

Lifestyle Politics:
Building “*Jeongful*” Relations Between
South Korean Gay Men

As the recent “affective turn” within the humanities and social sciences has emphasized, all social transformations, in order to be *effective*, must be *affective*. Building on this insight, this paper examines the lifestyle politics of the so-called “first generation” of South Korean (hereafter “Korean”) gay men. By “first generation,” I refer to men who became exposed to Westernized discourses of “gay identity” and “community” during the liberalizing period of Korean history in the mid-1990s with the emergence of the gay and lesbian movement. Even now, many of them are struggling to create a hidden but autonomous lifestyle centered around their non-normative identity. Central to this struggle, I assert, is the effort to building *jeongful* relations between gay men. Popularly known as a “deep sense of affection,” *jeong* is typically seen to emerge from the early mother and child relation and form within the structure of the heterosexual family. In trying to re-appropriate this emotion that has been central to constructing the nation as a family-based state, Korean gay men demonstrate how it is crucial to view social change— and politics—from the perspective of a perceiving, desiring, and fantasizing emotional being.

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