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Revisiting Korean Family Planning (FP):

Population and the pre-1962 Context

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Abstract

South Korean family planning is often characterized in terms of a progressive narrative in which the Park Chung-hee state transformed rural life (1964–early 1980s) through the successful application of social science with the help of a series of international collaborators. Similar stories are sometimes told for Taiwan and other parts of East and Southeast Asia. This paper argues, however, that Korean concerns about population issues have a much longer history, with origins dating to the late 1930s. The subsequent uses of these concerns indicate the diverse ways in which Japanese imperial training and education were successfully adapted by Korean actors to fit emerging American modernization efforts in the 1960s.

Keywords: family planning, transwar, social science, rural health, empire

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East Asia and Demography

In recent years, the attention devoted to documenting population in East Asia has increased dramatically, possibly driven by corresponding interest in China's expanding population and economic trajectory (Bouk 2022; Ghosh 2020; Greenhalgh 2008; Lam 2011; Merchant 2017). Prior to this recent and more skeptical take, much of the literature on Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea assumed the form of a progressive narrative, one in which the post-1945 application of social science successfully achieved its ambitions (Ross 2017). According to this narrative, the Korean family planning program (FP) corresponded roughly with the Park Chung-hee presidency (1961–1979), even though the program's official markers (1964–early 1980s) exceed this periodization. Moreover, this program is often associated with a comparable period of rapid economic growth, one in which a post-Korean War nation transformed itself into an export-led economy, a set of developments taking place over roughly three to four decades.

The problems with this narrative are conspicuous, and feminist scholars in particular have pointed out the numerous issues with such a smooth, confident story, one which aligns itself conveniently with the broad contours of a modernist set of assumptions. First, the rural women who were among the primary targets of these campaigns appear largely invisible in this body of scholarship (Clarke 2008). Scholars such as Chikako Takeshita have brought this theme to the foreground by looking closely at the technology of the IUD (intra-uterine device), the Lippes' loop, and its harmful effects (Takeshita 2011). Others, such as Matthew Connelly, have examined the frame of the Cold War setting, noting that the populations under pressure, primarily those in African and Asian postcolonial nations, highlight the racialized uncertainties of a decolonizing world (Connelly 2008; Merchant 2021). In these terms, family planning tied the developmental ambitions of new nations to their former partner nations, and in particular, maintained their populations at levels *acceptable* to anxious social scientists, whether these individuals were from a Western background or from a variety of postcolonial settings (Bashford 2014).

This essay builds upon these recent historiographic trends, although

pursuing a different line of inquiry. For the South Korean case, specifically, the progressive narrative as constructed remains problematic for multiple reasons, in addition to those already named. Concerns about population hold a much longer periodization, predating not only the Park administration, but even the official origins of the ROK (Republic of Korea) state. In fact, many of the senior figures who dominated Korean family planning, including E-hyock Kwon (public health) and Hae-young Lee (sociology) of Seoul National University, began their education and training under Japanese colonialism, especially during the late 1930s and early 1940s (KOSSDA). To clarify, this argument does not seek to make a case for a broad *continuity*, or any similar claims dating to the colonial period. Nor does it provide new archival evidence, instead making a careful review of the historiography. At the same time, it is critical to recognize the wartime period (1937–1945) as one of great importance, holding formative potential for many of these Korean planners, bureaucrats, and social scientists (Homei and DiMoia 2021). The motivations underlying their training and thinking, in other words, was likely distinct from the types of motives later attributed to them by American and international planners: Korean elites were likely not thinking in terms of American modernization theory (T. Park 2001). To clarify, a broader set of population concerns holds a much longer history, even as South Korean family planning as such corresponds to the postwar.

To explain this last observation, the early 1960s program began at the national level with strong collaboration coming from American and international partners, and also with concurrent observation tours of neighboring programs already deemed a *success*. The program hosted at Taichung, Taiwan was one such case, and drew interest not only from Korean scholars, but also from a range of international partners. In turn, this East Asian model came with sponsorship from (American) university demographic centers, in this case, the University of Michigan. Scholars such as Ronald Freedman and Leslie Corsa worked closely with the Taiwan program, and if the ROC (Republic of China, Taiwan) government sought American assistance, in turn, participating American scholars received the opportunity to test their ideas within an existing developmental context. South Korea sought to establish the same kinds of new relationships for its

scholars, and as its program expanded from the mid-1960s, many of the most ambitious would go abroad to train at sites such as the University of Michigan and the University of North Carolina, the latter also the host institution for a major demography program, the Carolina Population Studies Center.[1]

With this style of funding deriving from international partners, close collaboration with American research centers, and the sponsorship of the Population Council, by the late 1960s, the Korean FP program soon became a *model*, comparable to that of its Taiwan neighbor.[2] Its approach and demographic results were mobilized by Korean scholars and their partners in other developing countries, especially as fertility continued to decline through the following decade of the 1970s. Regardless of whether there was a genuine relationship between fertility and economic growth, many at the time assumed that there was, adding further luster to the program's reputation. The assumptions underlying this perceived success collectively became part of the package: educating rural villagers, and bringing them appropriate reproductive technologies, transformed target areas into modern village communities, with lower fertility rates and accompanying forms of economic prosperity (as characterized by KAP, or Knowledge, Attitude, Practice surveys).[3] These surveys assumed that rural residents wanted to adopt and practice new ideas, but only if they first learned of them. The primary task was thus one of education, bringing knowledge, after which personal attitudes would change, with new behaviors to follow.

When this 1960s narrative is challenged, it tends to appeal to the post-Korean War period (1954–1960) for its short-term origins, pointing to several developments. First, the settling of substantial refugee populations

1. Hae-young Lee of Seoul National University spent time in North Carolina prior to the formation of the Carolina Population Studies Center. North Carolina's link to quantitative social science dates to the early 1920s and the formation of the SSRC (Social Science Research Council) under the leadership of sociologist Howard Odum.
2. South Korea began being cited as a *model* from about the late 1960s.
3. KAP: The social science language suggests that would-be "acceptors" would adopt technologies if they only first knew about them: thus, knowledge leads to a change in behavior.

centered around major urban areas (Seoul in particular) created a renewed sense of urgency with respect to population issues (Kwak 2018; D. Park 2016). Second, missionary figures such as George Worth led a renewed effort to bring reproductive education and public health to postwar Korea, and often linked up with Korean advocates for similar issues. This type of tentative network across lines led to the civil society basis for the FP program, even preceding the official national roll-out the following decade. Third, the language and vocabulary of many trained in the earlier period shifted to reflect strategic priorities. If issues remained comparable to the imperial context, with urban poverty and housing serving as key examples, Korean participants in the conversation were learning to speak a new dialect, a social science language more suited to working with international development (Mizuno et al. 2018). Specifically, an earlier language of *quality* and implicit eugenics employed during Taisho and Showa-era Japan in colonial Korea gave way to a newer set of assumptions concerning social science and economic improvement through smaller birth cohorts. If prewar health advocates spoke of *jojeol* (limitation, restriction), a reduction in numbers, their counterparts several decades later argued for a much more stringent form of reduction, albeit one without the same eugenic implications.

Pre-1945 Context

What this optimistic narrative neglects, however, is that Koreans were thinking about diverse means of promoting rural transformation and early forms of population control as far back as the early 1930s, albeit under different circumstances. When war with China broke out in 1931, Japan had to undertake economic and social policies to place its population on a wartime basis. Under these contingent conditions, many economic and social decisions took on new implications, with childbirth associated with nationalism, a pro-natal stance. That is, new children represented the future of the empire, and a renewal of the ongoing imperial project. For Korean scholars studying at this time, though only few in number, there was an opportunity to work with these pro-natal ideas, and to consider the ideas

concerning reproduction circulating in Japan. As Sabine Frühstück has documented in her seminal work *Colonizing Sex*, Japan already possessed birth control technologies, and engaged in heated debates concerning the ideas of advocate Margaret Sanger, who had visited in Japan 1922, sponsored by Japanese left-oriented publishing concerns (Frühstück 2003; S. Kim 2008; Yoo 2008; Choi 2012).

Given this formative context, and the intervening period of two decades (late 1930s–early 1960s), which we discuss later, why has there been an implicit assumption that Korean social scientists *naturally* wished to follow along with the plans of the Population Council? Certainly, Koreans began to form relationships with the Rockefeller Foundation in the early 1960s, earning funding, field research fellowships, and additional opportunities to collaborate. In turn, these relationships led to publications and numerous advanced degrees, meaning that a growing network was in place by the early to mid-1970s. At least nominally, Koreans associated with FP embraced the technocratic, modernist assumptions of the broader program coming from New York, a set of ideas that populations should be curbed in rural Asian villages. However, Korean motives for pursuing these aims did not necessarily overlap smoothly with American ideals. There only needed to be a degree of compatibility, a common reservoir of ideas and practices. In particular, many of the senior figures for Korean FP and rural sociology continued to embrace some form of the ideas they had encountered previously in their imperial education (Immerwahr 2015).

The older arguments concerning *continuity* hold little interest here, and instead, what motivates this discussion is establishing the loose boundaries for what made possible a productive conversation bridging the shared spaces of late imperial Japanese (1937–1945) and incoming American Empire (1948–1960). As early as the 1930s, Korean intellectuals were exposed to reproductive technologies, pro-natal ideas, with this formative context appearing in the midst of a brutal war with China. Some of these figures would push for teaching about reproduction as early as *haebang* (liberation, August 1945), while others appeared in the aftermath of the Korean War (1954–1960). In this second case, there was a great deal of writing about housing, the perceived problem of the urban poor, and handling the

problem of a wartime population, with refugees settling around certain cities (S. Kim 2016–2017). To read this activity exclusively in terms of the forthcoming FP program, however, is problematic, and at the very least, overly teleological.

The goal here consists of looking closely at some of the earliest discussions of reproductive issues in colonial Korea and to follow these threads to the *haebang* period and immediately following (so from the late 1930s–late 1950s). Who was teaching about regulating one's cycle, and under what conditions? How did the wartime emphasis on a pro-natal policy influence not just Japanese officials and settler groups, but also the colonies? What kinds of reproductive technologies were in use, whether at the testing stages, or in terms of actual distribution? In the aftermath of 1945, the emphasis on reproduction continued, but now accompanied by a related focus on the rural, especially in terms of public health and welfare. Many Korean departments of sociology made this development a point of emphasis, especially after the Korean War.[4] In the absence of television coverage, and lacking adequate roads, providing access to public health and related forms of pedagogy to rural Koreans posed a problem, just as it had for colonial authorities.

At this time, especially during the second half of the 1950s, it is curious that the activities of many Korean scholars have been read as looking *forward*, or anticipating the Park Chung-hee period. In fact, many of these Koreans, particularly those with ambitions, continued with their research essentially as before, although they learned a new set of vocabulary and formed new relationships critical for their networks. The central figures in family planning, Dr. Jae-mo Yang of Yonsei University and Dr. E-hyock Kwon of Seoul National University, provide representative examples of individuals spanning the colonial and the postcolonial, and again, the aim here lies in examining points of common origin which may have appealed to both Japanese and later international patrons.[5] This observation holds not

4. Hae-young Lee founded and ran many of the key population and demographic institutions.

5. JOICFP (Japan Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning) was one

only for postcolonial Korea, but also for sites in the region with a similar trajectory, including Taiwan, but also perhaps Thailand and neighboring parts of Southeast Asia.[6]

With this comparative approach, South Korea's program appears less exceptional, less *Western*, and fits among a set of comparable postcolonial nations. This move towards networking and village-based studies may have been interpreted by external partners as a wholescale adoption of their social science ideals, and indeed, it is easy to understand why this style of reading would find appeal at this time. However, the desire to know one's population statistically, to be able to document it, and perhaps even direct it, was hardly a new phenomenon for East Asia. Certainly, Republican China overhauled its statistical outlook, and Meiji Japan did so very explicitly, compiling a rich data set later used by SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) during the American occupation (Balfour et al. 1950; Taeuber 1958). Hwang Kyung Moon (2015) astutely titled his take on late-Joseon reforms *Rationalizing Korea,* reinforcing this theme of a sober, measured take by a society interested in adopting a particular style of reform. These ideas were not brand new, even if the language and packaging might have appeared so.

Colonial Period: Demography Emerges (1920s–1945)

The drive to read 1960s Korean ambitions concerning population as largely congruent with American and international aims effectively elides a much longer, and more complicated history of such efforts. In part, the omission is deliberate, a conscious attempt to bring a new, postcolonial nation into being, and with it, an accompanying set of regulatory institutions. Moreover, imperial Japan had pursued its interests, especially during the late Taisho and early Showa, including its colonies within the scope of its plans. In fact,

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of the main Japanese patrons, along with JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). Aya Homei has a forthcoming work on the JOICFP's regional and international roles.

6. Many parts of East and Southeast Asia had similar FP programs, including Singapore and Hong Kong.

Korea's first *modern* population survey came as part of the 1925 imperial census, after Japan had deferred the 1920 census for a combination of political and logistical reasons (Park and Seo 2003). Similarly, Korean women's magazines, especially those circulated to a literate, urban public, frequently included such topics for discussion, as Korean women became aware of topics familiar to metropole Tokyo and other international centers (S. Kim 2008). Sonja Kim highlights the vocabulary driving much of this conversation, a set of terms "limiting birth," but not preventing it outright. Fewer children, raised carefully, would improve circumstances for both mother and child; and, moreover, still fit within a pro-natal, imperial discursive frame.

As mentioned previously, Sabine Frühstück tracks much of this activity in *Colonizing Sex*, especially the growth of interest in reproductive technologies during Taisho and Showa (Frühstück 2003). Although her work concentrates on the Japanese home islands, Frühstück notes the distribution of early technologies in the colonies, meaning that residents were aware of, and made use of, these devices. For colonial Korea, the Ota ring, an IUD (intra-uterine device), probably did not achieve high numbers, but received distribution and related discussion within the popular press (Takeshita 2011). Designed by Dr. Tenri Ota, the Ota ring was based on the model of the Grafenberg ring and sought to prevent fertilized eggs from adhering to the uterine wall. Even if its use remained low, the traces of the device, and the discussion surrounding it, remain significant, and in the 1960s, there was some attention devoted to the possibility of reviving it (J. Lee 1967).

However, the technologies were not the major focus for this period, with the larger concerns being issues of Japanese interpretations of eugenics and its possible uses. Especially during the interwar years, Japanese scholars and experts read, translated, and discussed a wide variety of European texts regarding eugenics, the possibility of producing *better* human beings through a careful study and use of applied biological research. In English-language discussions of this subject matter, the word "quality" appears frequently; the notion that the goal of having fewer children might be achieved, and in turn, these individuals could be of a higher fitness. In the

interwar years, these ideas did not yet carry the baggage they would after 1945, especially following German biomedical experiments in the European context, and for East Asia, Japanese war crimes associated with the conduct of biological warfare in Manchuria. Rather, these ideas were associated with crafting a *quality* population and better living conditions for Japanese women, specifically, mothers. By extension, these ideas had an impact on the biological practice and thinking of upcoming colonial researchers.

The first generation of Koreans to take university degrees, though small in number, likely would have been exposed to these ideas. In the domestic context, sites included Keijō Imperial University, especially the medical school, and missionary institutions such as Chosun Christian College (later Yonsei University). Given hierarchical pressures favoring Japanese settlers and the limited university seats available, others went abroad, typically studying at Japanese imperial universities, or in Republican China (G. Kim 2005). Certainly the prewar European version of eugenics circulated in many places, with the idea of limiting defects and *improving the race* holding a good deal of respectability among progressive thinkers. The Japanese version of this conversation held on to similar notions of *quality*, and anticipating the 1930s and war with China, one can easily imagine possible links to nationalism and ways of strengthening the nation through applied biological work.

Corresponding to this discussion, the literature for modern Japan has seen a resurgence of interest in this broad cluster of subjects, In the 1990s, Sumiko Otsubo wrote of Japanese eugenics, and Yuehtsen Juliette Chung undertook similar pursuits for East Asia more broadly, covering Japan (Meiji, Taisho, Showa) and China (Qing, Republican) (Otsubo and Bartholomew 1998; Chung [2002] 2018). More recently, a number of scholars have taken up population and demographic issues for Japan, including Aya Homei and Akiko Ishii, with these projects looking at a longer span, beginning with Meiji. Sujin Lee comes the closest to the themes outlined here, with a dissertation covering Japan's 1930s and the dense politics of eugenics and imperial demography (Homei 2022; S. Lee 2017; Lu 2019; Ishii 2013; Drixler 2013). Again, the focus here rests less on Japan per se, but what these ideas in flux might have meant for colonial counterparts,

especially those in Korea.

Although the number of Koreans receiving medical training remained low, the war years (1931–1945) allowed for a considerable degree of latitude with career advancement. Significant numbers of Japanese personnel had gone to the front, leaving more available spaces in colonial and rear area circumstances (Eckert 1996). Officially, the pro-natal position stood as the stance on population, with its imperial implications, but some spoke of reproductive issues in limited cases. Here we can find some of the earliest possible cases of Koreans discussing these concerns at the university level. In terms of rural heath, for example, there was a concern with bringing new knowledge to local populations, whether in terms of sanitation and hygiene, or in terms of reproductive politics. As mentioned at the outset, it is important not to read these activities as anticipating a later set of actions, but rather, to take them on their own.

In terms of this activity, perhaps the most famous case involves the work of the Committee on Social Hygiene, which reached out to the Korean countryside from 1936.[7] Several scholars have written on this subject, with many reading it primarily as a form of Japanese biopolitics, with the colonial government seeking to track the bodies of Korean women (J. Park 2014). However, it becomes more complicated when we recognize the participation of Koreans within the scheme, even as colonial subjects working under constraints. If Korean medical personnel participated, what did they learn, and how did they carry this practice forward? Korean doctors and nurses were already receiving Japanese medical training for anatomy and the body writ large, and now carrying it forward, taking this style of work to applied contexts.

Moreover, the example mentioned represents one of the more extreme forms of such activity, with Japanese officials actively seeking to control or manipulate the bodies of Koreans. When Koreans took charge of population activity, seeking to provide advice to rural populations, the perceptions and associations assumed a different form. If the village represented a basic unit

7. This is among the most common starting points when talking about Japanese eugenics in colonial Korea.

of governance, and one granted a certain degree of autonomy, it offers a potential window into the complex dynamics of colonial rule, complicating easy binaries of top-down control. When Koreans began teaching about reproduction in the 1930s, therefore, we have to work carefully to locate the motives underlying this activity. At the very least, those with education and opportunity sought to bring the benefits of new ideas to rural populations. The use of reproductive technologies, or even awareness of one's cycle, held the potential for easing rural life, with fewer children.

To this end, John Caldwell, writing about the 1960s program, notes that the activity did not necessarily have to be directly related to family and reproductive issues (Caldwell 1992). In looking at rural Korea, he highlights instead the presence of new kinds of voluntary organizations. These groups, indicating a form of social advocacy tied to problems such as tuberculosis and leprosy, suggest a desire to collect and direct energy around certain types of social problems. In fact, these two issues became the focus of public health in the post-Korean War, especially during the later years of Syngman Rhee (Kim and Park 2019). Although Caldwell's focus is distinct from the approach here, his examples prove useful for establishing this prewar context, especially one in which Korean actors had the leeway to undertake such activities during the late colonial period.

Moreover, Caldwell does offer examples specific to reproduction, with classroom and social implications. Whang Kyung Koh (Evelyn Cho), affiliated with Ewha Women's University, returned to Korea in the mid-to-late 1930s, following completion of her studies at the University of Michigan (Caldwell 1992, 40). In the late 1930s, and through the Pacific War, she worked at bringing her practice to Korean villagers. Some of this work took a broader form, including a homemaker school and village settlement work, meaning that the aim was one of improving the quality of lives. At the same time, from 1937 onwards, she began teaching population in her sociology and economic classes at Ewha, with a clear emphasis on the potential to control birth numbers through the use of various measures (Caldwell 1992; Repetto et al. 1981). In the aftermath of *haebang*, she asked students to study differential fertility rates in the surrounding community, conducting field studies with her students. This is perhaps one of the best examples of

1930s–1940s work in the colonial context, and more importantly, activity that does not necessarily have to be read as anticipatory.

Koh's example nicely illustrates the paradox here, with substantial experience in the American context (University of Michigan), followed by work in colonial Korea, now in the contexts of higher education and society. In keeping with Caldwell's observations about social forms, she also organized women's groups centered around questions of reproduction, here adopting the label "Mother's Clubs." Her work, spanning the 1930s to the 1950s, caught the attention of numerous observers, and later, in 1961, she was among those contacted by the incoming government, joining a group slated to advise on questions of rural society (Caldwell 1992, 10). We will return to this later, but here the question bears repeating: what does this style or work mean on its own terms, especially for the period and context in which it took place? The question of Japanese rule almost disappears here, as Koh was among a group of individuals working without much oversight, seeking to bring advice and a better quality of life to rural Koreans.

The question of rural life, and more specifically, rural sociology, appeared not just at Ewha, but also at other universities prior to 1961. The basic desire to understand the concerns of rural populations, their means of living, and the corresponding interest in improving their lives drove a good deal of academic research. At the same time, much of this research sought to translate its concerns into real world practice, and here is where we see Koh and others conducting field studies, engaging with these populations as much as possible. In this context, reproduction and family planning formed only one small part of a larger set of questions regarding the possibility of providing a better education about living in the modern world. Certainly for the late colonial period, this kind of activity allowed Japanese officials to defer these concerns to Koreans, who dealt with populations the state preferred to ignore.

Haebang (Liberation, 1945–1948) and Korean War (1950–1953): Constructing a Progressive Narrative

Much of the pre-1945 activity in this direction tends to disappear with two factors in mind: the intervening period of occupation and war, and the rise of population issues associated with refugees and relief issues. In the first case, there was considerable attention devoted to medical and relief issues, with little of the energy going to reproductive concerns, at least in any explicit fashion (Willard 1947). The second case, however, offers a context in which to continue examining the focus on rural life, now adding in related questions of housing and urban populations. The South Korean state conducted its own demographic study in 1955, and from this point, began to gather data with an increasing focus on economic planning over the long-term (Lin 2020). Korean demographers often cite the 1925 Japanese census as a starting point, and then work forward from there, recognizing that there is a gap between the late 1930s and the mid-1950s due to war.

In professional terms, those Koreans with the *right* timing performed best over the long-term, able to reach elite status by graduating from Keijō Imperial University, the imperial university (or a comparable institution), in the mid-to-late 1930s. The following move consisted of eliding, or minimizing that same status, by forming new relationships, especially during, and in the aftermath of, the Korean War. The war allowed many to transform their field of study and professional identity by placing these mid-career Korean scholars in the context of their international peers, especially for medicine. Moreover, the Korean War brought new opportunities in terms of fellowships and residencies to Europe and the United States. Previously, financial and colonial conditions had limited the majority of Koreans to the domestic context and East Asia (Japan, Republican China), with only a few exceptions. For our concern then, the question lies with identifying the major actors able to bridge the gap between the colonial and succeeding periods.

For Family Planning, E-hyock Kwon of Seoul National University and Jae-mo Yang of Severance Hospital/Yonsei University later headed the FP programs at their respective institutions. Dr. Kwon was a medical student at

Keijō Imperial University, graduating in 1947 as part of one of the first cohorts at the post-liberation SNU. Kwon took a second degree from Seoul National during the Korean War (1951), meaning that much of his medical training was shaped by the circumstances of wartime. Perhaps more significantly, he was also a part of the Korean student cohort who attended the University of Minnesota (1956, Public Health), taking additional training there. The Minnesota Project, a collaboration between the Seoul and Minneapolis campuses (1954–1962), brought students to the US campus in target areas of priority: medicine, engineering, and agriculture. Following the Korean War, this effort was an ICA (International Cooperation Administration)-sponsored effort at rehabilitation (Kim and Hwang 2000). With this training, Kwon became not only a Korean elite, but also one with a growing international network, a pattern that would continue for the remainder of his life.

Perhaps most importantly, Dr. Kwon was not a reproductive health specialist, nor a specialist in neonatal health. His training was largely in public health, which for Korea at this time meant making the most of limited resources and building up capacity. Following Minnesota, Kwon took his final degree at SNU in 1960, again in medicine, with an emphasis on blood serology and the distribution of blood groups on the Korean Peninsula (E. Kwon 1960). This work bears multiple signs of influence from the Japanese period, and this style of research remains consistent with Japanese beliefs about serology as a means of testing and evaluating human diversity (Bangham 2020). Jaewhan Hyun has written of the formative Korean genetics community, and the long-term impact of earlier forms of research in the post-Korean War period, so his work has much more to say here in terms of tracing this subject (Hyun 2018). For now, suffice it to say that Kwon's career up to this point did not necessarily suggest him as the optimal candidate for running a national FP campaign.

To reframe the issue from the perspective of 1954, the language and assumptions of a national campaign did not yet exist, either from an infrastructural perspective or from the standpoint of ambition. Instead, much of the period (1954–1960) was devoted to the restoration of basic necessities: electricity, clean water, and reliable supplies of food and

medicine. In this case, Kwon's work again holds interesting links, as he published a great deal on housing and poverty (E. Kwon 1974). In other words, his brand of public health spanned the urban and the rural, especially the former, given his base at a major university. Moreover, this issue occupied a great deal of attention during the late colonial period, especially the notion of the urban squatters, or the urban poor (S. Kim 2016–2017). As with Kwon's work on serology, there is a substantive basis here for asking questions about some of its underlying foundations, including the reliance upon class-based assumptions, with traces of an earlier eugenics left murky.

The other major point to make for this period lies with the lack of specialization, and the need for generalists. Someone like Kwon had to take on multiple roles, regardless of his original training. For almost any aspect of medical work, therefore, his name tends to appear, especially for the 1950s and 1960s. To offer an example, his name appears as an attendee at the first meeting of Korean parasitologists in 1959, and likely, his participation was mobilized with the subsequent formation of KAPE (Korean Association for Parasite Eradication) in 1964.[8] By this, I mean that colleagues wanted his name to be included, even if his interests were different. Strictly speaking, Kwon's work had little to do with these concerns, but the problems under study held common themes, and he was close friends with a number of KAPE members. His appointment and prominence within FP was the result of a combination of administrative necessity and personal ambition, rather than a question of research fit.

For a comparable figure in a related field, there is the example of Hae-young Lee, a major actor in Korean sociology, especially for rural matters. As with Professor Kwon, Lee was born at the height of the colonial period (1925) and graduated (in 1949) amidst Korea's transformation from imperial colony of Japan to *haebang*. His first two years were with the wartime version of the university (1943–1945), before completing his education in its post-liberation counterpart (T. Kwon, n.d.). Lee then spent the bulk of his career in a variety of positions affiliated with Seoul National University,

8. The meeting referred to here predates KAPE, that is, an earlier version of the parsitologists group.

especially related to anthropology, sociology, and rural development. Perhaps more importantly, he worked frequently at institution-building, helping to found (and head) the Population and Development Studies Center in 1964 (now the ISDPR, or Institute for Social Development and Population Research), and remaining with the Center until 1976 (T. Kwon, n.d.). More than any other individual, Lee helped to construct Korean demography, and one dedicated to bringing the use of statistics into state planning.

As many scholars have noted, statistics help to render *visible* actors who might otherwise evade the gaze of the state, whether deliberately or by mere circumstance. Korean statistics have undergone numerous *reforms* as far back as late Joseon period seeking to bring them in line with those of their partner nations. For the post-1954 period, this ambition had two motives. First, to understand the domestic population, as there was about a 15-year gap since the lapse of the Japanese imperial population surveys. Second, once a baseline measure could be established, to work with partners, and here, someone like Lee proved especially valuable. If Kwon worked in bringing public health to many areas, Lee formed partnerships with demographic centers in other countries, sometimes spending significant time overseas.[9] His goal was to make Korean statistics compatible with those of other countries.

Post-Korean War

In the mid-1950s, statistics took on new significance for at least three reasons. First, internal migration, a problem stemming from the Korean War, continued through the postwar period. The government hoped to get an accurate population count, both for reasons of the temporal gap with the last imperial census and to assess postwar circumstances. Second, the fertility question, though not yet framed in terms of FP, remained a pressing question. Especially postwar, many held to pro-natal beliefs, with the idea

9. For Lee, these partnerships included interactions with the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of North Carolina following the Korean War.

that more babies translated into national (and personal) wealth. Finally, and linked to both of these concerns, was the issue of forming international partnerships, which often required reliable sources of data. For topics like vital statistics, there were complaints about their lack dating to as early as the occupation, and these issues continued through the following two decades. Korean elites needed new ways of presenting their data not, so much because it was *correct*, but because this style of representing the data would lead to increased funding and collaboration. In other words, the aim was driven more by pragmatics.

With aid funding arriving from a range of sources, this period saw some of the greatest activity among civil society proponents. As noted previously, voluntary associations (e.g., related to tuberculosis) began to appear. Though some of them had almost nothing to do with reproduction per se, this type of social structure soon proved useful in terms of channeling energy into other causes. Moreover, many of the same actors, spanning the late 1930s to the occupation, resumed their work, now with greater attention, and likely meeting with a better reception. Debates about postwar Korean society proved a much better venue for discussing topics such as fertility, demography and the family. Whang Kyung Cho set up the Mother's Association (Eomeonihoe) in 1958, and in organizing women's groups in this fashion, taught family-planning methods (Caldwell 1992, 7). The Association also began the distribution of reproductive technologies (foam tablets, plastic tampon sponges), picking up on developments dating back to the 1930s (Caldwell 1992, 8–11).

Cho was only one among several actors, some with prior experience, and some entirely new, who saw the period as an opportunity to reach out. Presbyterian missionary George Worth arrived in the mid-1950s, and worked from his base in Daegu, where he advocated for reproductive issues (Caldwell 1992). In 1956, he appealed directly to the government to start a family clinic, having witnessed difficult postwar conditions for several years. His request was turned down, but Worth continued working in this context, and later experienced success. The logic for many of these actors was based on a view of working closely with Korean villagers, and women in particular, at these sites. As they saw it, family planning, meaning basic education in

the issues, and providing some access to technology, would afford a measure of control to villagers lacking resources. The postwar context shaped much of this worldview, and Worth, unlike many of the Korean actors, held a shorter perspective, having arrived only recently.

The critical point for many of these developments (1954–1960) also lies with their geographical specificity, limited to a provincial or regional level. Numerous individuals began teaching some version of demography and developmental economics at the university level, typically without raising any concerns. Besides Cho, others undertook a similar approach to bringing the ideals of reproductive work to larger numbers. In 1958, Chong Ching Lee sought the assistance of the National Medical Center (Gungnip uiryowon), where he held an affiliation (Caldwell 1992, 7). Following discussions with colleagues, the idea was turned down at the ROK ministerial level, despite some enthusiasm. In his account, Caldwell mentions that Presbyterian missions included family planning in their village work in the late 1950s, again without national authorization, gradually expanding to include up to 120 townships (Caldwell 1992, 8).

It is clear that individuals such as Worth, Cho, and others, were teaching and advocating for reform within a university setting, and also working within village contexts. This 1950s version of reproductive issues lacks the comprehensive social science confidence of its counterpart of the following decade, an optimism tied to larger data sets, and funding on a regional scale. Still, by the late 1950s, the basic elements of a program were in place: civil society actors, social groups capable of reaching out to villages, and both a growing academic and a missionary presence. A variety of reasons have been given to explain why these individual parts did not cohere, including religious objections from the South Korean administration, or a simple lack of visibility, given the problems of the time. For the discussion here, the point of emphasis has to be the relative lack of novelty for much of the ideas, that is, their compatibility with earlier types of rural reform.

Moreover, rather than seeing this as a sharp transition, it might be more interesting to read this period less in terms of practice, and more in terms of shifting labels and categories. Along with incoming civil society actors, Koreans were learning a new vocabulary, and how to use this language in

dialogue with international partners. If some of the activity was taking place domestically, much was also going on in terms of overseas networks. It is not coincidental that E-hyock Kwon completed his degree at the University of Minnesota (1956) before returning to Seoul. Jae-mo Yang studied at the University of Michigan, with a focus on public health, before resuming his position at Yonsei. In contrast to wholescale acceptance of external ideas, these patterns suggest a spirit of accommodation and a more gradual transition; Koreans learning how to exert control over their own institutions, while cooperating with close friends. It also bears mentioning that Koreans were extremely concerned with mixed-race children at this time, a product of the American military presence, and also an emerging concern in postwar Japan (Roebuck, forthcoming; Diederich 2021). Younger scholars in particular are looking at this intersection between American racial hierarchies and Korean tropes of race and ethnicity, as in the work of Sandra Park (University of Chicago) and Laura Ha Reizman (UCLA).

Constructing the *Official Narrative* (1961–)

If the preceding section aimed to illustrate the vibrant intellectual life and practice of the pre-1961 Korean academy, the same could be said for the early 1960s, even prior to the formal adoption of a family planning program. Certainly, there are comparable examples of classroom and civil society activity overlapping with the government of Chang Myon (1960–1961), although this period tends not to receive attention. Perhaps more importantly, there was no dominant consensus, but instead, a great deal of debate over which direction to pursue. Pro-natal ideas remained in circulation, and indeed, continued to be through the mid-1960s.[10] The practice of demography also continued to experience flux, and in fact, the gathering of new data and participation with international partnerships allowed for the formation of a more coherent, albeit less intriguing, style of

10. The precise date at which anti-natal policy *took over* remains unclear, although the debates were ongoing through the mid-1960s.

practice.

In Caldwell's estimation, the very reason the period deserves more attention lies with its openness, as many individuals felt freed from the tight constraints previously associated with President Rhee (Caldwell 1992, 9). In other words, the lack of resolution was not a problem, but instead, represented an opportunity. Regardless, two key developments occurred during this window, and it is very easy to forget that such developments were taking place. First, the PPFK (Planned Parenthood Federation of Korea; or Daehan gajok gyehoek yeophoe) held its first meeting, and began discussions about how to promote its pedagogy, as well as the distribution of technologies. Second, the 1960s census results came out, with an announcement of significant population growth in the intervening five years (1955–1960), a factor which increased the sense of urgency (Caldwell 1992, 9).

With the transition to a new government in May 1961, the preceding period (1954–1960, 1960–1961) became part of a story to be consolidated, fit within a retrospective frame, with a new start date assigned to it. Rather than a rich period filled with debate, contestation, and the exchange of ideas, the move to a national program sought to define this collective activity as the logical antecedent to itself. The immediate postwar (1954–1960) represented the problem, an influx of aid, goods, and technical assistance, but lacking in organizational coherence. The following period then became one identified with a few central figures, with academic and civil society actors identifying ways of putting their ideas into practice. The *new* narrative began from this basis and aimed to move quickly from conducting field studies to a national rollout by 1964. This brief review should not take anything away from the accomplishments of the PPFK, and the point of emphasis lies with recognizing that the major constituents were already in place by about 1958.

Moreover, the international actors newly arriving on the scene had every possible motivation to render events according to this new narrative. A few of these, especially those with missionary ties, had a longer history, and knew some of the earlier history. However, the bulk of the new funds coming in after 1961 sought mainly to identify key figures, to provide them

with resources, and to achieve results to be written up. In overwhelming terms, the new reports issued from about the middle of the decade emphasized quantitative results, whether in terms of the number of items distributed, or the number of IUDs inserted ('acceptors'). These types of easily digestible figures testified to success and led to further donations. Whether they held any genuine or deeper meaning was not necessarily a question for this moment, and indeed, would not be asked for some time.

Building a Network (1961–)

In the short-term, a number of related developments formed part of a revised population policy but have also been edited out of the narrative. First, along with the famous guest worker (*Gastarbeiter*) program, the new government pursued programs with a number of external partners, with these links designed to encourage migration (Hong 2015). The Park Chung-hee government sought assistance from South America (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Bolivia), aiming for a design comparable to what took place with Germany (S. Kim 1981). In contrast, however, the programs designed to send workers to these new sites intended for long-term settlement, not a return cycle, as was the case with Europe (S. Kim 1981). This omission from the record leaves out a critical economic component of FP, as well as related questions about class, skill sets, and other factors critical to the selection process (S. Kim 1981). Ultimately, very few Korean workers opted for this path, which means that it does not receive a great deal of attention.

From this perspective, the *new* program emerging after 1961 consists of a less impressive achievement, and one more bureaucratic and organizational in its aims than anything else. The Koreans who agreed to join were not necessarily trained in international development nor in reproductive medicine, but most of them had a longstanding commitment to improving rural living conditions. In some cases, this commitment dated as far back as the late 1930s, with the resumption of their activities taking place some point after 1954. In other words, even while grouped under the FP collective, their aims were far more diverse, and much more individual in scope, than the official story might otherwise suggest. The national program

provided new resources, an umbrella organization through which to pursue one's goals, and under these conditions, many of this group thrived.

Beyond this immediate goal, the larger context of Korean social science and its complex genealogy represents a project for future development. Certainly, Korean demographers frequently cited Japanese census data, and the first generation of those who established population centers at universities generally acknowledge their indebtedness to previous forms of practice, along with their new international partners. The language mobilized to study movement and the export of manpower as labor moved to Southeast Asia and the Middle East shares a great deal with an earlier conversation concerning the distribution of imperial resources.[11] What is more interesting, as already noted, is that this style fit well with the emerging modernist language coming from American actors. To be clear, Koreans spoke their own language and managed their own affairs, but they learned how to do so carefully, contingent upon the specific interlocutor, initially with Japanese officials, and later, with American social scientists.

11. There are numerous echoes of 1930s discussions of *illyeok* (manpower) in the 1960s.

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