Global Futures in East Asia

Youth, Nation, and the New Economy in Uncertain Times

Stanford University Press - Stanford, California
Chapter Four

On Their Own

Becoming Cosmopolitan Subjects beyond College in South Korea

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We met Heejin, a student at Koryo University, one of South Korea's top-tier private schools, in the summer of 2003 and again in summer 2004. Every time we met she sported a baseball cap and sweats. We were struck by her boyish voice, androgynous look, unselfconscious mannerisms, spontaneous laughter, and high energy. Heejin compared her carefree style with that of her best friend in high school who ended up at a women's college and had transformed herself into a stylish and feminine woman who spent lots of money on shopping and body care. Heejin sketched a contrast between her friend's narrow college life focused on consumption and her own more gregarious, masculine, and vital mode of being. Strolling with her across campus revealed her popularity and her social ease. Conversations shed light on her cosmopolitan interests in being comfortable in the world at large.

As a graduate of a special-purpose high school (with a focus on foreign languages), Heejin was upset that South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun had threatened—in the name of equality of opportunity—to repeal the policy of assigning extra points on the entrance exam to graduates of these competitive schools. Heejin called it “a policy to undermine students with high standards” and spoke of her entitlement: “I worked twice as hard as others to enter that school and twice as hard to stay there.” For Heejin, successful entrance to Koryo University had particular meaning because her squarely middle-class parents had insisted that if she could not enter a top-tier coeducational college then she should attend a top-rated women’s school. She had, thus, succeeded in avoiding a feminized space.

In 2003, we walked away from our meeting with Heejin with one phrase still ringing: “self-management” (chagi kwalli). We had been surprised to hear the phrase used so directly and to hear so many other students offering similar narratives of what it takes to succeed in a transformed South Korea. In this chapter we argue that college students inhabit new discourses of human development in the context of South Korea’s neoliberal turn and globalization. In addition to Heejin, we introduce three others from mid-tier colleges. While all four of these students aspire to and accept the burden of managing their personal formation for a changing world, we argue that the burden of self-development is borne variously, according to differences in the “brand capital” of the students’ universities, gender, and family background.

Contemporary college students in South Korea are envisioning human development, particularly their own maturation, in ways that are dramatically transformed in a time of globalization. These newly emerging subjectivities highlight personal ability, style, and responsibility and work to obscure escalating structural inequality in South Korea, reflecting neoliberal trends in South Korea and in the larger world. Although inequalities have long been framed in South Korea by discourses of personal effort and triumph over personal circumstances, what is new are ideas of self-styling beyond formal schooling and notions of personal character formation that extend beyond long-standing South Korean measures of effort and hard work. More specifically, the emergence of this shift must be understood in the temporal context of South Korea's postauthoritarian liberalization (that is, the call for personal freedoms) and its IMF-era neoliberalization. These emergent subjectivities and structural inequality must be viewed through the lens of South Korea's highly stratified higher education system in which college ranking is significantly correlated with real returns on educational capital (Seth 2002). Although education stratification is long-standing in South Korea, the rapid embrace of neoliberal restructuring and globalization by the education sector has accentuated differences in the brand capital of universities. Central to that brand capital is globalization itself, namely universities' differential ability to go global (for example, through opportunities
to study abroad or English-language courses). Although students attending South Korea's upper-tier colleges benefit from the prestige of their universities, those at lower-tier schools feel the burden of taking on the project of developing their human capital value on their own. However, this burden is borne in ways that are notably inflected by gender. Our research demonstrates that the feminine is imagined to be domestic (in both senses of that word): limited and limiting in direct contrast with masculine images of free circulation on a global stage.4

We use neoliberal subjectivity to index personal characteristics and proclivities that embrace the pursuit of active, vital, and cosmopolitan lives. This constellation of attributes as neoliberal agrees with many scholars who argue that changed economic and political formations across the globe have led to powerful changes in ideas about desirable or required ways of being. More specifically, this literature examines the articulation of personal formation with, for example, the flexibilization of labor, the demise of job security, and the retrenchment of both state and corporate support for social welfare. For South Korea, these personal features distinguish this generation from earlier generations of college students. Today's college students are committed to becoming vital—people who lead active and enjoyable lives, people who live hard and play hard and who aim to experience the world to its fullest. Students are aware, however, that these are more than just matters of style and pleasure. They realize that this new mode of being is a requirement for leading a productive life in a rapidly transforming and globalizing world. A feature of this discourse on human development is its explicit understanding of what it takes to succeed in the contemporary economy. That the work of embracing these new ideals can be onerous is, therefore, not unrecognized by students. At the time of our research, we noted a shared optimism among our interlocutors in their willingness to embrace this developmental narrative. In hindsight, some of this optimism may be waning as employment prospects grow ever bleaker and South Korea enters into an era of global fatigue, in which the call for the global has perhaps become so saturated as to lose all meaning.

Nonetheless, this new generation distinguishes itself from the hardworking model students of an earlier generation who were driven by familial pressures to achieve in the highly regimented discipline of formal schooling through the well-recognized education management of their families (espe-

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cially their mothers). Today's successful student must necessarily be more than simply a hard-working social conformist: He or she must be a self-starter. The new generation also sees itself as different from student movement activists who, although not model students, conformed to another sort of collectivistic pressure. Both of these earlier groups, then, are imagined as collectivist subjects driven by the external demands of families or their cohort group. In differentiating themselves from the past, contemporary students articulate a discourse of individuality, style, and self-fashioning. Additionally, the scope of this new persona extends beyond South Korea in an age of radical liberalization and the globalization of all forms of capital. Competition does not end at the boundaries of the state. Thus, the present college generation is deeply committed to a cosmopolitan ideal in which people are able to circulate in a wider and increasingly global arena. At the heart of this personal development project is English mastery, and many students described English as a necessary base (beizii) (Park and Abelmann 2004; see also Crystal 2003).

In some senses, the lives of the students today are not so radically different from student cohorts in the past. Personal development of the educated in South Korea has long demanded considerable individual energy and vitality. Family and other collectivities continue to assert considerable pressure on students; indeed, it can be argued that neoliberalization in South Korea—particularly in the form of the repeal of employee benefits and state social support—has even led to new formations of familism, namely the ideology of family as the locus of support and social welfare. However, people narrate and take responsibility for their circumstances and predicaments in ways that are quite new. Thus this generation's self-understanding and modes of narration must be situated at the juncture of neoliberal social, economic, and educational reforms in South Korea today.

Although we cannot claim that the four students we discuss in the following pages perfectly represent a generation at large, we were struck by the consistency of their narratives about self-development.7 We do not argue that college rank, class, and gender would articulate with the new forms of subjectivity in the same manner for every young person; however, we do think that they articulate in ways that are revealing. It is in this spirit that we linger on these four narratives to examine the variable modes of articulation in more detail and to preserve the dialogic quality of their expression.
The IMF Crisis and South Korea’s Neoliberal Turn

This generation of students spent their childhood in an increasingly prosperous and democratic South Korea. In their early or late adolescence, however, they experienced the IMF crisis (1997 through 2001). This crisis marked a period of economic uncertainty leading to a broad array of social and policy reforms that were neoliberal in character. South Korea’s neoliberal turn involved a critique of crony capitalism and led to the call for venture capitalism in a deregulated market. Creative, global, high-tech youth were critical to this reform project (Song 2003).

Intensified privatization, individuation, and globalization are the large context for the transformations of subjectivity we write of here. Increasingly, neoliberal subjecthood demands that individuals become self-managers who “produce themselves as having the skills and qualities necessary to succeed” (Walkerdine 2003: 240). Yan Hairong (2003) coins the term neo-humanism to describe, after Marx, how human exchange value in China today has extended to subjectivity. Specifically, she analyses the Chinese construct of suzhi (quality) as follows: “Suzhi is the concept of human capital given a neoliberal spin to exceed its original meaning of stored value of education and education-based qualifications to mean the capitalization of subjectivity itself” (2003: 511). Of course, post-IMF South Korea and market-reform-era China represent entirely distinct historical configurations, but the neoliberal spin Yan describes is one that perhaps unites youth worldwide (see Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 307).

Similar to other structural transformations imposed by external governing bodies, the IMF crisis forced the South Korean state and the corporate sector to become leaner and meaner. Unemployment skyrocketed in the immediate aftermath of the crisis. With radical corporate and banking restructuring as well as escalating transnational investment in the South Korean corporate sector, labor had to become increasingly flexible (Shin 2000). Today’s youth face a transformed South Korean economy in which full-time, secure employment is harder to procure, state and local protections and services are curtailed, the reproduction of the middle class is fraught with uncertainty, and the vagaries of transnational capital figure profoundly. These students face a reality that is ever more vulnerable and precarious, just as new models of personhood proclaim personal responsibility and authorship for one’s economic and general wellbeing. Ironically, however, their deep-seated embrace of these new narratives of personhood appear blind to the structural transformations that have fashioned these new subjectivities.

Furthermore, in a South Korea that is becoming increasingly class stratified or, as many have argued, polarized, we are particularly interested in how students do or do not take stock of their structural positions, which are registered here through college ranking. For South Korea and other recently democratized states, the trappings of neoliberal personhood are particularly appealing because they stand for liberal democratic reform in which people can enjoy self-authorship, personal freedom, and self-styled consumption (see Song 2003; 2006). Thus the ironic meeting of neoliberal and postauthoritarian/collective liberal “individuals” is such that young South Koreans can unabashedly celebrate what might otherwise appear to be so nakedly pernicious (Song 2003 and Chapter Ten in this volume). As neoliberal transformations are easily celebrated in the name of liberal values, so too are particular features of the authoritarian developmentalist education system, especially its egalitarian ideology and standardization, which are now dismissed as backward historical burdens (Park 2006).

South Korean higher education, along with South Korean mainstream K-12 education, has long been driven by social demand. In earlier decades, this was for equal access, and more recently, for neoliberal reforms, namely deregulation, privatization, diversification, and globalization. Although some charge that the state continues to lag behind consumer demand (Hanook Ilbo 2004; D. Lee 2004), South Korea today offers a case of state-managed deregulation of higher education in accordance with neoliberal values of efficient self-management, productivity and excellence, diversification, and global competition (Mok and Welch 2003; Mok, Yoon, and Welch 2003; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2000). In other words, although neoliberal reforms have been accelerated by social demand and global pressures in the aftermath of the IMF Crisis, as Mok and his coauthors (2003) argue, they have also been highly orchestrated by the South Korean state.

The new model student is an autonomous student-consumer who is responsible for managing his or her own lifelong creative capital development. South Korea’s elite university students have benefited most from the government distribution of national resources through the selective state support of higher education. Their coeducational campuses most deeply enact the
new global human capital development that these students are well able to articulate. 

This is the historical context in which contemporary college students are able to narrate their human capital development while obscuring the structural workings of college rank and family capital. The self-focused narration of this new generation works against a more broadly social imagination because it celebrates individuals who do not conform to collectivist demands. We are intrigued to find young champions of flexibility when it is flexible labor structures that jeopardize the secure futures of young people and, in particular, young women. This meeting of liberal and neoliberal values—precisely to the extent that flexible labor appears to speak to personal freedom—thus champions endless reinvention and frequent career changes. Indeed, a number of students we interviewed, particularly women, looked forward to flexible work lives in which they will be able to exercise their creativity, grow, and accrue experience. We were struck by the absence of talk about the gendered constraints in this new labor market and the burden flexibility imposes on women.

This “more radically individuated sense of personhood” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 305) thus obscures class and other structural differences. In the words of our interlocutors, the “machineline” (kijwe kat’i) students—the previous generation of model students who lived “as they were directed to live” (sik’inin taero)—were, ironically, better poised to recognize the structures that constrained their futures. The burden today of “living as one wants” (hago sip’iin taero) renders invisible the forces that impinge on one’s choices in life.

We now introduce four students in greater detail: Heejin from Koryŏ University, a top-tier private school, and the others from lower-tier schools: one from Myŏngi University in Seoul and two from Inch’on City University outside of Seoul. The designation of university level is complicated. For example, it is hard to put any university in Seoul on a par with those outside of the city and even more so with those in the provinces (chibang). Inch’on City University, which is located in a city not far from Seoul, is somewhat betwixt and between because it is neither a Seoul school nor a provincial one. Although Heejin busily distinguishes herself even from her own top-tier university peers, she is nonetheless deeply invested in her university’s reputation for vitality and excellence and the status it confers on her—her campus capital. The students from Myŏngi and Inch’on, on the other hand, articulate their projects of self-development against the grain of their cam-
puses. Precisely because their campuses are not easily identified with these neoliberal modes of being, they understand that they must shoulder the burden of their own human development. They thus articulate a vision of how to make the most of their college studies.

An Elite College Student

It is the feeling of energy, the motivation to continuously do something.

We return to the Koryŏ University student with whom we opened this chapter and her thoughts on “self-management.” Heejin dwelled on self-management as a way of distinguishing herself from her close associates during her chuseu year, the year after high school when some students study to retake the college entrance exams to ensure college admission or upgrade their eligibility for more elite schools:

I probably shouldn’t say this, but those of us here are at this level [and she motioned as if to include the campus around us]. Our society is led by people at this higher level. . . . Frankly speaking, among my friends from my chuseu year [that is, those who attended the same college preparation institute], I am the only one who got in here. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not saying they are bad. They all go to provincial colleges or . . . We all used to hang out together, but when we parted at 1 a.m. I would go home and study until 3 a.m. before I went to bed. They just went to bed because they were tired. So it was all about self-management . . . It isn’t that I look down on them. If I were to talk to them like this, they would think I was a different person. But I talk to them only about fun stuff. . . . I have friends whom I hang out with, friends I study with, and friends I consult with about the future. [emphasis added]

When we met Heejin a year later in her sophomore year, her position on self-management had hardened. Koryŏ University, she said unabashedly, was an elite school that should stand, metonymically, for students like herself: self-managers invested in the kinds of new human development sketched in the preceding pages.

She described a university that was a far cry from the one that her high school teachers had described: “Hang in there, hang in there, once you get to college you can do whatever you want.” Instead, to her delight, Heejin found
people who studied really hard. She told us that she had been “moved” by the long line of students waiting to enter the library at 5 a.m. For Heejin, competing, self-managing, and working hard made her feel alive and vital. She described the energy that comes from activity and achievement:

[If you have to study in college] you can feel that you have achieved something… When I was selected to be an exchange student [she hadn’t gone yet], the feeling was amazing—the sense of accomplishment. When I got into college, into the department I wanted, and… it is the feeling of energy, the motivation continuously to be doing something. [emphasis added]

Heejin was unfazed by the thought that this intensity of effort should be unending and that the point was not to arrive at one place or another. On hearing Heejin’s litany of activities and credentials, her friend asked, “But does this leave you any room for self-development?” Heejin’s retort was quick and easy: “But this is a part of self-development, too.” We understand her retort as refusing to make a distinction between a private or personal self and a market-oriented or instrumental one. Minutes later, the friend pushed her again, “You enjoy competition so that you can realize your dreams, right? It isn’t that you want to compete forever, right? Do you want to agonize yourself with endless competition?” While Heejin’s friend was keenly aware of the external pressures that demand neoliberal selfhood, for Heejin this selfhood resonates with her sense of her own essence, a selfhood well suited to the demands of the day and therefore deserving of reward.

We spent quite a bit of time talking about the university’s recently established English requirements for graduation, namely an 800 or above on the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication). The student government was busily campaigning against this change in graduation requirements and other features of Koryo University’s aggressive globalization efforts. Heejin was quite matter-of-fact about the requirement, which she argued should be even steeper. She posited that the social circles of future Koryo University graduates were ones that would demand English mastery. In passing, she remarked, “Last semester I saw more English than Korean [in course readings].” Heejin was unabashed that the university should confer these and many more credentials on its graduates. She described that she supports “anything that asserts that I have achieved to this level” [motioning with her hand]. She added later that Koryo University is her brand (mak’g), and hence she wanted the bar to be set high.

Heejin is a great defender of Koryo University’s efforts to remake itself from “national Koryo University” into “global Koryo University.” She described the university’s newspaper campaign, “Now we have turned our back on our homeland and are marching toward the world.” She praised the university’s efforts to be included in the list of the world’s top 100 universities, in which currently there are no South Korean universities. She was also well aware of the dean’s motto, “Let’s make good on our [university] pride!” For Heejin the march to the world, high levels of English acquisition, endless credentials, and ever-rising standards are the registers of self-development, not an “end” as her friend prodded her, but a way of life. Heejin’s career goals encompassed this sense of self-development. She detailed her ever-escalating desire for foreign languages: “My major is English [literature]. But it is unsatisfying to work only on English. After all, everybody does English… Now I am learning Japanese, and I am continuing with Spanish too. And I also want to learn Chinese.” She described crafting a career through which she can use her English to “contact foreigners.” Heejin thus imagined herself in broad circulation, moving freely in the world, facilitated by her mastery of many tongues, and acting as an agent who can help South Korea to the world. Heejin wanted to become an “events director”; more specifically she hoped to orchestrate public events that would “circulate foreign culture.” Heejin’s description of her ideal career synthesized her aesthetics of vital self-development, as well as her sense of the global:

I like to make plans and to act on them, to bring them to life. . . . I’m the type who initiates getting together with my friends. I want to develop this side of me. I also like to deal with people. At one point I thought about becoming a producer, but I sensed that I would be constrained and that bothered me. . . . A producer is confined to this country. Instead, I want to have a hand in circulating foreign culture.

Throughout Heejin’s narrative, she was queried both by her friend as well as ourselves about those who might be left outside of her notion of vital personhood. Heejin insisted that, in today’s world of nations, South Korea cannot afford to be concerned about socioeconomic inequality: “It’s too early, we are still at the point where we have to make students study more and more; all we do now is play.” Lest the reader imagine that this affirmation of individual striving for success might preclude national identification,
high school student in a peer group headed for greener pastures, Sori had a hard time coming to terms with herself at what she dubbed a “third-tier college.” What is so fascinating, if not tragic, about Sori’s case is that she articulated a narrative of personal development not unlike Heejin’s, even as her personal circumstances had shut her out of the elite college brand capital that confers ideal human development. The profound personal costs and even trauma of Sori’s college story aside, she was nonetheless willing to take on the entire burden of her own human or capital development, holding herself “responsible for her own regulation” (Walkerdine 2003: 239). Although she intermittently generated systematic structural and gendered critiques, she then quickly returned to the theme of personal responsibility.

It is impossible to wrest Sori’s own college story from her father’s college story; indeed, college is always an intergenerational conversation of one kind or another. When Sori ended up at Myŏngji University, her father, an import-export small entrepreneur and self-made man, let her know that she had “yielded no return” on his expenditures and that there was no point to his “investing” in her any further! Sori had made her way to Myŏngji University after a year of chaessu. Her scores had been so low on the first round of testing that she did not even apply to college because she had no interest in those schools that her scores would have enabled her to attend. Unlike most students from middle-class families, she did not attend a private institute in her chaessu year but instead burrowed in a public library because her father had pronounced her, his only child, a “hopeless case.”

At this turn, Sori’s family’s education investment became clearly gendered. She described the hapless library crew of other students, adrift in their private pursuits, many of them already years into the project of college entrance or study for one or another state exam. The irony of Sori’s settling for Myŏngji University was that her father, the first in his poor family to have attended college, had himself gone to Myŏngji University; it was thus unthinkable that the daughter, who had been raised with so many more advantages, had not managed to do any better. A year later it turned out that Sori’s college entrance exam scores actually went down; she explained that it seems that hers is a personal code (k’oldi) or personality ill-suited to the entrance exams. Further, she admitted to the arbitrariness of it all: Her best scores, for example, were on the third go-around when she had not even studied for it. But even when we pushed, and even with her admission that she is not an “exam person,” Sori refused any critique of this engine of selection in a

A “Third-Tier” College Student

I can’t get anything from this school.

We met Sori for the first time in 2004, shortly before she was to resume her senior year at Myŏngji University after a year’s leave. Myŏngji University had been a disappointment to Sori in every way. Having been a hard-working

comments championing “competition” in such nationalistic terms were not uncommon. Heejin was not alone in asserting that South Korea could ill afford more egalitarian policies in the face of its race for global standing. As many have argued, nationalism and cosmopolitanism often go hand in hand (Park and Abelmann 2004; Schein 1998; Cho 2008).

As for people who can’t afford the private after-school education indispensable to upper-tier college entrance, Heejin merely offered, “They should work hard and make themselves rich, too.” This remark perhaps betrays Heejin’s squarely middle-class background, which had allowed her to receive private after-school education. In the highly personalized project of self-realization, the individual must fashion her own mobility. Heejin identified state policies for “equalization of educational opportunity” with “dumbing down” the country in a way that it can ill afford in the global race. Toward the end of our meeting, her friend interjected a comment that Heejin found simply beyond comprehension. In the torrent of talk about English, her friend confessed to preferring the study of Korean literature, to which Heejin simply replied, “I don’t get it.” In her view, a preference for Korean literature would limit oneself to a smaller universe, a domestic scene with lower standards and a limited global circulation. Heejin’s focus on market value made it clear that she felt that citizens bear a responsibility to be competitive in the global contest. Her friend’s commitment to Korean literature was too localized and would be a drag on the nation’s movement toward the global.

Heejin thus positioned herself as a neoliberal paragon, and all the more so as the graduate of a special-purpose high school, one that ran against the policy current of school equalization. As an elite college student, she enunciated the neoliberal turn, relishing in the project of her own creative capital formation.
highly competitive South Korea; instead, echoing Heejin, she accepted that exams and competitive credentialization were necessary for South Korea’s competitiveness.

When Sori explained that the score that it took to enter her major at Myöngji University’s Department of Business Management was no different from that required by less desirable departments at higher-ranked schools, it seemed that she was about to criticize the stratification of higher education in South Korea with its brand capital. Instead, however, Sori was very critical of the college. She detailed the various ways in which it did not live up to her image of what a college should be, an image made all the more palpable because the vast majority of her high school and after-school institute friends ended up attending higher-ranking schools. Indeed, on the day we met, she was accompanied by a friend who was about to begin graduate school at prestigious Yonsei University located just minutes from the Myöngji campus. Sori mentioned the empty Myöngji library, completely vacant except during exam season; here we can recall how Heejin was by the students who lined up to enter the Koryõ University library at dawn. Also lacking for Sori were meaningful social relationships: She described that, although students at Yonsei or Koryõ Universities build relations with their seniors (sŏnbu) and join clubs or study groups, “there is nothing that I can learn from them” [other Myöngji students].

She went on to explain that she could not get anything from the school. When we asked her why she cannot even “have a conversation” with classmates at Myöngji, she continued:

To give an example: I am interested in English, but if I try to talk to them about learning English, they are clueless. They know nothing about what teacher is good at what institute or how to prepare for the TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language], and so forth. If they have studied English even a little, they would know that much, and I would at least be able to talk to them about how hard the TOEFL is. But all they can say is, “I don't know anything about the TOEFL,” or, “I have never taken the TOEIC.”

With these comments, Sori felt she was describing students with no future or little ambition. She was also remarking on the lack of network or social capital at a place like Myöngji University; there were neither strategic ties nor helpful information to be garnered there. These same students, who knew so little about the English exam for which Koryõ University was requiring a score of 800 for graduation (the very score that earned Sori a sizable merit fellowship at Myöngji University), nonetheless went for study abroad, but, Sori stressed, “with no mind of their own”: “They just head for China or the United States because their parents send them. I don't understand them. They say, ‘Isn't it a good thing to study abroad? Doesn't it expand one's horizons?’ But they have absolutely no plan to make good on their study abroad experience.” For her part, she could never imagine using her parents' money without “strong determination” to really study hard. Here Sori distinguished the spirit from the letter; her classmates, she asserted, lacked the spirit—the subjecthood—that would assure meaningful returns.

Aspiring to follow in her father’s footsteps, Sori had taken on the burden of self-development on her own. Sori admired her father, a well-traveled successful businessman, “a self-made man who speaks English well, considering his age.” She went on to note that his English is, in fact, better than hers. In spite of admitting to being “hurt” by him and to the trials of “never being able to live up to his expectations,” Sori was busily crafting her own parallel track. Foremost, she knew that she would need to identify her own import/export “item” (transliterated into Korean as ait’im) if she were to succeed. Over the course of our conversation, we began to listen to this phonetic loan-word for “item” more metaphorically, to stand for the stress that many students put on discovering their own talent or nurturing their own passion. We were struck that Sori’s “item”—something that she would market or bring from abroad—paralleled Heejin’s “events”; both styled themselves as decidedly cosmopolitan by extending their ambition beyond South Korea and by working to acquire English capabilities that could enable such mobility. Sori did not want to be merely “a part of the machine” but aspired instead to becoming a “figure in her own right.”

Like her chaebul year, Sori’s item was a particularly gendered burden. As she described: “My dad says that his trade item is too good to let it die with his generation and that if he had had a son he could have had him take it over.” To wit, her entrepreneurship was indeed a self-entrepreneurship; the matter of fashioning herself as a woman was tied up in the project of somehow identifying that perfect trade item. Denied her patrimony on the basis of her gender, Sori’s dream to circulate on a larger stage became harder to realize. Interestingly, Sori related that as a young girl she had been indulged by her father, who at that time still had big dreams for her. Like Heejin, she thus never even entertained the possibility of attending a woman’s college.
that would somehow hem in her horizons. It was as if, in the face of her failure, Sori’s father relegated her to the feminine, as if to say, “Pull yourself up, if you can, with your own bootstraps.”

Sori’s gendered perceptions of her parents’ domains are revealing. While her father moved on the world stage, she characterized her mother as the kinder and more empathetic parent, who was confined to the domestic sphere. It is telling, if ironic, that the “masculine” attributes of the healthy subjectivity that Sori admired are coldness or even cruelty, while she portrayed “feminine” kindness as hemmed in or domestic in both senses of that word. Sori’s gendered worlds and evaluations collided as she mapped her own future. She described a dilemma. On the one hand, she wanted to marry and have children: “I want to have three kids and a harmonious home filled with the sounds of children. I want my kids to have siblings, and I want to hear the sounds of people making noise when I come home.” On the other hand, however, Sori was aware that to become the “savvy entrepreneurial woman” who could please her father, she needed to postpone her vision of a happy home to the distant future: “Honestly, I don’t think I can get married before my thirties. . . . I need to work in a company and start my own business too, but if I get married and take care of my home and my husband, I won’t be able to do anything.” She dismissed out of hand the possibility of help from her mother who has already, she offered, “sacrificed too much to patriarchal demands.”

Sori’s struggles, however, must be appreciated in the context of what she described as the “two things that matter to my father: patriarchy and money.” Sori was determined to “both marry well and become a classy woman by virtue of making lots of money” so that her father will approve of her—“give her an OK”—in spite of her having attended a lesser college, as he had. The family context of Sori’s situation illuminates how her burden of self-development was intricately stitched into the fabric of conservative family norms and patriarchy. In this case, middle-class advantage was withheld along gendered lines. This case is perhaps not broadly representative of trends today: With South Korea’s rapidly declining birth rate, there are many families with only girls, and many such girls are afforded the same privileges that would have been accorded a boy. But gender ideologies and their transformations work their way unevenly in all populations.

Although the task of unearthing Sori’s item was still a project for her future, she had been taking a year off so as to study further for the TOEIC as well as to travel and take up photography. Sori was frustrated by what struck her as an irony: Although nonelite, the university’s tendency to give constant small exams throughout the semester thwarted her desires for human development. She calculated that she was better off leaving the campus to realize her project. English, travel, and photography comprise an easy trio, for they are all highly valued human development assets, assets that are all the more important for students from Myŏngji University because this is where, according to Sori, the large firms don’t even interview.

In sum, Sori realized that her human development was in her own hands. Lacking both the college brand and the gendered inheritance of her father’s import/export item, Sori was indeed on her own in the project of developing herself for a transformed world. At times she called attention to matters beyond the boundary of the self (for example, personal exam productivity, college reputations at the departmental level, and gendered inequalities in family support for exam preparation), but she nonetheless considered herself responsible for ending up at Myŏngji University and having to take on the development of her own human capital. Hardly unfettered by the burden, Sori nonetheless embraced it.

**Bordering the Megalopolis**

Each of us has to know exactly where we are headed and then make choices accordingly.

We turn now to two male seniors at Inchŏn City University, Min and Kūn, both the children of small entrepreneurs. Min was also the son of a single mother. Although we foreground university stratification here, Min and Kūn are also clearly from a lower-class background than that of the students already discussed. However, they, too, took on the burden of human development beyond the walls of their university. Min argued for the self-management of college in which each student decides where college fits in his or her own self-development strategy. Kūn, having recently decided to take the civil service exam, was resigned to a rather conventional occupational future while holding onto the possibility of personal development beyond the job. Inchŏn City University is a nonelite university attended by students from Seoul unable to gain admission to colleges in Seoul proper.
and also by Inch'on locals and students from the provinces. Inch'on, a sprawling city neighboring Seoul, presents an interesting case. Although an independent city with its own history distinct from the Seoul megalopolis, it is close enough to Seoul so as not to be easily classified as “provincial”; it is nonetheless clearly not a part of the greater Seoul metropolitan area. Inch'on City University, which began as a private university, was transformed into a public university in 1994 and is currently in the process of becoming a national university. We met Min and Kün in a larger group of students from the Communications Department in 2003 and in a smaller group again in 2004. In 2004, Min was off campus because of an internship that had turned into full-time employment, although he still needed to finish up some coursework. He made considerable effort to come and meet us because he had an urgent story to share. In 2003, Min who was stylishly dressed in offbeat clothes, spoke of his “fate to follow a different life course” and of his distinctive childhood without a father and with a “crazily” strong mother. He introduced himself as an “eclectic philosopher,” and it was clear that his classmates had heard much of this before. Min was a frequent performer of his own difference. In 2003, he spoke at great length about South Korea’s impoverished culture of conversation or debate. Speaking of English as “more comfortable,” Min seemed to be saying that his use of the English language was unfettered by South Korean schooling and perhaps the dictates of Korean social life. With his comments on English, Min referred both to his international travel, namely several low-budget trips in Asia, and his cosmopolitan affinities:

When I speak English, it doesn’t seem so hard. It is easy and systematic. . . . We have a real problem with our education system. We begin our schooling learning such strange things [textbook English]—and in high school and middle school, too. I don’t know why we learn those kinds of things. We could just go and talk when the situation arises, but instead we study English this way. Who knows why we can’t get out of our books?

Moments later, Min championed “survival English,” an English born in real-life interactions and through a more natural process of acquisition:

When I spoke English abroad, I didn’t think about it consciously—I just memorized the words and sentences that people used and said them that way. . . .

It’s really easy to learn how to just change the ending of sentences and put that into action, but instead [people in South Korea] just sit in the library five hours a day studying. That’s meaningless. We really need to change [the education system] soon.

If the English that Min spoke and learned in his trek in India was somehow more “natural,” South Korean English was a disaster, held hostage in South Korean textbooks and classrooms. On hearing Min speak about English study, Kün did not negate what he said but offered his own take on Min’s position: “Our [that is, South Korean] criterion for English study is the TOEIC exam. He hasn’t studied for the TOEIC exam, but he went to India and tried out his English a lot there. In a word, he is talking about practical English (gijŏn yŏng’ŏ).” Kün had traveled only domestically and thus had made different choices than Min, although their class backgrounds are not so different.

In keeping with his deep-seated criticisms of South Korean English education, Min was also an avid critic of South Korea’s chronic competition and of the connections (through school, region, and kin) that it takes to make it. In this litany, he included South Korea’s “Seoul National University sickness,” referring to the pathological obsession with this one school. Interestingly, in his excursus on English, Min also asserted that his English mastery exceeded that of Seoul National University students. Like Sori, Min also made structural critiques; however, he appeared to be more deeply empowered by them in the sense that he had not internalized his failure in having to settle on being an Inch’on City University student. While it is hard to generalize from this case, we think that both class and gender are relevant here.

Min was not burdened by Sori’s sense of failure and lack of empowerment. Whereas Sori was burdened with the desire to please her patriarchal father, Min prided himself on his unique family background, on being unfettered by “Korean” familial convention. Min’s assertion of freedom from patriarchy can be considered ironically as a gendered privilege itself; a fatherless daughter would have been very differently positioned and would by no means have been free from patriarchal constraints. In describing the many ways in which he had styled his path, from a trek in India to side jobs in college, Min detailed an entrepreneurship of the self that had begun early in his life by virtue of his cultural marginality. His position was outside of the logic of patriarchy that had so burdened Sori. In imagining his future, Min described his inspiration from Buddhism (“following one’s heart”).
By 2004, via an internship, Min had landed a highly desirable job in Seoul as a TV producer in a broadcasting company. In explaining how he landed the job, he made clear his understanding that each person must take responsibility for the management of his or her own future, a management that is inherently risky and driven by many choices:

When I was taking classes, I got many calls asking, “Min, are you up for some part-time work?” And I would turn to my friends, “Hey, let’s do it together,” but most of the time they said, “No, I can’t, I have class.” But in my case, I cut class and did those jobs. Because I skipped many classes, my GPA (grade point average) was between a B and a C... but I learned many skills in the field. And so I have been able to enter the work world so quickly. Those students who stuck to their classes can’t enter society and begin working as easily. It was a matter of my personal judgment; I did what I did because I chose to do it. Grades are also important, and I did fret about my grades... Each of us has to know exactly where we are headed and then make choices accordingly. I chose my course a long time ago, and I have stayed on that path without wavering. [emphasis added]

Min’s thoughts here about learning “in the field” echoed his earlier pronouncements about language learning and signified his embrace of new modes of human development. However, Min had made considerable effort to meet us that evening, not to offer these reflections but to tell us a love story.

It was a very long story, spoken with almost no interruptions, other than sympathy pangs from the assembled listeners; for Kün and another student present, it was clear that the story was already very familiar. In brief, Min had fallen in love with an Indian woman he had come to know because she was featured in a TV program that he had spearheaded as part of the internship that had led to his present job. It was a fairy-tale story of true love and tragic parting:17 The woman was not at liberty to marry a non-Indian. Although it was a serious and at moments melodramatic telling, there were humorous asides, mostly about the ways in which Min skimped on his work to follow his heart. We listened to the story intently. Min was skilled at keeping his auditors tuned in. As we listened, we were struck that Min seemed to be mobilizing the tale in almost the same way he had described making choices in college as an instance of living and experiencing intensely. Although at first glance the story was a very far cry from that of the credential-happy Heejin with her “events” or from “item”-seeking Sori, the intensity, the personal flair, and the interest in experience are consistent.

Min also told us a lovely story about an encounter with a Japanese traveler in India. The meeting had been serendipitous and fleeting but somehow very meaningful. It captured beautifully the allure of travel, the magic that it promises the adventuresome. The talk of travel, yet another instance of “experience,” had also featured largely in the meeting the year before, especially for Kün. Born and raised in Inch’ŏn, Kün had transferred from physics to communications, finding it better suited to his interests. After stating this, he said, “And I especially like to travel.” We asked about the relation between his love of travel and his new major in communications, which made everyone chuckle. Kün’s answer was telling: “Well, there’s no exact relationship between them, but... I think of travel as something that gives you time to contemplate. The way I think of travel is that, while passing through new environments, it allows us to think alone and to plunge into our own thoughts.” For Kün, both his major and his love of travel were tailored to personal proclivity and to self-fashioning of the sort we have been describing. Kün described his lofty goals at the start of each journey, “setting out for the answers to ‘how should I live,’ ‘what life is,’ and so on.” But, he continued wistfully, “After all, it’s the same. Whether I travel or not, life is hard.” Kün would have liked to travel abroad, but limited resources precluded it. The “weight of reality,” which Kün had described in 2003, had been getting in the way of his travels.

Kün’s comments on his future one year later must be heard in the context of his listening to Min’s account. Kün, conservatively and neatly dressed, smiled quietly throughout the telling. It was after this tale of adventuresome travel in India, television, and international romance that Kün shared his decision to take the civil service exam, a decision that would foreclose the possibility of employment better suited to his studies and passions. His future course appeared all the duller against the landscape of Min’s accounts. Kün spoke of the naked realities of contemporary circumstances for all college students but even more so for those in universities outside of Seoul: “People say that our economy is getting worse, and youth employment is becoming a serious issue. These days there are no college students who are relaxed. We hang out together, but the moment we are alone again we are overwhelmed with worry, worries about the future.” Kün thus described an anxiety that
we observed across many of our college student interviews and particularly those with students at the lower-tier universities. Kún, however, went so far as to note that these days even Seoul National University students struggle.

Traveler Kún, however, made peace with his decision to take the civil service exam this way:

If I become a public servant, I will have enough spare time. I can't imagine working more than ten hours a day, like Min. [As a public servant] I will go to work at 9 and finish by 5:30. The rest of the time is my own. And, in the near future, public servants will have every other Saturday off. And, somewhere down the line, all Saturdays will be off. With that time, I can do something for self-development.

In this way, Kún registered or at least performed his peace with his decision of the need to become a public servant. The peace, as he described it, came from the self-development that he charted for after hours. It is interesting how Kún even spoke of his shorter work day, contrasting with Min's, as liberating in its own way. Kún’s sketch accorded with widespread images of a changed salary man who does not forsake his personal life for the company. The typical salary man of the era of the South Korean developmentalist state was the one who gave his soul to the company for the economic development of the nation; family life, in turn, was relegated entirely to women; and leisure life was merely an extension of company life (see Janelli 1993; Kim 1998). Kún thus described self-development as a leisure-time project. Interesting here is Kún’s meditation on freedom, his charge that perhaps labor that one is passionate about and demands full devotion—such as Min’s—is not liberating at all!

In the previous year, Kún had described his own convictions, not unlike Min’s, to live differently. Dismissing conventional marriage and family, he had said, “Why should I live like that?” Now, however, as Kún spoke about the unparalleled benefits (for example, retirement pension) of civil service jobs, he seemed to be sketching a much more “conventional” life course. But, if a civil service career smacked of something conventional, Kún nonetheless reserved his after hours and the promise of Saturdays into the future of a transformed South Korean work life. It stood in for that refuge that he had once sought—if only half realized—through travel in his earlier college days. Even as he discovered how, indeed, “life is hard,” Kún was holding firmly to his ideals of self-expression and self-development.

Conclusions

The university students discussed in this chapter all aspire to human development, and they all accept the “burden” of managing their personal formation. These “new” students mark a break from the past with their aspirations to realize values of democracy, individualism, and cosmopolitanism. We have described how a small number of students across three campuses inhabit new discourses of human development and how in turn they manage their education and chart the course of their future lives. We have paid particular attention to differences according to university prestige as well as family background to argue both that the “burden” of human development was borne variously across these campuses and that it is powerfully gendered. Heejin occupied a privileged position in which her campus conferred a brand of subjectivity itself. In her vision of becoming a cosmopolitan events maker, she narrated her self-formation as a vital person to be a matter of personal responsibility and choice, largely unfettered by structure or circumstance. Similarly, in her case, we saw how English, as a powerful sign of the global, is a project for personal endeavor and transcendence.

Although Sori equally embraced the project of vitality as a student in a nonelite institution, she assigned herself the task of managing it on her own, independent of her university whose brand capital she found to be lacking. Her cosmopolitan vision of the future, in which she secured her “item,” was a gendered burden that she needed to shoulder alone, unlike a son who would have been able to take over his father's item. Against the backdrop of Heejin’s triumphant projects of personal development, we register Sori’s as more fraught, raw, and even pained.

Finally, Min and Kún, like Sori, pursued their project of human development beyond the bounds of college. These two young men, however, emerge as distinctive cases: Min, not unlike Heejin, offered an empowered narrative of choice, cosmopolitan belonging, and gendered freedom (all of this achieved, he stressed, in spite of his campus). Kún, on the other hand, spoke of a vital future and the riches of domestic travel but at many points returned to the limits of his own particular circumstances, as the son of a humble family and a student at a nonelite college outside Seoul.

Across these conversations there were mentions of circumstance, indeed by all of the students featured here except for Heejin. But, as we have noted at many points, the discourse of human development in the neoliberal era
seems to obscure structural differences by foisting the burden on the self, a burden that people necessarily come to carry differently.

We are well aware of the irony that, through the embrace of the discourse of self-development, these college students appear to be blind to their structural differences and positions. This is all the more ironic in an era when young people face a record low rate of employment and high rates of underemployment. With these cases, we document with others how young people's embrace of a new and very individuated discourse of subjectivity works as a "political rationality" (Foucault 1991; Gordon 1991; Lemke 2002; Seo 2008). As many scholars argue, in the Foucauldian sense, the shifting techniques and technologies of regulation in neoliberalism focus on the technologies of the self and the self-management of citizens (Gordon 1991; Lemke 2002; Rose 1999; Walkerline 2003). By rendering individual subjects responsible for themselves, neoliberal governing technology passes the responsibility for social risks or problems, such as poverty and unemployment, onto the shoulders of individuals. We also note that the individualistic character of neoliberal subjectivity precludes collective alliance both in South Korea, and as importantly, across Asia where so many youth face similar circumstances and technologies. This individualistic character of neoliberal subjectivity tends to prevent these students from seeking out any form of collective alliance. In the logic of neoliberal political rationality, the political subject is less a collective or social citizen than an individual citizen who obsessionally pursues personal fulfillment (Seo 2008: 3).

Under these new forms of regulation, neoliberal subjects are elected to understand their positions in personal terms, even as they are located in a complex web of structural positions, as articulated for example by class and gender. This is why Valerie Walkerline (2003: 243) calls for the necessity of exploring the ways in which social inequality "is differently lived" in the era of neoliberal transformation. The ethnographic interlocutors we have introduced here have allowed us to consider the ways in which vectors of social inequality such as college rank, class, and gender are now differently lived in South Korea's neoliberal transformation. In her discussion of British class politics in the neoliberal era, Walkerline (2003: 239) notes that, in the new mode of self-management technologies, "class differences are taken to have melted away" because diverse people, including low-paid manual and service workers, are constantly "enjoined to improve and remake themselves as the freed consumer, as the 'entrepreneur of themselves.'" Indeed, despite intensified social inequality in the context of neoliberalism, she argues that people's sense of the possibility of upward mobility seems to have flourished as they celebrate individual freedom to self-regulate and improve themselves. In a similar way, the robust discourse of self-development of the South Korean college students we introduce here can work as if their education and future are the outcomes of individual choices free from any structural constraints.

Furthermore, for South Korea and other recently democratized states, including many Asian countries, the discourse of self-development is all the more easily celebrated because of the ironic historical conjuncture between neoliberal and post-authoritarian/collective liberal transformations. This conjuncture helps to explain how and why the college students introduced here all aspire so eagerly to an individualized project of human development.

Notes

Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the helpful feedback from the editors of this volume, as well as Amy Borovoy, Ed Bruner, Bong Gun Chung, Noriko Muraki, Myung-gyu Pak, Cathy Prendergast, Jesook Song, and anonymous reviewers for both Stanford University Press and Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, where an earlier version appeared as "College Rank and Neoliberal Subjectivity in South Korea: The Burden of Self-Development" in Inter-Asia Cultural Studies (2009) 10(2): 219-247. Portions of the original article are here reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd.; available at www.tandfonline.com. Comments by Fred Carriere, Greg Brazinsky, and Kirk W. Larsen at George Washington University were very helpful. We are also indebted for feedback from seminars at Columbia, Harvard, and Stanford Universities, and at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. We thank Jinheon Jung, who assisted with research during the summer of 2004. We are also grateful to Byung-ho Chung, Hye-young Jo, Jinh-Heon Jung, Donghu Lee, Deok-hee Seo, and Keehyeung Lee for facilitating introductions to interlocutors.

1. Special-purpose high schools, which originally started in the late 1970s only for art and athletics, expanded during the mid-1990s in accordance with educational reforms that emphasized the "diversification, specialization, and autonomy" of schools. These schools have special purposes to nurture talents for the new
economy, including technical, science, and foreign-language skills. These high schools run against the grain of decades of high school equalization measures, a history that is reviewed later in this chapter (Kim Young-Chol 2003; Lee 1998).

2. In South Korea, top-rated women’s schools are easier to enter because of the decreasing popularity of women’s schools generally.

3. Critically important is that the state has effected recent higher education transformations in a centralized manner, concentrating on the country’s top-tier universities and thus intensifying the already enormous stratification of South Korean education with neoliberal reforms (J. H. Lee 2004). Although our focus is on structural correlates of college rank, the correlation between college and class capital seems to be increasing as contemporary education in South Korea offers consumers with economic means many new arenas for investment, foremost the option of study abroad prior to college. A $50 million venture in the first quarter of 2004, doubling the figures from 2002, the so-called early study abroad (dogyi yabak) is an escalating market (Hankook Ilbo 2004). Parents struggle as to how to best educate their children for a transformed South Korea in a transforming world (Park 2006). A not uncommon discussion is the one that asks, “Which will be more valuable into the future, a degree from Harvard or from Seoul National [South Korea’s premier university]?” These options present new, and sometimes risky, human capital development strategies. In the self-development narratives of the students featured in this chapter, we will see that they enthusiastically embrace these risks. However, such a struggle—even just with second- or third-tier schools in both countries—is not separable from the student’s class resources.

4. While we observe the interaction between patriarchal family forms and neoliberal subjectivity—particularly the ways in which gender and patriarchal norms mediate family investment in children and human development ideals—this chapter does not further larger discussions of the articulation of gender and neoliberal subjectivity, a still theoretically and empirically underdeveloped topic in the literature (see Walkerdine 2003; Anagnost 2000). Further, while we highlight persistent gender norms, it is important to note that South Korean families are among the smallest in the world, that son-preference has declined significantly, and that South Korean families make enormous economic and emotional investments in the next generation, investments that are arguably ever greater in the face of today’s considerable class reproduction anxiety.

5. This chapter is based on conversations with students in the summers of 2003, 2004, and 2005. We usually met students in groups or near college campuses, and in some cases we followed up with solo interviews. In most cases the groups were comprised of departmental or college club cohorts that followed the snowball networks of our recruitment. In total we spoke with about twenty students.

6. As neoliberal logics have spread worldwide, they take on specific trajectories in different places. See Anagnost 2004; Apple 2001; Borovoy 2004; Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Du Gay 1996: 182; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Fong 2004; Gee 1999; Kingfisher 2002; Rose 1995; Song 2003; Walkerdine 2003; Wallulis 1998; Yan 2003.

7. Comaroff and Comaroff (2000: 302) similarly describe the term: “Neoliberalism aspires, in its ideology and practice, to intensify the abstractions inherent in capitalism itself: to separate labor power from its human context, to replace society with the market, to build a universe out of aggregated transactions.”

8. See Borovoy (2004) for a study of the ambivalence of Japanese young people as they struggle to meet the requirements of Japan’s “new competitiveness.” In parallel with the South Korean case in this chapter, these Japanese young people are asked to become a new generation of individualized and creative workers. Borovoy analyses both how class works, such that some youth are not afforded the opportunity to develop these new subjectivities, and how for elite youth these new requirements challenge deeply held values as well as ambivalences about American-style capitalism.

9. The complex political colors of the current education policy climate are easily observed through a recent JoongAng Ilbo editorial that denounced South Korean education as an “outdated steam engine” that hampers the “nation’s competitiveness.” The editorial continued, “Korea is still mired in the age of democratization, in which remnants of previous authoritarian regimes continue to linger. As such, the influence of ideology remains evident” (D. Lee 2004: 39–40).

10. Mok, Yoon, and Welch (2003: 61) summarizes South Korea’s education transformation in terms of several key shifts: from standardization to autonomy, diversification, and specialization; from provider to consumer; and from classroom education to open and lifelong learning.

11. As Mok, Yoon, and Welch (2003: 62–63) characterize, “The Korean government openly acknowledges that the existing system has failed to equip the society with autonomous capacity” to solve the problems presented by the new knowledge economy. Former President Kim Dae Jung was committed to education reform that nurtured “autonomous” and “creative” human capital (Mok, Yoon, and Welch 2003; Song 2003).

12. English has long been a class marker in South Korea; that is, knowledge of, and comfort with, English has been a sign of educational opportunity, especially study abroad, and of social success, including successful jobs and career promotion in South Korea (see Park and Abelmann 2004). Several universities now have English course and examination requirements for graduation.

13. This refers to the list produced by The Times of London, a list that is well known in South Korea.

14. Here Heejin referred to South Korean state’s long-standing ideological commitment to egalitarian education—especially the “high-school equalization policy.” Her assertion echoed some neoliberal arguments that South Korea’s recent educational turn is not a thoroughly neoliberal one because it has sustained equalization policies (D. Lee 2004: 39–40).
15. In informal on-line rankings of South Korean colleges and universities, Myongji University appears most often in the upper quadrant of schools; “second-tier” then would be more accurate.

16. See Borovoy (2004) for a fascinating discussion of college clubs as a mark of university status in Japan. More broadly, she takes college clubs as a key element of elite “college socialization” that prepares students for elite corporate work and social life. She both considers what it means that students at a provincial “low-level” college participate in clubs at significantly lower rates (30 percent) because many of them are commuter students as well discussing differences in the “easy come, easy go” way in which they participate in the clubs.

17. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that it is not the story of forsaken or unattainable true love that is distinctive here but rather that Min’s was a global tale.

18. Since July 2005, public servants work only five days, from Mondays to Fridays.

19. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer who pushed us to think about the implication of our findings and argument for collective alliance.

Chapter Five

Smile Chaoyang

Education and Culture in Neoliberal Taiwan

NICKOLA PAZDERIC

Perhaps there are few better indicators of the scope of Margaret Thatcher’s maxim “there is no alternative” to neoliberal globalization than the appropriation of Stuart Hall’s critique of neoliberal economics to illustrate the imperative for educational reform in Taiwan. Hall’s characterization of the new workplace and social environment as a “Brave New World” was adopted in a PowerPoint review of Taiwan’s education goals presented by education professor Wang Hui-lan to an international conference on Globalization and Education Reform at Seoul National University in 2005.

Wang juxtaposes the quoted phrase with a Government Information Office (GIO) image of gleeful children supporting a globe—an image originally used to portray Taiwan favorably to the world in the aftermath of the 2003 SARS scare. Its use in this instance is unobjectionable insofar as it accords entirely with the impression that the government of Taiwan seeks to convey to the world. Hall’s description of neoliberal economic life, which is drawn from the short-lived but influential anti-Thatcher journal, Marxism Today, follows as part of Professor Wang’s presentation:

A shift of the new information technologies; more flexible, decentralised forms of labour processes and work organisation; decline of the old manufacturing base and the growth of the “sunrise” computer-based industries; the hiving-off or contracting-out of functions and services; a greater emphasis on choice and