Delayed Transition to Adulthood in Korea between 1990 and 2010: A Latent Class Analysis

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Background & Motivation
Transition to adulthood: a series of events associated with the acquisition of social roles and responsibilities

Traditional markers of adulthood
- Finishing school
- Working
- Independent living
- Entering into first marriage
- Parenthood

Prolonged, complicated, and diversified pathways to adulthood in the U.S. (Furstenberg, 2010; Settersten et al., 2005)
- The role of macro-level changes
- Changing job opportunities
- Growing inequality and economic insecurities
- Expansion of education
- Individual-level factors
- Socioeconomic status (e.g., education, occupation, or family background)

What’s Missing in the Literature?
- Limited attention to young adults in East Asia where young adults are most educated in the world (OECD 2015).
- Contextual similarities and differences
- Several studies focused on a single marker only, or combined into two different spheres: productive and reproductive (e.g., Park, 2013)

Objective & Research Questions
A New Approach to Transition to Adulthood in Korea
- We examine the transition to adulthood by focusing on how adulthood markers can work together to categorize people into distinctive groups.
- Overarching Question: How have the trends in transition to adulthood changed between 1990 and 2010 in Korea?

1) What percentage of young adults achieved four or five markers of adulthood by age 34?
2) Are there underlying patterns in how young adults experience combinations of markers?
3) What roles does family background play in the membership to each group?

Data & Methods
Data
- 1990 / 2010 Korean Census 1% Micro-level data

Analytic sample: young adults aged 25 to 34 in each respective year
- 1990: 1956 – 1965 birth cohort (n = 80,831)
- 2010: 1976 – 1985 birth cohort (n = 65,918)

Methods
- Latent class analysis
- Binary logit regression analysis

Descriptive Findings
- Transition to adulthood has delayed for both men and women from 1990 to 2010
- Men’s transition has delayed more than that of women

What’s Missing in the Literature?
- Several studies focused on a single marker only, or combined into two different spheres: productive and reproductive (e.g., Park, 2013)

Estimated Prevalence and Conditional Probabilities of Observed Latent Classes

Discussion & Conclusions
- Delayed transition to adulthood for both men and women; delayed patterns are clearer for men than women.
- Heterogeneity among Korean young adults is relatively modest.
- The gender-specific effects of family background on transition to adulthood
- Implies changing meaning of transition to adulthood in Korea

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