

Korean

Millennials

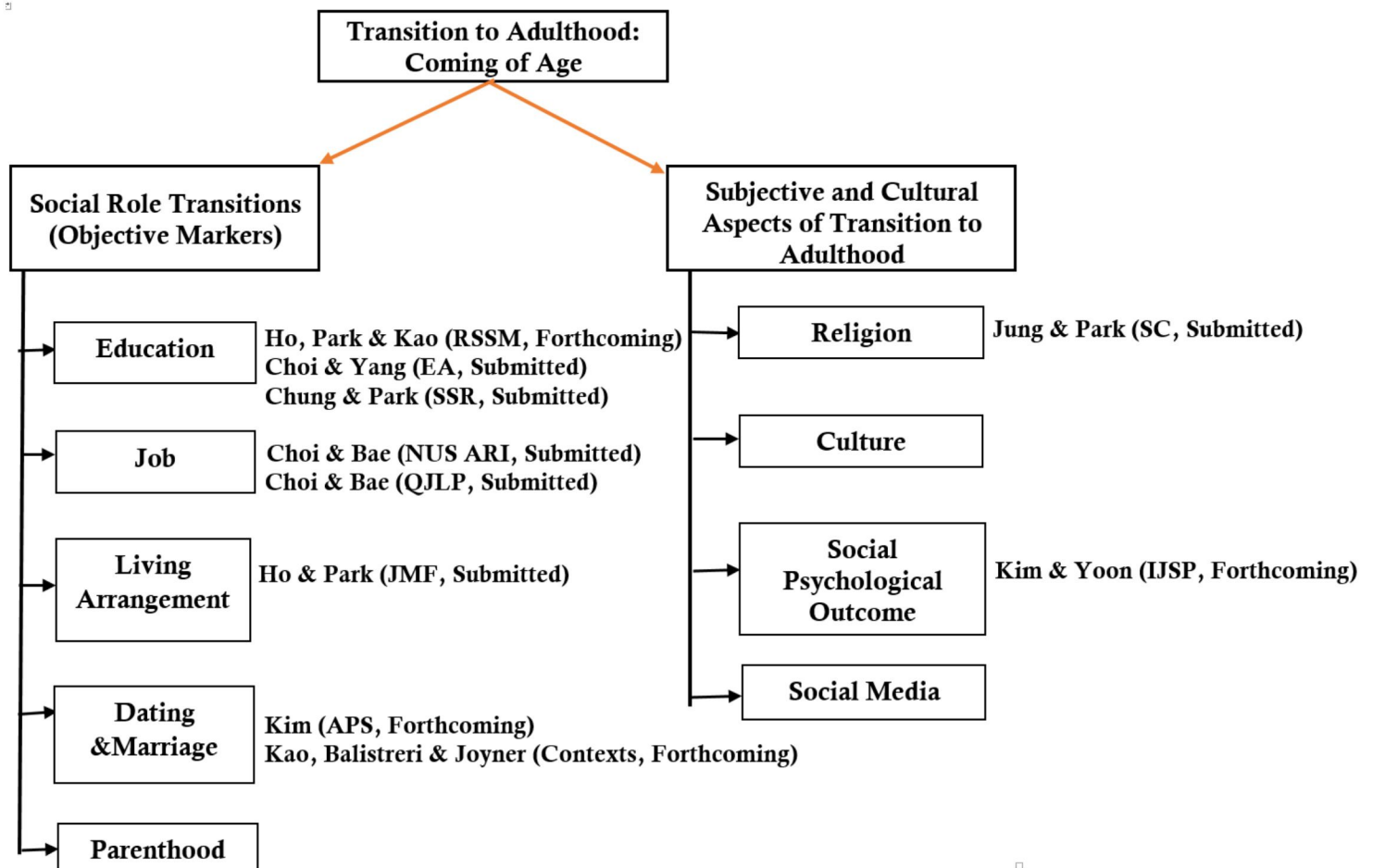
Newsletter Fall 2018

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The project (Sep 2016-Aug 2021), "Korean Millennials: Coming of Age in the Era of Inequality," investigates multifaceted challenges faced by Korean and Korean American Millennials in their pathways to adulthood in the context of rising inequality.

PUBLICATIONS



A LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Published Papers

Ho, Phoebe, Hyunjoon Park, Grace Kao. Forthcoming. "Racial and Ethnic Differences in Student Participation in Private Supplementary Education Activities". *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*

Kao, Grace, Kelly Stamper Balistreri, and Kara Joyner. Forthcoming. "Asian American Men in Romantic Dating Markets". *Contexts*.

Kim, Joongbaeck and Soo-Yeon Yoon. 2018. "Association between Socioeconomic Attainments and Suicidal Ideation by Age Groups in Korea". *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 64(7): 628-636.

Kim, Joongbaeck. Forthcoming. "The Influence of Premarital Coresidence with Parents and Family Income on The Transition to First Marriage in South Korea". *Asian Population Studies*.

Submitted Papers

Choi, Jaesung and Hanna Bae. "Temporal Change in Early Labor Market Outcomes of Young College Graduates in South Korea". NUS ARI.

Choi, Jaesung and DongGyu Yang. "The Impacts of Student Loans on Early Labor Market Performance". *Economic Analysis*.

Choi, Jaesung and Hanna Bae. "Preparation and Success in the Civil Service Examination: Focusing on College Ranking and Socioeconomic Characteristics". *Quarterly Journal of Labor Policy*.

Ho, Phoebe and Hyunjoon Park. "Young Adults' Patterns of Leaving the Parental Home: A Focus on Differences among Asian Americans". *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

Jung, Gowoon and Hyunjoon Park. "Bridging Sociology of Religion to Transition to Adulthood: The Emerging Role of Religion in Young Adults' Lives". *Sociology Compass*.

Chung, Inkwan and Hyunjoon Park. "Educational Expansion and Trends in Intergenerational Social Mobility among Korean Men". *Social Science Research*.

MEDIA INTERVIEW

Joongbaek Kim (Associate Professor, Sociology, Kyung Hee University) was interviewed for Daily Newspaper Comments by Joongang Ilbo(중앙일보 2018.09.17).

SOUTH KOREAN MILLENNIALS' MILITARY SERVICE AND NEOLIBERAL CALCULATIONS

As a fellow of the global lab project, Korean Millennials: Growing Up in an Era of Inequality, I have been working with Dr. John Finch on a research project, "South Korean Millennials' Military Service and Neoliberal Calculations," over the past year. The research questions are:

1. How do South Korean millennial men plan for and experience their compulsory military service?
2. How do South Korean millennials' class and educational backgrounds affect their planning for and experience of compulsory military service?
3. How are South Korean millennial men's neoliberal strivings expressed in their experience of military service?

In order to answer these questions, we conducted interviews this past summer with 45 South Korean college students who had completed their military service between 2013 and 2017. We had two research assistants who helped with interviews: Jinyoung Baek and Dohye Kim. All of the participants attended universities in Seoul, however, the rankings of their universities ranged from first tier (20 participants), to second tier (11 participants), to third tier (14 participants).

Our semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes to 120 minutes. We selected the universities in the different tiers, and asked faculty to post a call for volunteers to contact us to participate in the study in exchange for a modest gift card. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and we have completed the initial coding.

Preliminary findings are:

1. The neoliberal ethos that was instilled in South Korean millennials as they grew up during the period following the Asian financial crisis in 1997 guides their decisions and strategies regarding military service, even though the military is one of the least marketized sectors in South Korea.

2. Although military service is compulsory for all Korean men, there are a wide range of different assignments that vary considerably in how difficult or dangerous they are, how much time they will take to complete, and, how much the skills and contacts acquired during military service will be of use after leaving the military.

3. Several factors go into determining the assignment for each man, including written examinations, volunteering, and, for the most desirable assignments, a lottery system. The regular army is regarded as the least desirable assignment, however, that is where about three quarters of conscripts end up.

4. Men attending first and second tier universities had access to good resources for obtaining information about the most desirable options for military service, especially, because they knew seniors who had already completed service in these options. They were also accomplished test-takers, and likely to score well on any written examinations. By contrast, participants from third tier universities complained that they had trouble learning about options other than the regular army, and had to search for information on the Internet. This disparity of information produces divergent paths in the military service among men from the different tiers.

Only 10% of the participants from the first tier served in the regular army, whereas 45% from the second tier and 50% from the third tier did.

5. Those who were able to serve in one of the higher status options reported utilizing their personal time for additional study for such things as English proficiency tests or national license exams that might prove useful for their future careers. Even those participants from third tier universities who served in units such as the auxiliary police or the air force reported that they studied hard during their service due to the study-encouraging environment. By contrast, those participants who served in the army felt that they were further disadvantaged by not having enough personal time to study for their future careers, and they felt anxious about being left behind.

6. Across our entire sample, participants preferred positions that were comfortable and easy, allowing for more personal time, conflicting as little as possible with the academic calendar, and enabling them to be closer to Seoul or their hometown so that they could meet friends and family easily.

7. In stark contrast to older generations who expressed embarrassment about accepting relatively comfortable assignments, the participants of this study were proud of their “instrumental calculations” to get easier assignments.

We are planning to write an article from this research, and it will be submitted to the Journal of Asian Studies.

Seungkyung Kim (Professor, Institute for Korean Studies, Indiana University)

KOREAN MILLENNIALS LAB'S FALL BREAK AT YALE UNIVERSITY

Students at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) typically spend fall break, which usually falls around early October, to travel or catch up on schoolwork. As a lot of us had done last year, however, those involved with Professor Hyunjoon Park's Korean Millennials lab at Penn chose to forgo this time to travel to Yale University for a joint lab meeting with Professor Grace Kao, a close friend of ours from her days at Penn. So instead of sleeping in on the Thursday morning of fall break, the eight of us- Professor Park, Dr. Gowoon Jung (postdoc for the Korean Millennials project), and six graduate students in Penn Sociology and Demography- split into two rental cars (I was one of the drivers) and embarked on the three-hour drive to New Haven. In my car, we listened to some tunes on my phone, but also engaged in research talk along the way: Dr. Jung kept me company in the front of the car as we shared our research projects and ideas, while Professor Park and Adira discussed her dissertation chapter in the back seats.

It was cloudy and drizzling when we finally arrived at Yale, but we were warmly greeted by Professor Kao and Dr. Ronald Kwon, a postdoc at Yale's Center for Empirical Research on Stratification and Inequality. Throughout the next day and a half, all of us took turns presenting our research and fielding comments and questions from the others. In addition to getting helpful feedback regarding my own paper, I learned a lot from others' presentations, not just about the variety of topics they presented on, but also about presentation styles and how to provide constructive feedback. Unlike last year, we allocated a session at the end of our schedule Friday afternoon to collectively brainstorm about current and future research on Korean millennials' transition to adulthood.

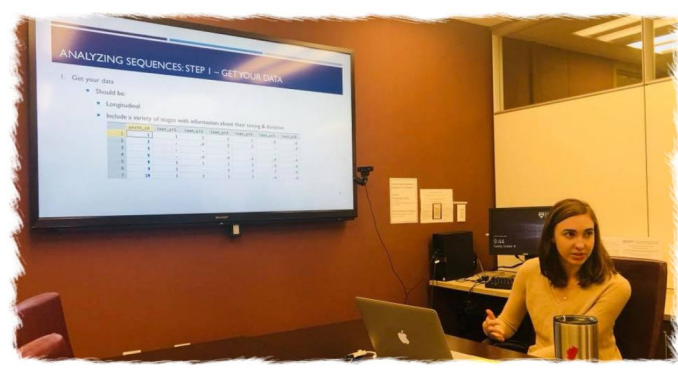
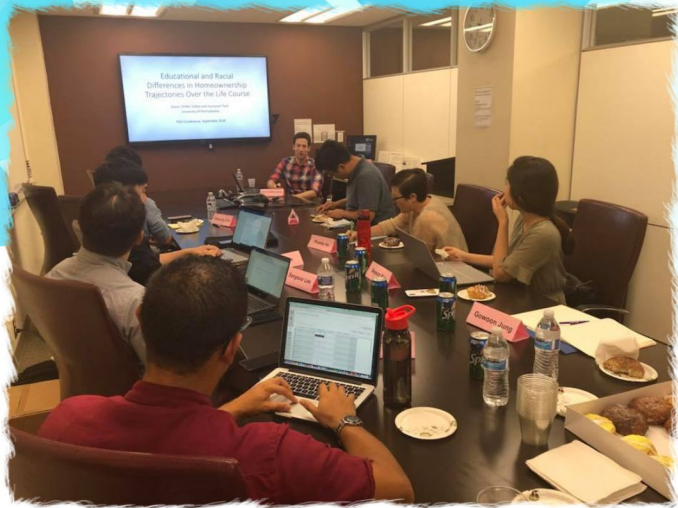
We used this time to identify gaps in the literature we are mending, as well as areas we should focus on moving forward, all of which was written out on a blackboard (see picture above). I felt that this was an insightful exercise as it visually laid out our progress and future directions.

These research/academic meetings were our main purpose in arranging this inter-university workshop, but I personally found the time and social interactions outside of the sessions to be the most enjoyable and valuable parts of the trip. Like last year, Professor Kao invited all of us to her beautiful house for dinner on Thursday, where we were fed delicious catered food and served her husband Jeff's famous makgeolli all night (search for Jeff Rubidge makgeolli on Youtube!). We were also introduced to a group of Yale sociology graduate students there, who we met again the following evening at a hot, local restaurant known for their mashed potato pizza. Throughout our couple of days in New Haven, I had a lot of fun interacting with Yale students and comparing our respective departments, making small talk about everything from TV shows to travels abroad, and listening to professors' experiences of the job market and tenure processes. As was the case last year, I felt closer to the professors, postdocs, and other graduate students as a result of this trip and returned to Philadelphia without any regrets about how I spent my fall break.

Yun Cha (Ph.D. Candidate, Sociology, University of Pennsylvania)



MEMORIES FROM MEETINGS



Korean Millennials: Coming of Age in the Era of Inequality

Lab Director: Hyunjoon Park

Lab Fellows: Grace Kao

Seung-kyung Kim

Joongbaeck Kim

Jaesung Choi

Postdoc: Gowoon Jung

Students: Kennan Ceba, Daesung Choi,

Phoebe Ho, Sangsoo Lee, Yun Cha

Collaborators: Hyejeong Jo, Soo-Yeon Yoon

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<http://web.sas.upenn.edu/koreanmillennials/>