

# Shifting Study Abroad Motivations of Korean Millennials: From Utilitarian to Self-realization

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## Introduction

- With the tide of globalization, South Korea has experienced drastic social changes and the key factor among them is cross-border interaction, such as studying abroad.
- Extant studies have reported that Korean students were motivated to study abroad mainly for academic and career aspirations (Park, 2009; Kim, 2011).
- However, these studies remain stagnant in the past and do not reflect the changing Korean society and the younger generation today.

**In this study**, we propose to explore what motivates the new generation (so-called the 'Millennial generation') to study abroad and how their ideas on study abroad has changed under the dynamic changes of the Korean society.

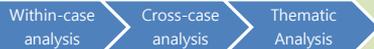
## Research Goal

- (1) What values do the new generation in Korea put importance on?
- (2) How do the Millennial generation Korean college students design their future to fulfill their ideals, and what role does studying abroad play in it?
- (3) How does this maintenance/ changes in value system of the new generation reflect fluctuating Korean society in the era of globalization?

## Methods

- A mixed-method approach was used:
- (1) **A survey with 488 students** from six universities was conducted to investigate some factors that pull or push them to study abroad, their past experiences abroad, and countries they would like to study abroad.
  - (2) **In-depth interviews with 18 respondents** were conducted to explore their motivations to study abroad and understand which aspirations they expect to fulfill by obtaining education overseas.

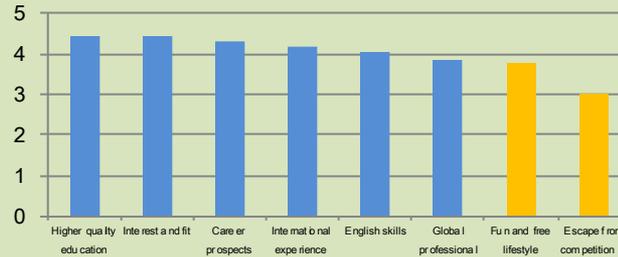
### Data Analysis Procedure



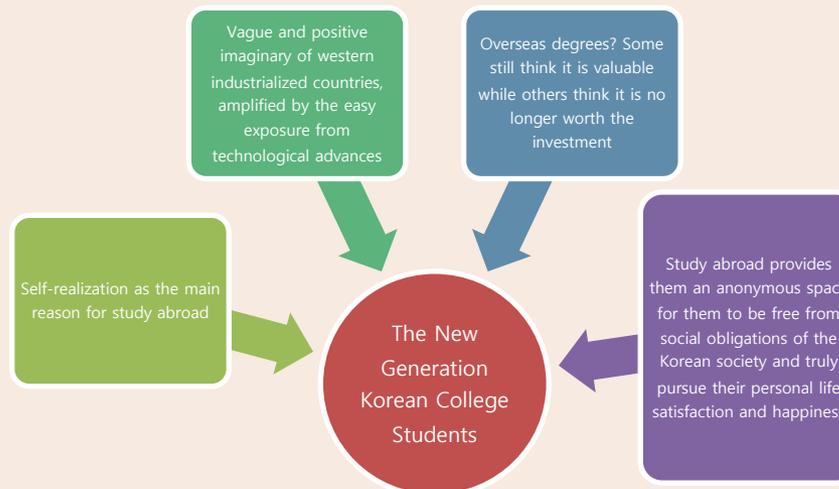
Creswell, 2014

## Figures and Results

Table 1. Study Abroad Motives (mean score)



The survey result shows that the new generation Korean college students still prioritize academic and career motives for study abroad (table 1) but in-depth interview reveals another side of the story...



## Conclusion

- The Millennial generation seems to think studying abroad as the main reason for self-realization.
- Their motivation for studying abroad is based on vague and positive international imaginations of foreign countries. This appears to have been amplified by the easy exposure to cultural diversity through the media as technology advances in the era of globalization.
- A new generation of Korean university students think overseas degrees are still valuable in Korean society but are skeptical about whether they are worth investing time and money compared to the past.
- For the millennial generation of college students, studying abroad served as a steppingstone to free themselves from Korea's social obligations and to enjoy personal satisfaction and happiness.

## Implication

Our study sparks the possibility of cultural emphasis on education shifting to self-realization in South Korea. The shift being mainly influenced by the opportunities globalization provide, this study leaves implications to other globalizing East Asian countries that have also traditionally placed great emphasis on education.

## Acknowledgments

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## References

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