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**Aspiring to the Good Life in Seoul: Ethics and Economics in the Narratives of Young South Korean**

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Summary

Due to changing economic conditions, it appears to be increasingly difficult for young South Koreans today to reproduce middle-class status. In public discourse, these difficulties are expressed in the terms ‘Spec’ or ‘Give-up Generation’. At the same time, young people are starting to question middle-class lifestyles and values and turn to practices which emphasise different standards. Carolin Landgraf explores how young people living, studying and working in contemporary Seoul negotiate different values and practices to achieve what they define as a good life in a middle-class context.

Landgraf concentrates especially on four central themes: education, marriage, consumption, and work. Imaginations of education are highly contested in South Korean society. These young people engage critically with social norms and values to form their own imaginations about how education and success should be conceptualised. In designing and planning their weddings, young people negotiate not only practices and values about the form and content of the ceremony, but also reflect on married life to be. Some young people also considered not marrying at all. Consumption, especially of clothing and education and other certificates, and the different anticipations that come with them, illustrate how young people's values and ideas contrast with social expectations of beauty and 'making Spec'. These young people's hopes for good work not only include an adequate salary, but also the possibility of completing interesting tasks and forming good social relationships with their coworkers. Landgraf concludes that the narratives of these young people assume that a good life is to be achieved when their own aspirations and those of their wider social surroundings can be balanced.