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From Enviable Other to One of Us?:
Class, Militarized Masculinity and Citizenship among Korean Study Abroad Men

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Abstract

Drawing on in-depth interviews, this paper shows how study abroad men with upper-class backgrounds manage their image as enviable others, particularly in the context of their military experiences and understanding of military service. They view military service as a useful way to secure militarized masculine citizenship and launder their contaminated image as enviable others in order to live and work in South Korea. This understanding of military service as an individualized benefit deviates from the dominant construction of military service as a patriotic duty expected of all male citizens; at the same time, the meanings and values study abroad men attach to militarized masculine citizenship reveal the powerful workings of the triangular relationship between men, military service, and citizenship in Korea. The findings here complicate the commonly understood association between Korean men, military service, and citizenship, revealing the highly classed as well as gendered nature of military service and the meanings/values of militarized masculine citizenship. Furthermore, the role of American education and English skills within the military and beyond also reveals the ongoing effects of US imperialism and the American military presence in Korea.

Keywords: citizenship, masculinity, class, study abroad, military service

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Introduction

Hojin, who had just been released from his military service and was planning to return to his college in the US, told me a story that he had heard from his two supervisors in the military.[1] One, a commissioned officer, was happy to have Hojin in his personnel administration unit because he assumed that Hojin, as a student at an American college, would be smart and capable. However, the other supervisor, a non-commissioned officer, was worried that Hojin would be a poor soldier because he was too Americanized (*migukmul-eul meogeoseo*–literally meaning 'drank American water'). These conflicting images of Hojin highlight the contradictory ways in which *study abroad men* are viewed in the military (and in Korean society, generally). Namely, study abroad men are *enviable others* stereotyped as globalized elites who attend nice schools in the US and are proficient in English. At the same time, they are viewed with suspicion as young people who are likely selfish and stubborn. I use the term "study abroad men," a direct translation of the Korean term "*yuhaksaeng namseong*," in order to capture the cultural meanings attached to it.

This paper explores the military experiences of Korean study abroad men, and the ways in which they give meaning to their military service in South Korea (hereafter Korea), particularly in light of the contradictory images described above. The interview data come from two years of fieldwork in Korea (2011–2013), during which I interviewed sixty study abroad men who had completed or were in the midst of their military service with different assignments in various regions of Korea.[2] This article aims to make two interventions in our understanding of the relationship between masculinity, military service, and citizenship. First, this study shows that study abroad men rationalize military service as an individualized benefit to be simultaneously global and national, such as by increasing one's attractiveness to an employer, sharing the broader neoliberal logic of individual freedom and responsibility with other young Koreans of their

1. Hojin (pseudonym), interviewed by the author, Seoul, November 4, 2012.
2. A separate table with basic demographic information is provided at the end of the paper.

generation (Abelmann et al. 2009). Doing so, they are not opposed to nationalist constructions equating Korean manhood, military service, and citizenship, rather they are comfortable using those constructions in service of their individual interests. Second, this study reveals how the rhetoric of equality in conscription and becoming "one of us" through military service is belied by the highly *classed* nature of military service and the meanings/values attached to militarized citizenship. In addition, it also aims to discuss the impact of the commonly accepted equation of masculinity, military service, and citizenship on hierarchically gendered citizenship in Korea.

Citizenship, Military Service, and Masculinity

The close relationship between citizenship, military service, and masculinity in modern nation-states has been well documented, considering that conscription has institutionalized military service as a core duty of male citizens (Dudink et al. 2007; Feinman 2000; Sasson-Levy 2002, 2003, and 2007; Snyder 2003; Yuval-Davis 1997).[3] There have certainly been changes in the close relationship between citizenship, military service, and masculinity in many industrialized countries with the end of conscription and the demobilization of mass armies following the end of Cold War, the shift towards technology-intensive professional armies, and the effects of neoliberalization (E. Cohen 2001; Cowen 2006; Eichler 2014; Haltiner 1998; S. Cohen 1995). Yet the triangular relationship has remained strong in societies that have retained conscription, including Korea. The ways in which study abroad men assign meaning to their militarized citizenship in Korea echo the broader neoliberal logics of individual calculation and the marketization of citizenship (Choi 2016; Choi and Kim 2017; N. Kim 2013; Ong 1999). Military service is, at the same time, still considered a core institution for the production of normative male citizens in Korea. It is particularly in this context that study abroad men understand military

3. A famous exception to male-only conscription is the case of Israel. Even in Israel, military service has been understood to be masculine. See Sasson-Levy (2002, 2003, and 2007).

service for individualized benefits.

This paper complicates the common equation of men, military service, and citizenship, giving particular attention to class. Scholars in the critical studies of men and masculinity have analyzed masculinity not as a coherent whole, which is fixed and stable, but rather as "configurations of practices" (Connell [1995] 2005) that allow for change and negotiation. In the context of the military, multiple and hierarchical masculinities are possible depending on the job (e.g. rank-and-file soldiers, technical specialists, combat soldiers, administrative workers, etc.) (Barrett 1996; Sasson-Levy 2002); and across the military experiences of marginalized groups, including immigrants, racial minorities, and working class people (Gill 1997; Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 2003; Sasson-Levy 2003). These studies have revealed that the relationship between masculinity, military service, and citizenship is filled with tension and contradiction, particularly from the perspectives of the marginalized. This article expands the scholarship by analyzing how upper- and upper-middle class study abroad men, considered to be globalized elites, must also navigate this tension in their engagement with militarized masculinity in light of their image as enviable others.

Study Abroad Men as Enviable Others

In order to understand the image of study abroad students (*yuhaksaeng*) as enviable others, the meaning and value of education abroad in Korea needs to be considered. Since the late 19th and early 20th centuries, education abroad has served as a mechanism for achieving modernity, enlightenment, and class mobility for elite Koreans. During Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945), elite Koreans migrated to Japan to study, and many returned to Korea and became leading intellectuals, government officials, and reformers (Robinson 2007). In the postwar period, as a US imperial presence replaced Japanese colonial rule, the United States has become a primary study abroad destination for South Korean elites. The South Korean government considered student returnees from the United States an important source of talent for modern nation-building and development, and degrees from US

institutions have been highly valued in Korea (Yoon 1992). In this historical context, "the value of foreign training and degrees is a veritable sine qua non of South Korean modernity and development narratives" (Lo et al. 2015, 8).

A state-led globalization policy and the neoliberalization of education that started in the 1990s fueled an explosion in the popularity of study abroad programs across a wide spectrum of Koreans (Lo et al. 2015). Pre-college education abroad took its place in an already extremely stratified private after-school education market intended to make children competitive global citizens with a mastery of English (Ihm and Choi 2015; Kang and Abelmann 2011; Park 2009). While the desire to study abroad is widespread, not everybody can afford to do so; attending boarding schools in the United States or international schools elsewhere and studying in American universities, as my informants did, is not easily affordable. Thus, studying abroad remains a class marker as well as a strategy to secure skills for educational and professional success. In this sense, study abroad students can be considered *enviable* beings.

While being envied, study abroad men are simultaneously viewed with suspicion. Those returning from studying abroad were expected to contribute to the nation's development with the knowledge and experience they gained abroad, but they were viewed more critically as individuals who left the country for their own self-interest (Yoon 1992; N. Kim 2008). While recognized as globalized elites, their proper Koreanness can be called into question. Often, returnees are stereotyped as arrogant, selfish, and pretentious snobs (Lo and Kim 2015, 175). These conflicting images of study abroad students reflect the common expectation that study abroad students would nurture "democratic communication" skills with an emphasis on open debate and individuals' freedom to speak up, which contrasts with more standardized and discipline-centered education in Korea (Kang and Abelmann 2011). The ambivalent images of study abroad students also reflect Koreans' broader conception of the United States. According to Abelmann and Lie (1995, 62), the South Korean understanding of the United States has been, "at once an object of material longing and materialistic scorn, a heroic savior and a reactionary intruder. Material desire and moral approbation, longing and disdain, have been twin

responses to many of the trappings of American culture." To highlight the ambivalence and contradictory images associated with study abroad students in Korea, I refer to them as enviable others.

I use the phrase *enviable others* to refer to the stereotyped images of study abroad students in general. I do not mean to imply that enviable others necessarily reflect the realities of all study abroad students. Study abroad students are anything but homogenous. Study abroad men I interviewed exhibited diverse educational trajectories: some began at boarding schools in the US while others went to international schools elsewhere while living with one or both parent(s); some went to public schools in North America enabled by their parents' business immigration, often times primarily for their children's educational opportunities. While my informants broadly shared upper-class backgrounds and a US college education, others have examined study abroad students from lower-middle class backgrounds with different education trajectories, including public schools in Singapore or community colleges in the US (Choi and Chung 2018; J. Kim 2010). In addition, class backgrounds can change over the course of one's life, as was the case with one of my informants who described his father's business failure in Korea, which occurred during the son's college years in the United States. Given the different trajectories of study abroad students, it is possible that their sense of belonging to Korea and familiarity with Korean culture vary based on their experiences.

Furthermore, education abroad does not automatically lead students to become cultural "others." As Abelmann's (2009) analysis in *The Intimate University* aptly shows, the American university that the Korean students experienced was a racialized one featuring an inherent tension between multicultural diversity and colorblindness. Like Korean-American students who experienced ethnic segregation at an American college (Abelmann 2009), Korean study abroad students often talked about their segregated college life and social circles limited to other Korean study abroad students. In addition, there were the relatively large number of Korean students on American campuses. Indeed, in the 2011–2012 academic year, there were 72,295 South Korean students enrolled in American colleges, making South Korea the third largest source of international students at American

colleges.[4] Even on American campuses, it was still possible (and more likely) for study abroad students to interact mainly with Korean peers and familiarize themselves with Korean culture. Thus, my analysis of study abroad students as enviable others speaks more of the general image, rather than the heterogeneous realities of study abroad students.

With the experience of segregated marginalization in American colleges, as well as the difficulties facing foreigners seeking employment in the US, study abroad men came to value the option of returning to Korea after graduation, where they expected to be recognized as globalized elites. To that end, study abroad men found it necessary to launder their contaminated images as enviable others in order to be recognized as both properly Korean and global. To do this, these students understood their military service in Korea as a way to secure full cultural citizenship as Korean men.

Militarized Masculine Citizenship in Korea

As male-only conscription has been implemented and legitimized for more than half a century in the context of military tension with North Korea, conscription has been recognized as a rite of passage for Korean men on the way to full citizenship (Kwon 2001; Moon 2002a, 2005b). As of 2021, every able-bodied man between the ages of 19 and 35 is required to serve eighteen to twenty-one months of active military duty, or up to thirty-six months if they choose alternative routes.[5] In order to legitimize the connections between military service, hegemonic masculinity, and citizenship in Korea, the state made great efforts to construct the ideology of military service as representing a sacred duty of male citizens and to establish military service as both precondition and preparation for employment, another core aspect of hegemonic masculinity (Moon 2002a). In particular, this ideological

4. OpenDoors, accessed Decmber 2, 2021, https://opendoorsdata.org/.
5. Military Manpower Administration (Byeongmucheong; MMA), accessed November 30, 2021, www.mma.go.kr.

construction of military service as a patriotic duty of male citizens has been made through formal education with an androcentric nationalist historiography. Understanding the Korean history as a continuous cycle of foreign invasion and patriotic struggle by male warriors, male soldiering became the legitimate basis of full citizenship (Moon 1998; Jager 2002). Ongoing confrontations with North Korea added more weight to this militant nationalist historiography used to legitimize male conscription. Militarized masculinity came to be seen as hegemonic normative masculinity, which in turn established the traits necessary to become a disciplined worker-citizen in contemporary Korea (Moon 2005b). Scholars have also noted that normalization of militarized masculinity was accompanied by a marginalizing and distorting of the masculinity of men who cannot/do not serve, as well as the femininity of women (Moon 1998, 2002a, 2005a and 2005b; Kwon 2005; Lee 2005).

In this particular Korean context, I argue that study abroad men can earn full cultural citizenship through their military service, which I call "militarized masculine citizenship." I use the term "militarized masculine citizenship" to capture the deep connection between military service, masculinity, and full citizenship in Korea. Military service is not just a legal obligation imposed on male citizens, but it has become a way to have a formal certificate as "One of Us" with militarized masculinity; it is a recognition of the full legal and cultural belonging as proper Korean men. By securing militarized masculine citizenship, study abroad men do not necessarily genuinely embrace militarized masculinity or feel their actual sense of full belonging as Korean men. By serving in the military, however, they can be recognized in the broader Korean society as Korean men who have the *proper* manly traits associated with hegemonic masculinity.

My analysis of militarized masculine citizenship—full cultural citizenship conditioned upon military service—draws on discussions from cultural citizenship in anthropology. According to Rosaldo (1994, 57) in his work on Latinos in the United States, cultural citizenship refers to "the right to be different…without compromising one's right to belong." Ong (1996, 738) critiques Rosaldo's view of cultural citizenship as a unilateral construction by state power and the demand of the disadvantaged for full

citizenship. Rather, Ong portrays cultural citizenship as "a dual process of self-making and being-made" within shifting webs of power. In the context of the Singaporean National Service (NS), Tan (2012) observes that cultural citizenship is a passive negotiation in which the contours of cultural citizenship are set by the state and gay soldiers react only when those contours work against their interests. In this paper, I also analyze the cultural citizenship study abroad men secure through military service—militarized masculine citizenship—as a dual process of subjectification. Compared to the gay soldiers in the Singaporean NS in Tan's analysis, study abroad men seem to have more maneuvering room in their negotiations. They cannot, of course, legally evade their military duty, and they also value the role of militarized masculine citizenship in making them proper Korean men. However, they sometimes willingly express their differences as globalized elites, while at other times they make careful efforts to be the same as other recruits. While they do not necessarily share the ideological construction of military service as a sacred patriotic duty of male citizens and embrace militarized masculinity, they do value having militarized masculine citizenship for the individualized benefits it provides. The men I interviewed discussed the value of military service in various spheres of life, including peer and family recognition and their work life in Korea.

In my analysis of militarized masculine citizenship, I pay particular attention to class, considering how it can be easily elided in dominant discourses surrounding conscription, which emphasize the principle of equality in Korea. Universal male conscription in South Korea has been understood and legitimized as a shared and homogenizing experience of all male citizens regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds (Moon 2005a, 2005b; Kwon 2001; Lie 1998). However, given not all men perform the same military duty or share the same military experience, their socioeconomic backgrounds matter. With the democratization of South Korea, there have been numerous scandals involving military evasion by the sons of wealthy and powerful families, scandals that have been strongly criticized by the public; the rhetoric of equality has been emphasized more than ever in military recruitment to legitimize conscription (Choi and Kim 2017; Moon 2005a). This study aims to show how class continues to matter in shaping

the experiences of men both during and after their military service. The stories of study abroad men from upper- and upper-middle class families reveal how both their lives in the military and the meanings/values attached to military experience are classed.

In addition, analyzing how study abroad men feel about male-only conscription and what they perceive as benefits of military service, which their female counterparts lack, this study reveals important understandings and assumptions about gender in Korea. It has been noted that certain conceptions of militarized masculinity entail a corresponding femininity, revealing the gendered nature of citizenship (Gutmann 1997; Enloe 2000; Moon 2005a; Yuval-Davis 1997). Study abroad men expressed few complaints about male-only conscription even though they had to sacrifice precious time (approximately two years) in their 20s, during which they were not well compensated while their female counterparts were able to continue their education and advance in their careers. Their relatively benign response to male-only conscription, I suggest, can be understood as their class-based confidence in their ability to deploy militarized masculine citizenship for their own benefits as globalized elites and fully Korean men. Their understanding of male-only conscription also implies a hierarchical view of femininity as inferior for both the military and corporate spheres. Thus, this study will deepen our understanding of the cultural politics of gender by looking at the relationship between militarized masculinity and a corresponding femininity, which reveals and reproduces hierarchically gendered citizenship in Korea.

In the sections below, I draw on my interviews to show how study abroad men, who are viewed as enviable others, become *one of us* through their military service. Analyzing how study abroad recruits view and deal with militarized masculinity for their own survival and adjustment, and how they appreciate militarized masculine citizenship for its concrete practical benefits, I argue that the militarized masculine citizenship study abroad men secure and value is both classed and gendered.

Military Experience: From Enviable Other to *One of Us*

Being Enviable Other: The Contradictory Images and Treatment of Study Abroad Students

The double-sided nature of study abroad recruits leads to different treatment in the military. On the one hand, their ability to adjust to military life is questioned because they are seen as problematically "global" and sheltered—that is, lacking the proper comportment required by a hierarchical organization and the rigors of military life. On the other hand, their foreign language abilities, particularly English, and their experiences overseas are often positively recognized and rewarded in the military. In this section, I will show how the double-sided image of study abroad recruits affects their military experiences, sometimes leading to tension and conflict with other soldiers. I highlight that the tension and conflict are rooted in a class-based understanding of global education, which belies the myth of equality among all conscripts.

1) Recognition of Globalized Elites at the Institutional Level

The image of study abroad men as global elites is often recognized and rewarded at the institutional level of the military. Study abroad men tend to have more options to complete their military duty. If they have permanent residency overseas or lived abroad for more than five years with parents who are registered as overseas Koreans, they have the option to serve on a special track for transnational recruits (*yeongjugwon byeongsa*). This particular track was institutionalized in 2004 at the urging of the Korean-American community.[6] It should be understood in the context of the increased cross-border mobility of Koreans and a public demand for equality in military service that has intensified since democratization. Faced with numerous scandals involving military evasion using permanent residency overseas or foreign citizenship by upper-class Koreans, the state sought to preserve the

6. MMA, accessed November 24, 2021, www.mma.go.kr.

legitimacy of conscription as a universal obligation for "all" male citizens (Choi and Kim 2017). Indeed, the Military Service Law was amended in 2005 and 2010, replacing a service exemption with a postponement until the age of 37 for overseas residents. Furthermore, military service should be completed if they resided in Korea for more than six months of the year or worked for profit in Korea before the age of 37. These legal changes were intended to prevent military evasion by *fake* emigrants who used their legal status overseas to evade military service while they and their family members primarily resided in Korea. On the other hand, the track for transnational recruits was aimed to support *voluntary* military service of *genuine* emigrants. The military service of transnational recruits has been promoted by the state as an exemplary contribution to the nation, a form of "noblesse oblige" (Choi 2016). As benefits of their military service, transnational recruits were given a week-long training program specifically designed for them, free flights and longer vacations to visit home abroad, and a choice of where to serve. The privilege of choosing one's service location was discontinued in 2016, though at the time of interviews in 2011–2013, transnational recruits usually served in the greater metropolitan area of Seoul. In reality, the boundary between *fake* and *genuine* emigrants has been blurred, which lead many transnational recruits to military service. By serving in the military, they want to navigate the option to work and live in Korea within their transnational life trajectory (Choi 2016).

While some served as transnational recruits, the majority of study abroad men were not eligible for the special track, given their lack of permanent residency and the fact that their parents lived in Korea. For those not qualified for the special track, one of the most popular options for military service was the Korean Augmentation to the US Army (KATUSA) program, because it allowed less rigorous military service and included frequent weekend outings and the opportunity to consistently utilize and improve their English skills. However, because KATUSA assignments are based on luck, education abroad is not particularly recognized or rewarded in the process. Study abroad men can also apply for jobs that utilize their English skills for interpretation, and these postings are often located in elite administrative units. Even if study abroad men enter the military on a

regular track, they are likely to be assigned to office jobs in elite administrative units because they are considered elites capable of administrative work, as are other recruits attending elite universities in Korea.[7] In addition, they are sometimes asked to translate documents and books from English to Korean, and to participate in joint South Korea-US military training exercises, largely due to their education abroad and English skills.

2) *Enviable Others* in the Military

The image of study abroad men as global elites can cause tension with other (particularly senior) soldiers who are jealous of this preferential treatment. The following story by Sanghyun is a case in point.

> My appointment was packaging parachutes, which made other people in the unit wonder how such a man [who went to school in the US] came to this unit. Indeed, officers had me translate some documents and training books written in English into Korean. As officers ordered me to translate, I had to do it, which made other senior soldiers jealous of me. They complained that I was not doing what I was supposed to do. Indeed, though my appointment was as a soldier packaging parachutes, I spent significant time on administrative work, translation, and I was also sent out for detached service interpreting during the joint Korea-US military exercises. I did various things in the military because I was a study abroad student, which other soldiers hated.[8]

Sanghyun's story shows how study abroad men's privileged position can lead to tension with other soldiers. I interpret the grievances of senior soldiers against Sanghyun as arising not just from the fact that he translated instead of packing parachutes but because this translation work, made possible by his study abroad experience, is associated with class privilege. Within the

7. Not all study abroad men were assigned to office jobs and elite administrative units. I met some who served in forward units and in the combat branch.
8. Sanghyun (pseudonym), interviewed by the author, Seoul, July 11, 2012.

military, where every conscript is ostensibly equal except for earned differences in rank, this latent difference associated with class threatens to puncture the myth of equality, which is essential to legitimizing universal male conscription in Korea (Moon 2005a; Choi and Kim 2017).

Chulgi's story also highlights how the image of study abroad recruits as global elites simultaneously connotes class-based privilege. It also reveals how their life abroad and classed background work together to call into question their militarized masculinity and the ability to successfully adjust to military life. During his military service, Chulgi was a runner in an artillery unit near the demilitarized zone between the two Koreas, unlike many other study abroad recruits who work in military offices or are recruited for interpretation jobs. As the only one in his camp with study abroad experience, he had to deal with the image of the enviable other when he first arrived. As he put it:

> When I first went to the camp, senior soldiers teased me for being a study abroad student and for my parents having a home in Seoul. They assumed that I had grown up without any hardship. Ok, I admit that I went to boarding schools in the US and enjoyed a privileged life. But they don't need to take so much joy in watching me suffer. Once I was part of the dining hall team and the sink was clogged. Since I was a private soldier (the lowest level), I had to reach into the drainage with my bare hands. I did what I had to do even without a stiff look, and do you know what the other soldiers asked me? "You haven't done this kind of dirty work in Washington [DC], have you?" It just pissed me off.[9]

I suggest that this comment—"You haven't done this kind of dirty work in Washington [DC], have you?" —captures the image of study abroad recruits as enviable others, where the stereotypes of being global and upper class intertwine. From the perspectives of other soldiers, someone who studies in Washington, DC, is assumed to have an affluent family background and be unsuited to "dirty work" in the military. The image of global elites may bring better job assignments and opportunities in the military, but on the flip side,

9. Chulgi (pseudonym), interviewed by the author, Seoul, June 18, 2013.

being others calls into question their aptitude for military service. Chulgi's uncomfortable response to this marked status suggests that this identity is something study abroad men try to eliminate in the supposedly egalitarian setting of military. In the next section, I will analyze how study abroad recruits try to become *one of us* instead of enviable others.

Becoming One of Us *in the Military?: Strategies to Cope with Militarized Masculinity*

Recognizing the double-sided nature of their image, study abroad recruits often try to become *one of us* in the military by strategically utilizing and concealing their differences. I use the phrase "one of us" to emphasize how soldiers in the military—regardless of their background—have to assimilate to some extent in order to survive, and how the completion of military service provides full membership as "one of the Korean men." I do not suggest that they do, in fact, become homogenized. Given the military hierarchy, junior soldiers, especially privates, face pressure to comply. Though all recruits need a period of adjustment to military life, study abroad recruits encounter a distinctive layer of adjustment associated with their image as enviable other. In a military context where egalitarianism is emphasized, save for hierarchical differences in rank, junior soldiers should be lower status than senior soldiers; by revealing higher-class backgrounds or any differences associated with affluence, junior soldiers can disrupt egalitarianism in the hierarchical structure of the military.

In order to transcend the image of enviable other and become *one of us*, study abroad recruits employed various strategies. The most common was to cover up their classed differences. For example, Chulgi kept the cost of his university tuition a secret. He said:

> When a senior soldier asked me about the tuition for my American university, I instinctively felt that I should not tell him. So I told him a considerably reduced amount (approximately $10,000). Still, he and the other soldiers were very surprised at the *high* amount! When they asked me what kind of car my parents drove, I described my mother's car, which

> is an older model compared to my father's. After that, when my parents visited on the weekend, I asked them to drive my mother's car.[10]

However, efforts to become *one of us*, I suggest, are not intended for their own sake. Study abroad recruits tried to cover up their differences *when necessary* in order to survive in the military—by avoiding, for example, the unnecessary nagging of senior soldiers and by socializing well with other soldiers. This tendency is well reflected in Chulgi's experiences as he was promoted from private to corporal. Chulgi, who tried to hide his relative class privileges at the beginning of his service, added that he no longer had to do so when he became a corporal, because those below him in rank could not nag him for his background. Anthony, another study abroad recruit, also hid his discomfort over military discipline when he was a junior soldier by just letting it go; as he became a senior soldier, he had relative freedom to avoid disciplining his junior soldiers, which could reveal his differences to other soldiers. Thus, I interpret the efforts of study abroad recruits to conceal their differences, particularly at the beginning of their military service, as a survival strategy. In other words, as Anthony put it, they made efforts to become *one of us*—concealing classed differences and discomfort over military discipline - in order to ensure their survival and wellbeing.

However, study abroad recruits sometimes utilize their differences in order to improve their situation in the military. It was common to hear that the same study abroad recruits who tried to hide their classed differences also utilized their English skills (also a class marker) to create better relationships with other solders. Some of them helped other soldiers study English, even leading study groups in the barracks. Thus, depending on the circumstances and their own calculations, study abroad recruits chose to either conceal or utilize these differences. Sangjin, who had permanent residency in Canada, even utilized the stereotype of enviable other to pursue an easier military life. As he put it:

> There is a tendency to consider a life abroad as the privilege of affluent

10. Chulgi (pseudonym), interviewed by the author, Seoul, June 18, 2013.

> families. To be honest, I exploited that stereotype. If people think that you are from a rich family, they will not bother you much. Because people already thought that way, I did nothing to disabuse them of that notion. In addition, because people thought that I would be somewhat different in terms of language and mindset due to my upbringing abroad, I also made use of it to make my life in the military more comfortable.[11]

Sangjin was unusual in that he took advantage of the image of enviable other in order to make life in the military more comfortable, rather than to better fit in as *one of us*. His use of the stereotype was likely possible because he was a *transnational recruit* with permanent residency in Canada. The official recognition of *genuine emigrants* as transnational recruits made people potentially more understanding of his personal differences. Sangjin's status as a transnational recruit also contributed to his assignment to one of the elite military institutions in Seoul, where he was surrounded by soldiers with less diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Though unusual, along with other aforementioned cases, Sangjin's story reveals that study abroad recruits employ various strategies to balance their image of enviable other and militarized masculinity in order to successfully complete their military service.

Both Sangjin's indifference at becoming *one of us* and Anthony's discomfort with military discipline show us that efforts to successfully complete military service do not necessarily entail a wholehearted embrace of militarized masculinity. Rather, there are varying responses towards militarized masculinity, including Sangjin's indifference to and Anthony's discomfort with it. The question then becomes: When study abroad recruits do not necessarily celebrate or appreciate militarized masculinity, how do they make sense of their military service? What do they gain from spending two years of their life in the military after their education abroad? In the next section, I try to shed light on these questions by exploring the meanings that study abroad recruits attribute to their military service.

11. Sangjin (pseudonym), interviewed by the author, Seoul, November 12, 2012.

The Value of Militarized Masculine Citizenship

In this section, I show how study abroad men appreciate militarized masculine citizenship for the possible benefits it promises. In contrast with the hegemonic rhetoric of military service as a patriotic duty of all male citizens, the study abroad men's understanding of militarized masculine citizenship is more instrumental and directed at their own personal gain. While I do recognize that militarized masculine citizenship matters in various spheres of life, I mainly focus on the value of militarized masculine citizenship in the context of working in Korea. As young men mostly in their 20s and enrolled in or graduated from college, study abroad men explained the benefits of military service primarily in relation to work opportunities in Korea.

Even though Sangjin was indifferent to militarized masculinity and even tried to cynically utilize his image as enviable other to make his life in the military easier, he still appreciated the militarized masculine citizenship. Besides achieving the legal right to work and live in Korea, Sangjin appreciated militarized masculine citizenship as an asset for securing a job in Korea following a transnational trajectory that began at the age of three. As he put it:

> [During job interviews] I often received the same question of why I wanted to work in Korea even though I have permanent residency in Canada. Answering that I wanted to contribute to Korea through my overseas experience, I told them that was the same reason why I had chosen to serve in the military. The seniors of the company who interviewed me really liked that answer.[12]

The senior management's response to Sangjin's answer reveals how study abroad men are expected to relate to Korea. Namely, they are expected to contribute to Korea through their global experiences, which requires and includes the completion of military service. Their individualized calculation

12. Sangjin (pseudonym), interviewed by the author, Seoul, November 12, 2012.

that militarized masculine citizenship would improve their chances in Korea should be hidden; instead, they benefitted by emphasizing their willingness to contribute to Korea, as evidenced by their completion of military service. Sangjin's interview tactic of framing his military service and job search in Korea as patriotic projects operates within the nationalist discourse of Korean masculinity, one in which militarized masculinity becomes a core aspect legitimizing one's citizenship (Moon 1998; Jager 2002).

Militarized masculine citizenship is also beneficial for securing jobs in Korea because it undermines the stereotype that study abroad students are unable to adjust to corporate culture. Yoosung, who was interviewing for jobs in Korea, also received many questions about his military service. As he put it, "People have certain stereotypes about study abroad students as selfish, impolite, and unruly. But completing military service has helped me to dispel these stereotypes."[13] Completing military service and being certified as *one of us*, thus demonstrating an ability to adjust to a hierarchical organization's culture, attenuates the stereotype of study abroad men as others.

The importance of militarized masculine citizenship in study abroad men's employment suggests that militarized masculinity is widely understood to be an asset to work in Korean companies. Indeed, study abroad men shared stories of how their military experience helped them to adjust to working in Korean companies. The traits of militarized masculinity they often mentioned as useful for work life included such things as proper use of the honorific form of language, politeness to superiors and obeying orders, as well as cooperation, patience, and the confidence to do anything difficult. For example, Sangjin even asserted that he would have quit his job already if he had not served in the military. Without his military experience, he said he would have found the hierarchical work culture and overtime without pay to be intolerable. Chulgi also declared that learning to properly interact with seniors, especially using the honorific form of language, was useful during his summer internship in Korea. Chulgi mentioned a Korean-American intern without military experience in his company, noting that,

13. Yoosung (pseudonym), interviewed by the author, Seoul, October 7, 2012.

"When he spoke with seniors, he often put his hands in his pockets. I told him that he should take them out."[14] Responding to the stereotyped image of enviable others, Chulgi tried to distance himself from the stereotype and self-identify as a proper Korean man who served in the military and understood how to work in a hierarchical corporate culture.

For many study abroad men, it was in Korea that they were able to be recognized as globalized elites, indexed by their English fluency and American college education. In order to be recognized as globalized elites (rather than problematically global), study abroad men also need to demonstrate full national belonging and obtain recognition of their *proper Koreanness*, a process in which militarized masculine citizenship is a valuable asset.

Classed and Gendered Understanding of Male Conscription

This section examines how study abroad men make sense of male-only conscription. What do Korean study abroad men think about women who are not required to fulfill the same duty? Among the sixty interviewees, no one raised the issue of military conscription as a male-only endeavor until I brought it up, suggesting conscription has been naturalized as masculine. They did not have many complaints about the fact that women were not required to serve in the military.

Some informants considered male-only conscription to be fair, as women possess different physical strengths and have differing responsibilities later in life, such as pregnancy and mothering. Rather than the need to share the burden of military service with women, my informants talked about the need for women to better recognize and understand the men's military experiences. These responses show that some study abroad men are oblivious to the male-only nature of conscription based on their stereotypical understanding of sexed bodies and fixed gender roles in which women are expected to remain primarily within the domestic sphere.

14. Chulgi (pseudonym), interviewed by the author, Seoul, June 18, 2013.

Male-only conscription was also rationalized based on the benefits of militarized masculine citizenship that did not apply to women. According to Yoosung:

> Regardless of how long you've studied abroad, if you are Korean, then you tend to get a job in Korea. Therefore, I think that the military service is good way to adjust to the Korean work life.

When I asked Yoosung whether female study abroad students needed the same period of adjustment, he replied:

> Yes, I've witnessed some cases of female study abroad students entering big Korean conglomerates and having a hard time adjusting to its work culture. Female study abroad students tend to transfer jobs more. They tend to end up working in foreign-affiliated firms [rather than Korean companies]. Considering the difficult work culture in the big Korean companies, most female study abroad students I know got jobs in foreign-affiliated firms from the beginning.

Though I cannot use Yoosung's anecdotal account to make any claims about study abroad women, his story, as well as Sangin's, suggest that women (study abroad women in particular) lack the opportunity to learn from military service. Their celebration of militarized masculine citizenship as a way to secure jobs and to better adjust to big Korean companies shows "a convergence between the different elements of hegemonic masculinity" (Moon 2002a, 102). Study abroad men understand military service as an important precondition and preparation for employment, one not available to their female counterparts. Here, male-only conscription is legitimized by, and in turn reinforces, the gendered image of the masculine provider.

I also suggest that their understanding of male-only conscription as a relatively fair system is based on their particular class and educational backgrounds. If the hostile response to women in the extra-point system controversy was rooted in the class-based inequality of conscription and a sense of deprivation that men felt in not being duly recognized or compensated for their military service (Moon 2002b), I suggest that study

abroad men's relatively benign response to male-only conscription stems from a recognition of their own class-based privilege and benefits associated with military service.[15] That is, they recognized the preferential treatment and opportunities that they received in the military in part due to their study abroad experience and English language skills. They also felt relatively confident that they could utilize their militarized masculine citizenship to better their own futures in Korea. Their classed privilege during and after military service explains why study abroad men value their militarized masculine citizenship in Korea.

Conclusion

This article has analyzed how study abroad men deal with their image as *enviable others*, particularly in their military experiences and how they make meaning of their military service. The stories of study abroad men show how study abroad recruits view and deal with militarized masculinity for their own survival and adjustment, and how they appreciate militarized masculine citizenship for the concrete benefits it provides. The emphasis on individualized benefits in understanding military service is shared by the general Korean public, particularly the younger generations. According to a 2021 survey by Hankook Research of 1,000 adults in Korea, 66.0 percent of the general respondents and 82.0 percent of those in their 20s agreed that military service is a unilateral demand of individual sacrifice by the state, while the majority of respondents also agreed that military service is a due responsibility of citizens (83%) and is conducive to social life (74%). In addition, 82 percent of respondents agreed with the need for appropriate material rewards for military service.[16] Sharing the ambivalent response to military service identified by the survey, study abroad men's understanding

15. The military service extra-point system granted additional points for former conscripts in certain public employment tests. The system was ruled unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court in 1999, which brought about a furious public debate.
16. Hankook Research, accessed December 2, 2021, https://hrcopinion.co.kr/archives/18805.

of military service deviates from the dominant construction of military service as a patriotic national duty of male citizens, but at the same time, the meanings and values study abroad men attach to militarized masculine citizenship reveal the powerful workings of the triangular relationship between men, military service, and citizenship in Korea.

This study also points to a particular layer of meaning attached to military service among study abroad recruits: they understood military service as a useful way to launder their contaminated image as enviable others. By analyzing relatively benign response to male-only conscription and their appreciation of militarized masculine citizenship as an employment asset, I argue that the militarized masculine citizenship that study abroad men secure and appreciate is both classed and gendered. The way in which study abroad men value militarized masculine citizenship reveals their classed confidence in their ability to secure employment because of their education abroad, and operates within a gendered hierarchy in Korea. The findings of this research complicate the commonly accepted equation of Korean men, military service, and citizenship, revealing the highly classed nature of their military experience and the meanings/values of militarized masculine citizenship. It lifts the veil on the myth of equality, which legitimizes conscription as an equal duty of male citizens. Furthermore, the recognition of American education and English skills within the military and beyond reveals how US imperialism, and the American military presence in particular, continue to impact the military experiences and militarized masculine citizenship in Korea.

Table 1. Interviewees' Demographic Information

Name	Education	Military service
Hojin	High school education in the US, living with his aunt, a Korean American; finished sophomore year at an American college at the time of interview	Worked in unit personnel selection in Gyeonggi-do province; military service after sophomore year

Chulgi	Two years of elementary school in Canada, boarding schools in the US for his middle and high school education; finished sophomore year at an American college at the time of interview	Artilleryman in Gyeonggi-do province; military service after freshman year
Sanghyun	High school education in the US—one year in public school as an exchange student and two years in private school with home stay families; graduated from an American college	Soldier packing parachutes in an airborne special forces brigade in Incheon; military service after sophomore year
Yoosung	High school education in the US—one year in a public school as an exchange student and two years in a private school with home stay families; graduated from an American college	An air force officer in Wonju and Seoul; military service after college graduation
Sangjin	International schools in Dubai and Egypt following his father, an expatriate of a Korean conglomerate; public high school in Canada when his mother secured a business immigration visa; graduated from an American college	A transnational recruit in unit personnel selection, Seoul; military service after college graduation
Anthony	International schools in many countries following his mother, a diplomat; finished sophomore year in an American college at the time of interview	Soldier of logistic maintenance, but transferred to information operations due to educational background; in the middle of his military service in Gyeonggi-do province at the time of interview

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