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Laura Bogorad: My name is Laura Bogorad and today is March 28th, 2023, and I'm interviewing Tegh Khosla in-person for the Colby College Korean Oral History Project. Do you agree to grant the college permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?

Tegh Kholsa: Yes.

LB: Awesome. Thank you so much. Okay, question number one is what is your favorite K-pop group?

TK: Ooh, this is a tough one. I have many K-pop groups that I listen to. I would say, right now, (G)I-DLE. They're pretty cool. They're a girl group. They're not too big, but they're kind of cool.

LB: Amazing. I was also wondering what was the highlight of your study abroad experience in Korea?

TK: The highlight… Overall, I just think all of the friends I made there. It was nice to travel with friends, especially when you're in a new place. It was nice to meet some other people from the US as well, and even from other countries. So not just Koreans, but many other people from different ethnicities and different backgrounds. That was really exciting.

LB: Is there anywhere in particular you went that you really liked a lot?

TK: I went to Busan, which is the second largest city in South Korea. When I went there it was really nice, the whole city just felt like a beach, even though it's not a beach city. I mean, it is a beach city, but it's more than just on the beach. But the whole city just felt like a beach when I was there, so it was pretty chill.

LB: Awesome. How did you first encounter Korean culture and music?

TK: It was the summer after ninth grade. I don't really remember what I was doing that summer, but I was on YouTube one day and I was just watching some videos, just things like that. One of the videos had a background song and it was actually a K-pop song. My very first Korean song was by SEVENTEEN, which is a K-pop group, and the song's name is "*Ulgo Sipji Ana*" [which means] "Don't Wanna Cry." That was my very first Korean song, and I liked it. Hearing it in the background of the video, I'm [thinking], "This is really good. I like this." I didn't know it was a K-pop song at first, and then I added it to my playlist. After that, I just kind of went down the rabbit hole and I just kept listening to more music. I

listened to all of the songs by SEVENTEEN, and then I moved on to more songs, and then more songs and more songs. So, that was my first introduction to it.

LB: Would you say that you were into K-Pop before it was cool?

TK: So actually, for me, I had Korean friends in high school. But where I grew up, ethnicity wasn't that much of a big deal. So, people would just listen to whatever music that they want. But I remember in middle school, early on, there was a lot of just stigma around, "Oh, you listen to K-pop." For some people who actually listened to K-Pop even earlier than I did, they [thought], "That's weird, that's girly," and stuff. But I didn't really think much of it because I didn't have to have any judgment at that time. So, I just listened to Demi Lovato [and] stuff like that. I had a really positive introduction, but I also had friends who were ethnically Korean who did listen to it.

LB: Do you think your exposure to Korean music inspired you to pick Korea as your study abroad location?

TK: Oh, for sure. Because I [am] a musician [and] I sing you know [and] I played the trumpet for several years. So as someone who makes music, music has a very important part in my life. For me listening to K-pop for, I don't know how many years, but since I guess summer after ninth grade, now it's 2023 and that's a really, really long time. So, I've gone through many different stages of my development listening to Korean music, I'd say. It has a very important part of my life. That definitely shaped why I went to study abroad or why I even wanted to pursue Korean culture, because just simply the impact it had on my life.

LB: Do you think what you saw online was similar to the culture once you actually got to Korea, or did it feel very different?

TK: Well, that's one thing you have to put into perspective. There are many fans that just listen to Korean music and they don't really separate culture from what they see online. But as I grew more understanding the culture, people who I knew, reading and things like that, I kind of went down the rabbit hole. Over time, I just learned that there's obviously a separation between the two, right? And online presence is always going [to] be just a market, rather than reality. So, of course there is this fantasy that is portrayed like [that's] really, really good style or really, really good skin, or [the] hair is really nice, really good makeup, skincare, just lots of really good products and a lot of developed material culture. Especially in film, there was beautiful scenery. Things that create this very big aesthetic just from online media. But when I went there, I would not say that I experienced any differences in the sense that I was already aware of my own volition of differences. To me it wasn't a surprise because part of my interaction with Korean culture is that I always needed to make that separation. So, I'd never really let myself get trapped in a fantasy versus a reality kind of realm in my head.

LB: That makes sense because obviously the internet is very idealized, but would you say that Koreans have a good fashion style in general?

TK: I [would] definitely say that. Yeah. People definitely dress very nicely there. It's very clear that your image is very important there. The way you portray yourself is how other

people are going to view you or even judge you and perceive you, so that is a very important. People are very attentive to the way they look because they want to present their best selves to [the] society around them.

LB: Speaking to that, do you think that [the way you] looked impacted your experience? [Regarding] your racial identity, do you think you experienced a different experience than someone else would?

TK: That's a good question. In terms of the way I looked, my wardrobe is not very diverse, so that was the first thing I wanted to cover. Some of my first Korean friends, they looked at me and they [said], “Teggy, you cannot wear this outside.” I [asked], “What do you mean?” He's [said], “You’re wearing pajamas.” I [said], “These are my clothes.” So, they [said], “Okay, we're going shopping.” After that, I had this realization that I need to dress a little bit better than I actually dressed because I didn't notice, I just usually wear sweats and stuff. I didn't really care much, but I realized that presenting in a fashionable manner is a sign of good character. I kind of also fed into that part of the culture and very much let my local friends influence me in the way I dressed [and] give me advice on what I should do and I expanded my wardrobe there, so that was the first thing.

In terms of racial identity, I would not say I experienced anything racist towards me. But I do have other friends who have a darker skin tone than I do, and they sometimes felt that they were being stared at. Overall, fair skin is definitely valued. I've just heard from some other people [that] in some places that don't really see many foreigners, like the countryside, you may get stares. But, besides that, the way you looked like came to play in some establishments, especially in the nightlife scene. In some clubbing neighborhoods there's some clubs which are Korean only. It's not necessarily racist, but it's more xenophobic in a sense. Something which I noticed and which I've heard from other people and other Koreans as well and in some of my own observations is that the American military in Korea is very problematic. From my own perspective, they just act and do things without any consequences. They'll start fights or things like that [or] they'll just wreck some places where they go to and just act kind of carelessly, so I can understand where that sentiment comes from. Because if you're going to be destructive, it is going to create a stigma. I feel like there is a stigma towards Americans more than there is for Europeans, per se. There's definitely that stigma because [of] the American presence in Korea. They've had this autonomy and they've existed there for a while since the war. Some anti-American sentiment is prevalent, but now in a different way where it seems that they're kind of destroying things, but not recklessly, but they're just a little careless of culture and things like that.

LB: That's super interesting that there are Korean only clubs. Did you experience any times where they wouldn't let you in, or did you know to avoid those?

TK: It kind of depended on the day, sometimes. The only time I went to the Korean only clubs is when I was with my Korean friends because I did sometimes feel out of place in there. I could go in because I was with my Korean friends, and also it helped that I spoke Korean and I spoke it well. So, they let me in, I guess. But it really depended. But I kind of generally just avoided them. It didn't really impact my experience.

LB: That's really interesting, I didn't know that. Speaking to what you're talking about with the military, do you feel like there were any moments as an American that people were maybe more cautious of you or had certain stereotypes?

TK: Yes, definitely. For some of my friends' parents, actually, [my] Korean friends' parents, they were kind of wary I was American at first, but then got to know me through my friends and they [realized], "He's not that bad." But there is the stigma towards Americans because if you're thinking about American military personnel, they're not necessarily there for a cultural, academic or learning experience. They're there for their work. The military, it's their job, right? So, their obligations and their cultural literacy is different than people who are going for academic reasons or post-grad work, but there's nothing bad about that. It's just different. So, when the majority of Americans in Korea are military personnel, that's the stereotype or stigma that's going to unfortunately be created if that's the only exposure.

LB: When [Koreans] were cautious of you, do you know why? In what way? What things did they think about you, if you know?

TK: I think from what one of my friends said, they were just afraid that I was too liberal. But I think, when I was curious about what "too liberal" meant, it was really just a lack of morals, or just doing things of your own volition, just way too individualistic. You do whatever you want without thinking of the consequences. But that was just the perspective I got with one person. I don't really know in detail what other people thought, but from my experience the perspective wasn't necessarily bad, it was just a little cautious.

LB: That makes a lot of sense. Speaking to the social scene, do you think that the club scene or the bar scene in Korea was different than your experience in the US?

TK: Well, for myself, I turned 21 in Korea. Which is kind of irrelevant because the age to enter bars is 18, so 21 is not really a big deal there. So, I wouldn't really know the difference between American bars and [Korean bars]. But one thing I did notice in the clubs, especially in Hongdae, which is like one of the clubbing neighborhoods, they played a lot of hip hop, American hip hop music. Even the Korean only clubs would play only American music. It was interesting to see how they don't let in Americans, or even foreigners, but they consume all of their culture. But at the same time, it's the same way that I consume Korean culture without their permission. I feel like it kind of goes both ways.

LB: That's kind of ironic, too, because the way that you first got interested in Korea was through Korean music, but they don't play that at the clubs as much.

TK: They do, but it's Korean hip hop, and it depends on where you go. In Hongdae, where there's a younger presence, mostly a younger demographic of university [students], they're not going to really play K-Pop. They're going to play Korean hip hop. There are also some Latin clubs as well where they play Spanish music. So, there is diversity in the music scene for sure. There's EDM clubs too. But it really depends on where you go for the type of music you're going to hear.

LB: One other club question. I feel awkward saying this, but as we learned about it in class, there's a place called Homo Hill, and you said that you did get to visit there. What was that experience like?

TK: Well, I went there with my friends because they took me there. It was interesting. It was kind of small. When I went to eat at Itaewon with my friends, we just walked around everywhere [and] club bounced. There are some good restaurants there, too, which you walk by. I thought it was pretty interesting because you have all these regular clubs, which are predominantly heterosexual, and then you have this little section where you have drag shows. That was kind of interesting.

LB: That's really interesting! Speaking of restaurants, do you have a most memorable meal in Korea? Or one type of food that you ate a lot of?

TK: I ate a lot of food. But one of the things that I kept coming back to was *samgyeopsal*, which is pork belly. It was really interesting for me, because in the US I never really liked meat, actually. I just didn't like the texture. I didn't like the taste. But when I went to Korea there's a lot of foods with meat in it and I actually liked it there. It was just [that] the texture felt different. I don't know what it was, but I was definitely open more to eating meat. And the chicken was great, so that was one experience for me. I'm very happy to [have] expanded my picky eating. That was nice. It was definitely *samgyeopsal* (pork belly), because I kept going back for that, and KBBQ, but also some more cultural foods. I would get *sundubu* (soft tofu stew), which is how do I describe that? I will come back to you and tell you about that later. But that was also really good.

LB: It's interesting that the way that they prepare their meats you preferred over American meat. Not surprising, but interesting. What did you think of the alcohol culture in Korea? Do you think it really shaped the culture and the student experience?

TK: Well, drinking alcohol has always been a very big part of Korean culture. Yes, people will drink a lot. There's actually this term called *honsul* (solo drinking), which means drinking alone. So, it's not even really looked down upon to drink in your own room. Or just thinking about your thoughts or even listening to music or something and taking shots alone. It's not necessarily fully stigmatized like, we might say here, as abusing alcohol. So, there is very much a larger alcohol culture.

LB: Yeah. That definitely is a difference that they have in terms of drinking alone. I guess drinking and smoking cigarettes is the main activities you would engage in?

Tegh Kholsa: Yes.

LB: Do you think there were a few more popular drinks there that you wouldn't get as much in the US?

TK: Well, there are some traditional mixed drinks, like *somaek*, which is [when] you mix *soju* and *maekju*, which is beer, and you mix them together and you have a mixed beer and it's actually really tasty.

LB: It sounds gross.

TK: It's really tasty. It's good. There's a lot of cocktails. They definitely have a lot of western alcohol, so that was interesting.

LB: That makes sense. How was your experience being a university student? Did you feel like the classes were a different format or going to school felt different in Korea than in the US?

TK: Oh yeah, for sure. That is very big difference because especially here at Colby, we have a lot of assignments. I would say, from my experience, there was a lot of work, but in the sense that if you didn't do the work, you were not going to do well on the exams. In some classes I did have assignments, I had a paper and a presentation. There was another class where I had an essay every week. But in terms of workload, the format is a little bit less diverse than Colby classes where we have very diverse curriculums and also very diverse class formats. You know, some classes don't have exams at all versus some that do. Most of my classes [in Korea] very much followed the traditional midterm final exam format.

LB: Do you think people cared as much about school?

TK: Well, it kind of depended because for many of us, especially a lot of my other foreign exchange friends, it was very hard to pay a lot of attention to school, especially when you're in a new culture and you're really excited to just go and explore. Being in a city, too, that's a really big difference. Makes things a little bit distracting. What it's like here at Colby, for example, it's a very rural environment, the closest city is Portland. Your accessibility to entertainment or fun things is a little bit difficult to reach. Compared to Korea [where] I could just walk outside, go to karaoke, or go get food when I'm hungry in the middle of the night. So, yeah, it's a little bit different because it's very easy to get distracted, too. So, doing work was of course not the priority. I mean, it was a priority in the sense that I did not travel as much due to the fact that I had work to do. My traveling experience was definitely limited because of my workload.

LB: That makes sense. Because when I went abroad it just felt like people didn't take it quite as seriously, the people that went to the school. I don't know, but maybe that's just coming from Colby where we're really intense.

TK: For sure. I did my best to do my work and do well, but there were definitely some classes where I just did not do the readings as thoroughly as I should, or I would just do it once and not read it again. Because there was this class where I had quizzes every week on the readings, and the reading would be 60 pages of science textbook [reading]. [The professor] would ask really specific questions, for example. I was just [thought] “whatever,” because at that point I don't want to memorize this. I'd rather have a meal or walk around or explore some new place rather than reading a textbook three, four, or five times. It was just my priorities and my values of what I wanted to get out of my study abroad experience.

LB: I think that makes a lot of sense. I know you took a Korean history class, but do you think the way that they taught about the Korean War was different from the way that we learned it in this class?

TK: The Korean history class that I took did not actually cover the Korean War. It was just pre-modern Korean history. It was just really from foundations all the way up until Joseon (the last dynastic kingdom of Korea, 1392-1897) and then that was where I stopped.

LB: I forgot about that. But do you think the Koreans that you met seemed like they were still impacted by the Korean War? Could you tell that in any way or no?

TK: Not really. I think it's pretty far removed now. From my experience. It's not really talked about unless in [you're in] an academic setting.

LB: [My] last school question: Was there any mention of North Korea by either your classes or the people that you hung out with and how was that framed?

TK: I think the most prevalent talk about North Korea, it was just brought up in one of my classes, exchange classes, basically. It was [the] study abroad courses, taught in English, but it actually wasn't necessarily a full study abroad course. It was just an American professor and they were also Korean students in the class. But one student brought up [whether] you are paying attention to the testing of missiles, because that kind of happened. But it's not very prevalent. North Korea will be testing their missiles and it just doesn't affect day-to-day lives. People are just so desensitized to it because it's not really a threat actually, if you think about it. It's not an imminent danger. Even if they're testing missiles, it's not a threat. So, I think most [of the] fear of North Korea was just coming from study abroad students that just didn't really understand too well about that. It wasn't a threat for me, I didn't really care because I knew it wasn't a threat. So, I mean, it would pop up on the news, but it didn't really disturb me.

LB: I guess they're just used to that kind of experience. So, if someone was visiting Seoul, what would you say that they had to do before they leave?

TK: Well, this is going to be hypocritical of me [because] I didn't go. It's really nice to [go] at night and eat chicken at the Han River. I didn't do that. I only went in the daytime because it was kind of far from where I was. But yeah, I did not eat chicken at night at the Han River. That is definitely something you should do because it's really nice. In Seoul, you should definitely go to the Namsan Tower (officially called the YTN Seoul Tower). You go to the top of the tower and you see everything. And there's also some really cool mountains in Seoul, which you can go up to and you can get some really nice views. So that's really nice and really pretty to see. Other than that, you should definitely go to Gangnam (a trendy Seoul neighborhood) and check out the shopping. [There are] lots of outlets, restaurants and stuff like that. Also, Itaewon (a trendy Seoul neighborhood), is nice to go to. There's a street called World Food Street and there's restaurants from many different cultures. [There are] a lot of different things you can eat and [you can] explore. So, it's really interesting actually. That's a really, really long list of things, but some other things. Oh, yes. Definitely the palaces. There are I think three, four palaces in Seoul from the Joseon period. People should definitely go check those out. They're really nice, and it's pretty close to the university. So, if you go there, you can go try *hanbok*, which is traditional Korean clothing. You can go walk on the palace grounds on the inside, the palaces. Also, they have a museum so that you can really see some traditional items that were kept in store.

LB: Since you didn't get to do some of the stuff you wanted to do, what would you do if you had free time? I guess it would depend on the day, right?

TK: In South Korea there are so many cities and I have developed this new obsession of little metropolitan regions. So, anything with a subway interests me and buildings. I am both very much a nature person and very much an urban person as well.

LB: Did you have a favorite little neighborhood?

TK: Neighborhood in Seoul?

LB: Yeah.

TK: I would say actually Dongtan (a township south of Seoul) which is a little city. But it was developed I think after 2010. It used to be all countryside and they popped up the city within a few years. I went there and I went to the zoo there. My friend drove me there. It takes about an hour [or] an hour 20 minutes from Seoul to get there by car. So that was really nice. But in Seoul, I would say my favorite place to go was probably Hongdae (a trendy Seoul neighborhood).

LB: Going back to earlier when you were discussing your friendships with Koreans, did any of them have any questions about your experience in America? Were they a little more comfortable with it than their parents?

TK: They were very curious. They were asking what New York City is like, because they know I'm from New York. It's the same way I was very interested to go to Seoul and go to school. They have this very big fantasy image of New York City. Whereas to me, I think New York City's overrated. That's because I've lived there, not in New York City, but right outside. I've just been around it. When you're living in an area, you kind of lose appeal to wherever you are. So, they have very high expectations of American glamor, I would say. There's this image too that they're very interested in.

LB: That makes sense. [It] might have to do with all the movies and music that they listen to that is American. When you first got there, did you have any culture shocks? Was anything really surprising or [did you have] moments when you [thought] I don't know what to do because I'm not from here?

TK: I was kind of shocked by the lack of culture shock to be honest. But I would definitely say I was prepared, so I kind of knew what I was getting into. I had familiarized myself beforehand with the culture. So, I kind of knew what to do. Now one thing I can't stop doing is bowing, it's not a full bow but you just nod your head when you're saying thank you. There are just some mannerisms that I have now which I gained there that I can't get rid of.

LB: That's funny. Are people a little bit more deferential? And does that translate to class? Do you think people are a bit more respectful?

TK: People are pretty respectful. Even cashiers, they're very respectful to you [and] you're respectful to them back and they're very friendly and very helpful. In terms of customer service Korea is very good. There's this experience that you get whenever you go to a Starbucks, or even a fast-food place that it's a very positive experience.

LB: That's nice. Do you think that there's anything in Korea that they do better than the United States and you wish we adopted?

TK: I wish the US could adopt public transportation. That is phenomenal. I can get on a bus and then get on a subway and then get back on a bus and all within the same route. So, if I have this planned out, I can get a five, to even at most a 20-minute wait, for the next thing. I can get somewhere by taking multi transportation means, you know, you can just take many different transportations to get to your destination and you can interchange them because they all work on a schedule.

LB: That's so nice. Going back to what you said earlier, how did you prepare and learn a lot about Korean culture?

TK: I did not want to get caught up in Orientalizing. Because obviously I learned on my own through the fact that I'm an East Asian studies major, that really helps because I have an academic background. I'm not just exposed to media and culture. I have a background in readings and textbooks and academic literature. I think that definitely played a role into preparing me.

LB: Do you think that people that you were friends with approached getting meals in a different way? Is eating more intentional? Or is it kind of similar to the US?

TK: Eating is definitely more intentional, but also, it's very fast at the same time. Here you have to wait for a very long time in any restaurant you go to. [In Korea] you can get your food in five minutes in most places. They're very fast bringing the food out, but that also has to go with intention. You're going there to eat, right? You're not necessarily there to fully socialize. Of course, eating is definitely a social experience. So here, going to a restaurant is a whole endeavor, a whole two, three-hour experience. But there it's very intentional. You go, you eat and you leave. So that was definitely one thing.

LB: How would you describe the restaurants?

TK: I never went to any fancy Michelin star [resturaunts]. I mostly just went to street shops or those kinds of restaurants. They're not as big obviously. And I didn't really go to any fine western dining experiences. Why would I? It’s kind of ‘popup shoppy,’ you have these little open shops. You go in, you sit down and you order your food. You eat, and then you just leave.

LB: Coming back from Korea, what are you taking with you? I know you developed your skincare and perhaps your fashion talents, but what else are you bringing back with you?

TK: Bringing back? Well, one thing is network connections. I made really good friends, even in the US who live in Wisconsin [and] go to UW Madison. I definitely have more friends and connections and it's nice to have those friendships. In terms of life lessons, I've definitely mellowed out personality-wise. I used to be very hyper. I'm not sure how much of that is just timing and coincidental development. But I've definitely mellowed out because Korea's a very much [about] listening, especially in the classroom setting. It's very much a listen before we talk kind of thing. I just got that perspective that people are very reserved. You keep to yourself in the sense that [you] don't really intrude in other people's face. So, you keep to yourself as much as you can. It's a very collective society in that everyone's working towards a collective goal. You do things for the better of society. You do things for your family and those are your priorities over yourself.

LB: That makes sense. When you go on the street, are you expected to mind your own business more? Or is it acceptable to say hi to people or stare?

TK: Of course, if you see someone you know you're going to say hi, everyone does that. But it's not that common to go to someone and say I like your outfit. That probably won't really happen that often.

LB: It's interesting that collectivism really shapes the culture in Korea, and to that note that they're really bothered by the American troops

TK: I wouldn't say that [they're] very much bothering them. It's not that they think about it every day. It's just very much a presence that that is there. You can't have a nightlife experience without seeing people who are from the American military.

LB: So, it's still pretty prevalent. Do you know for what reason they are there?

TK: Well, people [are there for] different reasons. I have one person I know, or actually two people I know, they do ROTC training. I don't really know, in detail. They're from the military, but they're not in the military. So, they're there doing training and then they can stay a certain amount of time while they're doing that training and then they can come back.

LB: I know [it's] probably unlikely that you know anything about this, but I know Professor Diederich mentioned that prostitution is still prevalent. Did you hear anything about that?

TK: Actually, that was really funny because one day I was I think in Hongdae and I saw this business card on the floor and I looked at it and it was a card. I guess for [a woman's] escort services. That was a little shocking to me. And I was confused because at the time I didn't really understand. I guess my understanding was very superficial. I [thought that] prostitution's illegal. It just struck me. Obviously, that's going to happen. Everything that's illegal is going to happen. But that was my only experience seeing that.

LB: Now knowing what you know, how has your understanding of prostitution changed?

TK: It's definitely more under wraps. There are people who do it for a living, but those places are camp towns, which are no longer really in the city area. So, those are [not] going to be

something which someone would see in their work life if they're working in Korea or [in] the study abroad experience. Those things you have to go looking for. You're not going to come across it, but I think on a subtle note some people do engage. I don't really know how the logistics of that works [or] if it's endorsed. I overlooked seeing that business card. But now after we were learning about it in class, that was just the one memory that I had.

LB: That's really crazy actually. Do you think that the dating culture is a little different? How do you approach someone?

TK: Dating culture is different in the sense that here we have apps. There there's very much a greater sentiment on meeting people in real life. That is very much the emphasis [that] everything online is fake. There are these things [called] *Hunting pocha* which is a traditional Korean word for a pub. I don't know how to describe it, but basically you go sit down in table. It's called hunting. I never went to one, but there were people who go to hunting bars where you go to tables to talk to people. So, you go to this speed dating bar specifically looking [to use] speed dating to meet people.

LB: That's really interesting. When you went to a club [did] people still approach others in a casual sense?

TK: Yes!

LB: Do you have a conception about the difference in personality between the people that you met in Korea and in the US? Do you think there's any differences? Or maybe it's more individual personality?

TK: That's a good question. I think people's personalities come out more when you get to know them. When you're first getting to know people, it's very hard to pick out their personality. [With] Korean people there's a very similar way in which they present themselves upon the first meeting. Then you get to know their personality after that. But, here, it's very obvious to see someone's personality quickly.

LB: People are a little bit more reserved?

TK: Yes.

LB: When you're discussing hobbies with your friends, what would that kind of entail?

TK: A lot of my guy friends, they go to the gym. It's very common for men to go to the gym because of your aesthetic. A lot of people I met in some way or form work out. A lot of people are interested in soccer. That was interesting. [The] hobbies [were] pretty similar across the people that I met, but there are other people who do coding for fun.

LB: Do you think it's more of an expectation that men go to the gym over women?

TK: Women also go to the gym a lot. A lot of people go to the gym. Another friend of mine actually goes scuba diving, so that's pretty cool. He goes to Indonesia every now and then and goes scuba diving. And also skiing, a lot of people I know like to ski.

LB: Was there good skiing in Korea?

TK: I didn't go skiing when I was there. If I brought my skis I would've, but honestly, I probably did not have time to go skiing. Actually, more people snowboard than they ski there. So that was interesting.

LB: That is interesting. I don't know why, but I wouldn't have really expected that. I feel like snowboarding is harder. But did you notice gender differences between your friends?

TK: Yes, usually boys and girls keep to their separate groups. So that was something interesting. There's also this expectation, unspoken rule, that when you start dating someone, you're supposed to cut out all of your opposite gender friends. There's very much a gendered sphere. Boys really interact with guys [in] same gender groups.

LB: It's interesting that once you start dating, you're not supposed to have friends of the opposite gender.

TK: It's not everybody, but that's the sentiment I heard from both girls and guys. I have friends in Korea who are both girls and guys, but it really depends even across our generation. There are differences in opinion about that issue. Should you have friends who are of the opposite gender, or do you never have friends of the opposite gender, or if you have friends of the opposite gender when you start dating someone do you cut them out? That's another layer of the issue. And then the other layer is the people [who say] it doesn't really matter who you're friends with. There's kind of a spectrum of that sentiment.

LB: That makes sense. Did your friends ever discuss politics with you or did you hear them discussing it?

TK: Especially some of my more liberal friends, they don’t like the current president.

LB: What specifically did they not like [about him] if you remember it?

TK: Some of my friends [think he] might have been too conservative. But I also have friends who actually voted for the current president. I'm not very familiar with the Korean political scene. But it's definitely not the same as what we would call American conservatism or American liberalism. It's different. The definitions are different and the value systems are different.

LB: Did [politics] seem less prevalent in the culture than American politics is right now?

TK: Yeah. I mean among friends [I heard it less] but that could also just be that I'm a foreigner. Obviously my Korean friends may not talk about politics with me just because it

didn't apply to me, so that could be part of it. But from perspective political conversations didn't really come up that much.

LB: That makes sense. I feel like if someone studied abroad and came to Colby, that would not be their experience.

TK: That's very true actually. That goes into the academic environment and the social academic environment. You know how politics is a very big issue in the academic scene across the United States.

LB: So [politics] isn't brought us up as much?

TK: No, not in the university setting.

LB: Did anyone talk about the military service that they would have [to do]?

TK: Yeah, that's actually a good question. A few of my friends are all going into the military. One of my best friends Tae-hoon, he's going April 1st. He's a junior as well. He's two months older than me. He's doing his service starting on April 1st, so he won't be able to use his phone for a few months, or one or two months, and then they can get their phone back. But then I have another friend, Hojin, who is doing his service right now. And then my other friend, his name is Scott. Scott's actually a very interesting story. He is Korean born, but he went to Emory. [He] graduated from Emory and he has this Korean American identity. He [said that he's] doing his military service and all these guys are just complaining all the time. And I [said that] I'm surprised you are not complaining because you have [an] American experience of freedom, [being] able to not do it. That was an interesting [thing] to hear from him. But he's doing his military service right now, and from his perspective it's not that bad.

LB: Is it for a certain [number] of years?

TK: 18 months.

LB: 18 months, okay.

TK: Depending on the person you do something different in the military. It also depends on where you get assigned. When you enlist, there are rules in some areas depending on what and where you're assigned to. Or what brigade or unit you're assigned to. It depends on who's in charge. Some actually let their hair [grow and] you don't actually have to buzz your hair. It depends. Some are very strict about conformity and [require] short hair and others are laxer. It varies. That's what I've heard from my friends who are in military service who are doing it in different places.

LB: Do you know if women also have to serve?

TK: No.

LB: Okay just men. That's interesting. I feel I might potentially feel scammed if I was a man. I guess that's common because in the US you only have to sign up for the draft if you're a man.

TK: Yeah. I'm under the impression that many people don't want to do it very soon and they have to plan for it. It's very hard because some people will do it after their first two years of college and then they'll go back to school and finish their college. For many of the people I know it's a very big hindrance to them because you [think that you] need a plan for this and it can be frustrating. That's one of the things that I've heard. From my understanding it's frustrating for people because especially if you're very driven and ambitious for your own career and then you have this national obligation. It can be frustrating because it impedes on your own goals and then you have to do it. It's something you have to do and you have to stop everything that you are doing to do for 18 months. I can understand why many people complain about the military, especially younger people who haven't finished their college education, but it's a double-edged sword. There's people who go to college, they finish their college first, and then they do their military service. And then there's others who do [service], like I mentioned before, while they're in college and they take a gap semester, [or] a gap year.

LB: That definitely makes sense. It's just so interesting from an American perspective to hear that you have to go the military.

TK: And it's very disruptive to individual lives for sure.

LB: Did anyone you were friends with discuss their plans [and] what kind of jobs that they were looking for after graduation?

TK: So, one of my friends, he's working in Samsung for engineering. There's a very big corporate culture in Korea. So, in terms [of] industry there's not that big of a diversity in terms of the job market [and] what you're looking for. There's food service. After an academic education in higher education, most people will go work for corporate industry, whether that be engineering, computer science, medicine, business, things like that.

LB: And its pretty common right after college to go into [those fields]?

TK: Yeah.

LB: Do you know if there's a lot of stay-at-home mothers in Korea?

TK: Yes, there definitely are. There are stay-at-home mothers in a sense, but they are in control of their kids' academic career. So, especially when their kids are younger [they are] talking to other moms or figuring out their private education or tutoring just to get an upper hand in the university system, which is very competitive. There are stay-at-home moms in that sense, but also a lot of women work. Most of the Korean professors at Yonsei [University] were women, the Korean language professors.

LB: Do you have a final comment about your experience in Korea?

TK: I definitely want to go back. That's for sure. But, I wanted to go back [and] do the same thing really quickly. But now that I'm back I'm going to wait a little bit before I go back [and] go back under different circumstances.

LB: What do you mean by that?

TK: Maybe post-grad or [an] internship or just go to travel. But I definitely do see myself there at least for a short period of time and working there. I want to get the chance to explore many of the other places that I didn't get to go to. And I think I would have to do that over a longer period of time so, it's actually something I'm thinking about.

LB: Well, that's awesome. You probably need a good amount of time then. Thank you so much Tegh, I really appreciate your time.