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Master's Thesis of Sociology

Comparing Graduate Students'
Research Diversity in Sociology in
Korea and Taiwan by Analyzing
Keywords of Degree Theses in
2014–2018

August 2020

Graduate School of Social Sciences
Seoul National University
Sociology Major

LIAO, TZU-HSUAN

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Abstract

Korea and Taiwan are considered to share a similar trajectory in terms of their democratic and economic development. However, each country still has significant differences due to their distinct cultural and historical contexts regarding the main concerns of their societies. It is reasonable to suspect that these similarities and differences in the aspirations and concerns of the two societies might reflect the topics of graduate students' degree theses in sociology. Using co-word (co-occurrence of words) analysis in bibliometrics, this study set out to identify, compare, and explain whether and how the primary sociological research conducted by graduate students in Korea and Taiwan has differed in these two newly industrialized economies in East Asia over the latest five years (2014–2018). We believe this is a worthwhile endeavor because contrasting the degree theses of graduate students who majored in sociology in the two countries helps provide a better understanding of each country's distinct social and cultural contexts. It also provides a case study of how intellectual and societal factors interact with one another in both countries; meanwhile, it creates the possibility of identifying trends of future study in the academic field of sociology.

Keyword: sociology, topic of degree thesis, graduate students, comparative study between Korea and Taiwan, research diversity, co-word network

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Despite Korea and Taiwan sharing a trajectory in their democratic and economic development, both countries have significant differences due to their varied cultural and historical contexts in terms of the main concerns of their societies. It is reasonable to suspect that the similarities and differences in the aspirations and concerns of these two societies might reflect the topics of students' research in sociology. Using co-word (co-occurrence of words) analysis in bibliometrics, this study set out to identify, compare, and explain whether and how the major sociological research themes differ in these two newly industrialized economies in East Asia. We believe this is a worthwhile endeavor because contrasting the sociological research of the two countries helps provide a better understanding of each country's distinct social and cultural context. It also provides a case study of how intellectual and societal factors interact with one another in both countries.

As a Taiwanese student who graduated from her own country's university after majoring in library and information science and who is now studying sociology in Korea, I would like to determine differences in sociology graduate students' choices of degree thesis topics between Korea and Taiwan through social network analysis (SNA). Meanwhile, I will attempt to relate such research diversity to local social issues.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to identify popular topics of degree theses in sociology over the last five years (2014–2018), respectively, in Korea and Taiwan, by looking at differences in academic trends between the two countries and attempting to explain causes and effects.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Korea and Taiwan

Taiwan and Korea are considered to have shared several similarities during the postwar period (e.g., Japanese colonial legacy and postwar geopolitics) (Hsieh, 2011). Most importantly, both countries present showcases of the theory of the developmental state. The similarities between the two countries imply a convergence in their development path during the postwar period (Hsieh, 2011), and yet Taiwan and Korea have evolved different patterns in their social values.

Take gender issues, for example. According to Yen and Yang (2011), for both Japan and Korea, the correlation between gender attitudes and marital attitudes is consistently positive. However, Taiwanese women tend to be more conservative in terms of their gender ideology. Moreover, their attitudes toward divorce are far more liberal than female respondents from the other two countries. Regardless of their gender ideology,

Taiwanese women's preference for divorce as a means of exiting a dysfunctional marriage can be interpreted as a way of exercising their autonomy for another chance at satisfaction and happiness in life, rather than them being trapped in a strained relationship due to the heavy pressure of maintaining the role of wife in the family.

2.2 Degree Theses Topic Selections of Graduate Students

Education has been proven to be an essential factor that can change a person and guarantee that society keeps improving to create a more satisfying status for living.

In Bowen's work, "Investment in Learning: The Individual and Social Value of American Higher Education" (1977), Fincher (1996) mentions the following: "There were dreary debates about social or distributive justice, rates of return on investments, and the effects of college on starting salaries, lifetime earnings, and the heights of career ladders." In such analyses of educational outcomes, sociologists and economists have used similar statistical techniques that were at cross purposes regarding their statistical models. Sociologists sought the determinants of job status, prestige, and earnings in home, family, community, and social class; economists studied the productive functions of incremental inputs to schools and colleges with the expectation that improved outcomes would follow.

Moreover, it was said that graduates of American colleges and universities are more

likely to continue learning after formal instruction completion, to display better self-understanding and self-acceptance, and to show more sympathy for the rights of social groups that have not fully shared the benefits of an affluent society. In brief, Bowen (1977) makes a convincing argument that college graduates do obtain better jobs, become better citizens, act more intelligently as consumers, and enjoy a better quality of life. Each of these advantages rebounds to the credit of society. As the level of education in a society rises, the social roles of employees, consumers, citizens, and parents are significantly influenced (Fincher, 1996). Here, a question arises regarding the higher education system in other countries. What is the current situation in East Asia or, more specifically, in Korea and Taiwan?

There is no denying that graduate school can provide students with the opportunity to pursue their interests in a particular field of study and can help them develop the knowledge and skills required for their future careers (Poock & Love, 2001 as cited in Lei, 2009). One of the most critical decisions graduate students face is which master's thesis or doctoral dissertation research topic to select and that will present the best fit for them, both academically and personally. Many graduate students nationwide view the research topic selection (decision-making) process as quite stressful and time consuming (Poock & Love, 2001; Lei, 2009).

Meanwhile, as the degree thesis is regarded as the final and most significant

deliverable in the journey to achieve a master's or doctorate degree, students worry early and genuinely about the topic of their dissertation. The topic's selection criteria are well known (Isaac et al., 1989; Lei, 2009; Useem, 1997) and include the student's familiarity with and interest in a problem, the faculty's availability, as well as preferences and practical considerations, such as the timeline and funding. Table 1 summarizes the selection factors, as obtained by Lei from a review of the literature (Lei, 2009). While each factor in Table 1 is a legitimate consideration, they are not all equally important (Ségol, 2014).

Table 1. Factors Influencing Graduate Students' Topic Selection

Category	Factor
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advisory committee approval ● Advisory committee support ● Closeness of topic to advisor's research ● Ongoing research projects
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Familiarity with a topic ● Personal interest
Nature of Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uniqueness ● Depth of existing research ● Theoretical or political controversy
Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hot topic (current or future trends) ● Springboard for future research
Duration of Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Solvable or manageable research problem or question ● Tractability of research subjects ● Research timeline
Research Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Availability of research funding ● Amount of funding ● Duration of funding with a possible extension
Eventual Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Publishable research topic ● Significance of a topic ● Readers' interest in a topic ● Readers' appreciation of a topic

Source: Lei, 2009 as cited in Ségol, 2014

2.3 Co-Word Analysis

As far as “identifying the popular topics” is concerned, we chose a brief view of methodology to adapt in this study: co-word analysis in bibliometrics. The bibliometric analysis method, which has the fundamental characteristic of being quantitative, has been applied by several researchers in their studies (Wu, Xie, Dai, & Li, 2016). Recently, the research scope has continuously expanded.

By applying the bibliometric analysis method, we can determine the research distribution. The method also has a significant influence on adjusting the research direction and discovering trendy topics (Yang, Wu, & Cui, 2011). Its principle can be summarized as follows: two or more terminologies representing a particular research topic that appear in the same dissertation have essential relationships (An & Wu, 2011).

Furthermore, the more co-occurrence between two keywords, the closer their relationship. To reveal the structure and development of research fields, certain co-word analysis methods will be applied based on the co-word matrix, which consists of factor analysis, cluster analysis, multivariate analysis, and SNA. These methods contribute significantly to helping researchers learn an overview of a field. As a result, it plays an essential role in identifying the value of an academic discipline (Zong, et al., 2013; Musgrove, Binns, Page-Kennedy, & Thelwall, 2003, as cited in Chen, Chen, Wu, Xie, & Li, 2016).

Co-word analysis has been used by several researchers to study conceptual work in different domains. Some social researchers use co-word analysis to analyze the structure and development of scientific literature on gender differences in science (Dehdarirad, Villarroya, & Barrios, 2014 as cited in Chen, Chen, Wu, Xie, & Li, 2016).

It appears that co-word analysis is more pertinent for the study of graduate theses as they tend to receive fewer citations. Therefore, it would make the co-citation network very sparse.

The semantics of the co-word network also offer a rare opportunity to study the concerns and aspirations of sociology graduate students in both Korea and Taiwan.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

This study's primary purpose is to compare the academic fields of sociological degree thesis studies in Korea and Taiwan in 2014–2018 using keywords analysis. We specifically attempted to answer the following interrelated research questions:

First, are there different tendencies toward research topics in sociology degree theses in Korea and Taiwan? If so, what are these areas of research? Second, what are the reasons for such differences between Korea and Taiwan? Are they related to the

social issues we encounter these days? Based on the findings above, how can we apply the results to future research in sociology? To answer these questions, we performed the following analytical procedures to identify the research diversity in sociology degree theses in Korea and Taiwan.

To begin with, we collected all the master's and doctoral theses of the department of sociology published in 2014–2018, respectively, through Korea and Taiwan's most authorized database. Then, we checked the bibliographic information of the articles we collected to ensure the data were appropriate for constructing networks, including the title, author, university, department, published year, degree, and keywords. While translating the above information into English to fit in the SNA program, authority control of the keywords was essential because it would alter the results that affect our interpretation of the networks.

3.1.1 Korea

Korea degree theses in sociology published by 31 Korea universities were collected through the Research Information Sharing Service database provided by the Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS), a public institution under the Korean Ministry of Education that promotes various projects and academic research related to Information and Communication Technology in education ranging

from primary to higher education.

The process of Korean data collection was quite challenging because there were lots of missing data or theses without keywords in the database. Even though we made every attempt to contact each school's department directly and to find papers through other databases (i.e., schools' libraries, the Library of Korean Study, the National Assembly Library of the Republic of Korea), there were still difficulties accessing the papers we needed (we collected 626 articles from 31 Korea universities, 91 articles of them without keywords).

Table 2. Data Collected in Korea

	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		checked	
	MA	PhD										
고려대	14	3	20	3	12	3	11	6	10	5	87	도서관
서울대	10	6	11	3	11	3	19	8	10	6	87	v
연세대	10	4	10	5	9	3	10	5	4	2	62	답장 X
서울시립대	10		7		9	1	5	1	7	2	42	답장 X
서강대	5		2	1	5	1	9	1	9	2	35	v
성균관대			9	2	7		9	1	5		33	연락 X
이대	2		9	2	3	1	5	2	6	2	32	답장 X
영남대	1	3	1	2	1	7	1	2	6		24	연락 X
중앙대	8	2	3	1	3		1	2	3	1	24	v
성공회대	1	4	4		3	1	4	3	2		22	연락 X
한양대	3		1		3	2	7	2	3	1	22	연락 X
경북대	4		9		1		1		1		16	연락 X
경희대	3	1	3				3		2	4	16	답장 X
전북대	3		4	3			2	1	2		15	답장 X
부산대	2	1			3		4		3		13	연락 X
한국학중앙연구원	3		3		1	1	2	2		1	13	도서관
계명대	2	3	1		2		1		1	1	11	답장(기다림) X
충남대		1		1	1		4	1	3		11	v
동국대			4		1		2	1	1		9	답장 X
전남대	1	1	3		1	1		1	1		9	연락 X
대구가톨릭			1		3		1		3		8	답장 X
충북대	2		1		3				1		7	답장 X
제주대	1	1		2						1	5	답장 X
한림대					2		1			2	5	v
가톨릭	1				2		1				4	답장 X
국민대	1			1	1				1		4	연락 X
숭실대	1		1		1		1				4	개인정보보호
강원대						1			1		2	연락 X
동아대							1	1			2	연락 X
경상대	1										1	답장 X
아주대							1				1	연락 X
	89	30	107	26	88	25	106	40	85	30	626	

Numbers typed in red font represent data revision.

Universities with yellow interiors are departments without email contact addresses.

3.1.2 Taiwan

As for Taiwan's data collection process, we used the authorized database National Digital Library of Thesis and Dissertations in Taiwan (NDLTD) and found 13 universities, with 539 articles meeting all the conditions we established for the study.

3.2 Vocabulary Control

Initially, a total of 5870 keywords (Korea: 3332; Taiwan: 2538) were collected from the chosen 1074 articles (Korea: 535; Taiwan: 539). In the literature, certain related concepts are represented by different words or phrases. Such words or phrases were standardized by selecting appropriate headings from the vocabulary controlling tool *Thesaurus of Sociological Indexing Terms*, published in 1996 by Sociological Abstracts, Inc. During the process, the author assigned keywords that might be altered/merged/divided into one or more broader, similar term(s) to normalize spelling variations and synonyms of the same concept. For instance, keywords that convey similar meanings, such as “citizen identity,” “citizen-making,” “citizenry,” “citizenship,” and “citizenship status,” were merged into “citizen”; misspelled keywords, such as “academic achievement” and “learning motivation,” were fixed; broadly used terms

were filtered; meanwhile, keywords appearing in singular and plural forms of nouns, gerunds, abbreviations, and acronyms were also merged. As a consequence, from a total of 4644 keywords appearing in the searching results—2534 in the Korea and 2110 in the Taiwan theses collections—had distinct concepts initially identified after vocabulary control.

3.3 Data Analysis

After using the coding program Python and statistical functions in program UCINET, we constructed a co-word network for Korea's and Taiwan's sociology degree theses collections by importing the data into Gephi, an SNA program. To create the co-word networks, keywords were used as nodes, and edges were calculated using the inclusion index (Courtial, 1986; Callon, Law, & Rip, 1986) to maintain the edge weights' ranges between 0–1.

The inclusion index (I_{ij})

$$I_{ij} = C_{ij} / \min(C_i, C_j)$$

where

C_{ij} denotes the number of documents in which the keyword pair (M_i and M_j)

appears;

C_i denotes the occurrence frequency of keyword M_i in the set of articles; and

$\min(C_i, C_j)$ is the minimum of the two frequencies, C_i and C_j .

Table 3. Contexts of Two Networks

	Universities (Majors)	Theses	Theses with Keywords	Nodes	Edges
Korea	31	626	535 (-91)	2534	21218
Taiwan	12 (13)	539	539	2110	10706

Thus, a total of two term-similarity matrixes (Table 3) were generated to implement the social network analytical methods so that, for example, cohesion, centrality, and community detection could be performed (Table 4):

- **Average degree:** The sum of all the degrees divided by the number of actors in the graph.
- **Average weighted degree:** The average sum of weights of the edges of nodes. The graph is designed in a way that the weight of an edge represents how many times edges are traversed between a pair of nodes (Ayyappan, Nalini, & Kumaravel, 2016).
- **Network diameter:** The maximum internode distance (the “longest shortest path” between any two nodes).
- **Graph density:** The proportion of all possible ties that are present (the sum of the ties divided by the number of possible ties).

- **Modularity:** A measure of the strength of a community partition by considering the degree distribution of nodes (the algorithm will attempt to maximize the within-group link density and minimize between-group linkages).
- **Connected components:** A maximal subgraph in which all nodes are reachable from every other (maximal means that it is the largest possible subgraph: you could not find another node anywhere in the graph such that it could be added to the subgraph and all the nodes in the subgraph would still be connected).
- **Clustering coefficient:** A measure of how close a node's neighbors are to being a clique (in other words, if A connects to B, and B connects to C, then it is likely that A connects to C).
- **Path length:** The graph-distance between a pair of nodes.

Table 4. Statistics of Two Networks

		Korea	Taiwan
Network Overview	Average Degree	16.747	10.148
	Avg. Weighted Degree	7.777	9.75
	Network Diameter	11	17
	Graph Density	0.007	0.005
	Modularity	0.875	0.952
	Connected Components	82	175
Node Overview	Avg. Clustering Coefficient	0.912	0.93
Edge Overview	Avg. Path Length	4.601	6.595

To reveal the major research themes in the co-work networks, modularity-maximizing community detection was performed through Gephi. While choosing “modularity class” to distribute the color of each node and “weighted degree” to adjust the size of each node, the co-word network would look like Figures 1 and 2.

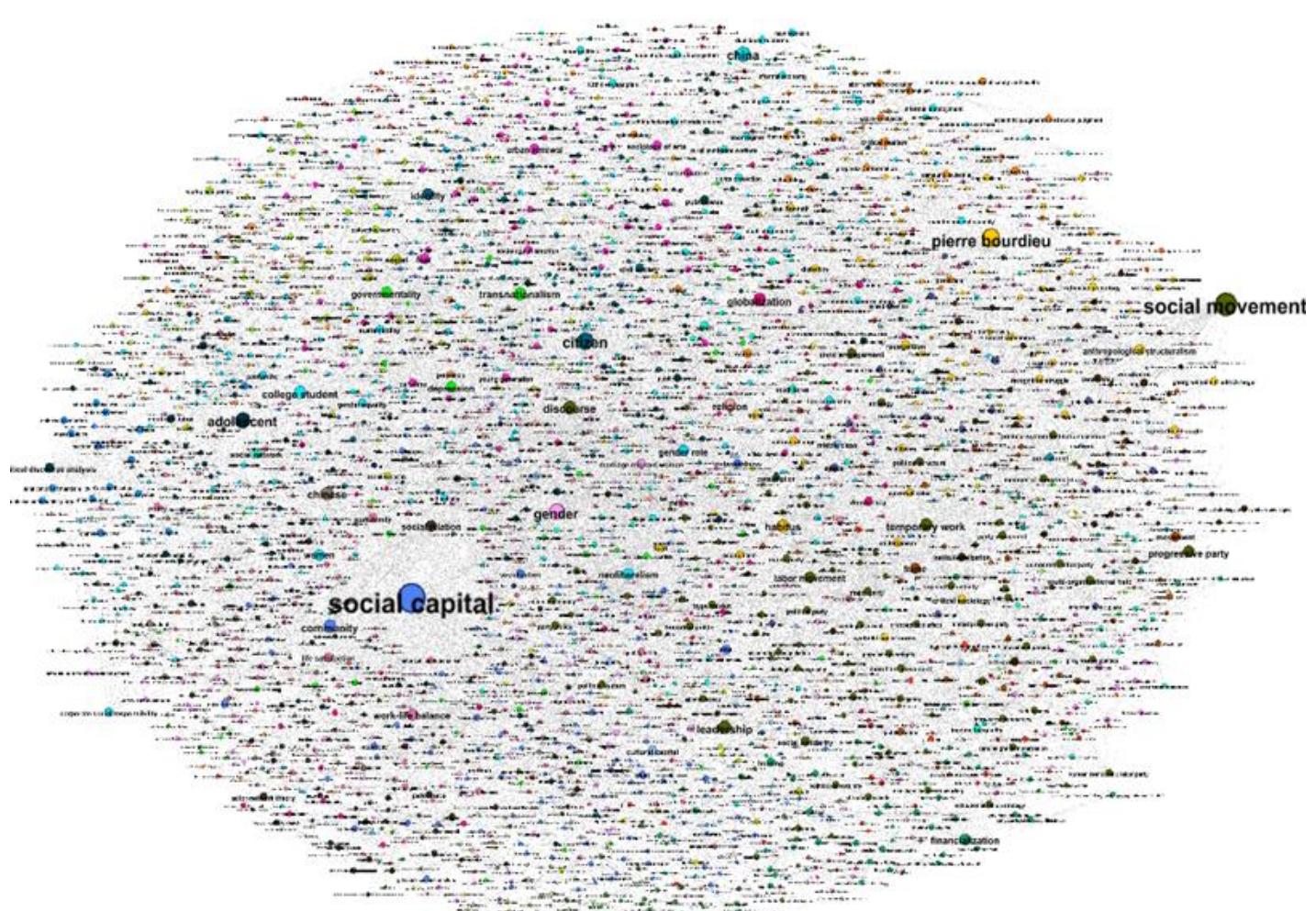


Figure 1. Korea Co-Word Network of Sociology Degree Theses Collection (2014–2018) – original, without filter

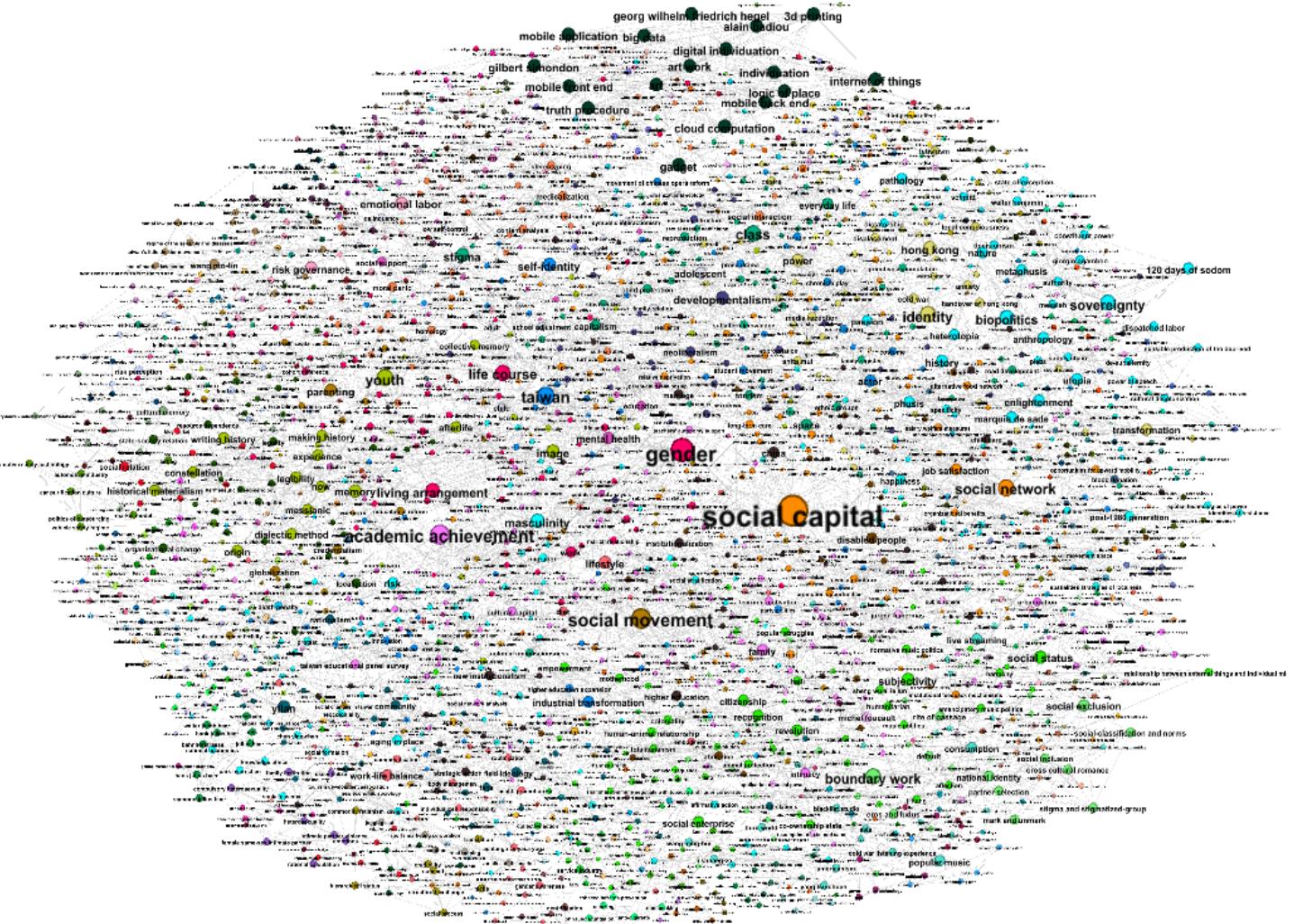


Figure 2. Taiwan Co-Word Network of Sociology Degree Theses Collection (2014–2018) – original, without filter

As the networks based on raw counts have enormous sizes and heterogeneity of terms, filtering is required to create intelligible groups. The filtering criteria and their corresponding parameters were chosen iteratively (Tang, Teng, & Lin, 2019). Furthermore, Tang, Teng, and Lin (2019) emphasize that “An overly high threshold would preserve the most important nodes and edges, only at the expense of a greater loss of information. A low threshold would result in difficulties in interpreting individual

clusters as they tend to lump together unrelated topics. Thus, a trade-off had to be made.”

Considering the opinions mentioned above, we applied the topology filter “giant component” and attribute filter “degree range” to simplify the network structure and to focus on the crucial nodes (keywords with high degrees). Meanwhile, the layout “Force Atlas 2” was used to shape the underlying data with an attempt to focus on different visualized effects brought out by different algorithms (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).

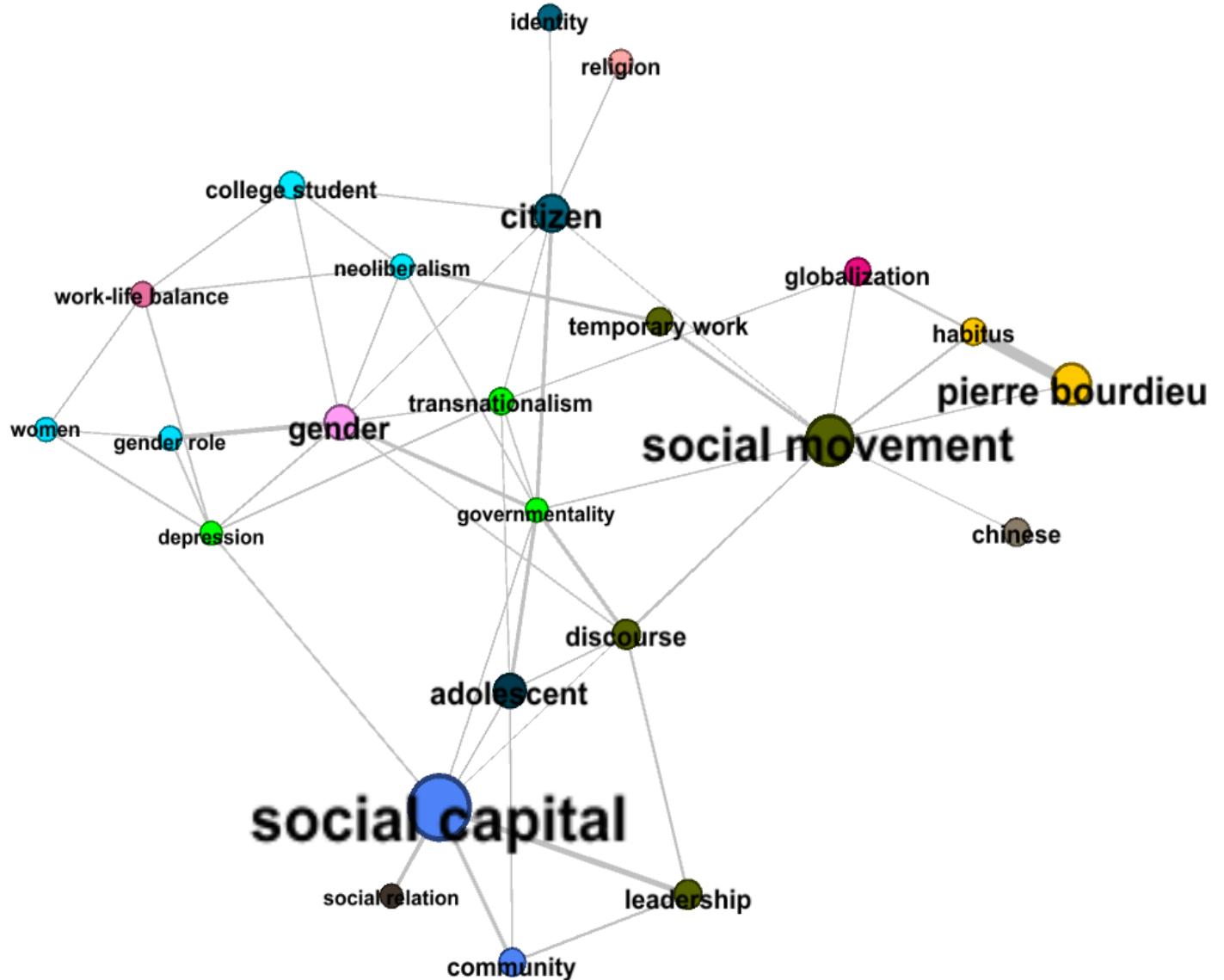


Figure 3. Korea Co-Word Network of Sociology Degree Theses Collection (2014–2018) – filtered, layout *Force Atlas 2*

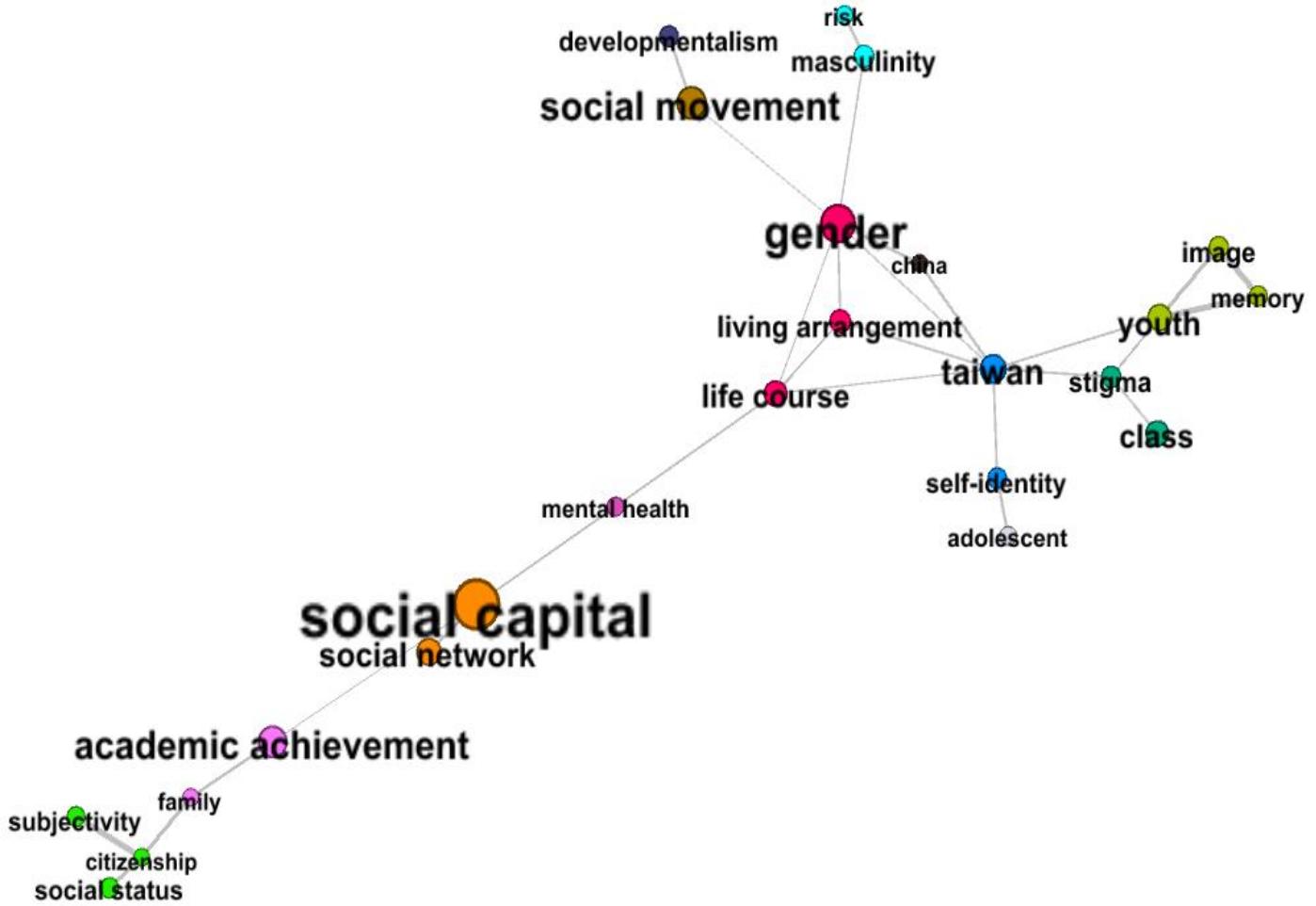


Figure 4. Taiwan Co-Word Network of Sociology Degree Theses Collection (2014–2018) – filtered, layout *Force Atlas 2*

3.4 Comparison of Other Statistics Data

The keyword of an article can represent its main content, and the frequency of occurrence and co-occurrence can reflect themes that focus on a particular field to some extent (Zong, et al., 2013 as cited in Chen, Chen, Wu, Xie, & Li, 2016). According to the statistics data of the research, keywords with a high frequency of occurrence in the respective two countries co-word network include the following:

- Korea (Figure 5): social capital (27), adolescent (14), social movement (13),

gender (13), Chinese (10), China (10), citizen (10), gender role (9), women (8), and identity (8);

- Taiwan (Figure 6): social capital (16), gender (11), academic achievement (10), social movement (9), social network (8), life course (8), Taiwan (7), masculinity (6), class (5), and mental health (5).

While keywords' frequencies of occurrence might be a valuable indicator in identifying different tendencies toward the research topic of sociology degree theses in the two countries, we can find that it is not directly related to the degree in the co-word network. Thus, "occurrence of the word" and "node degree" should be treated as completely different attributes.

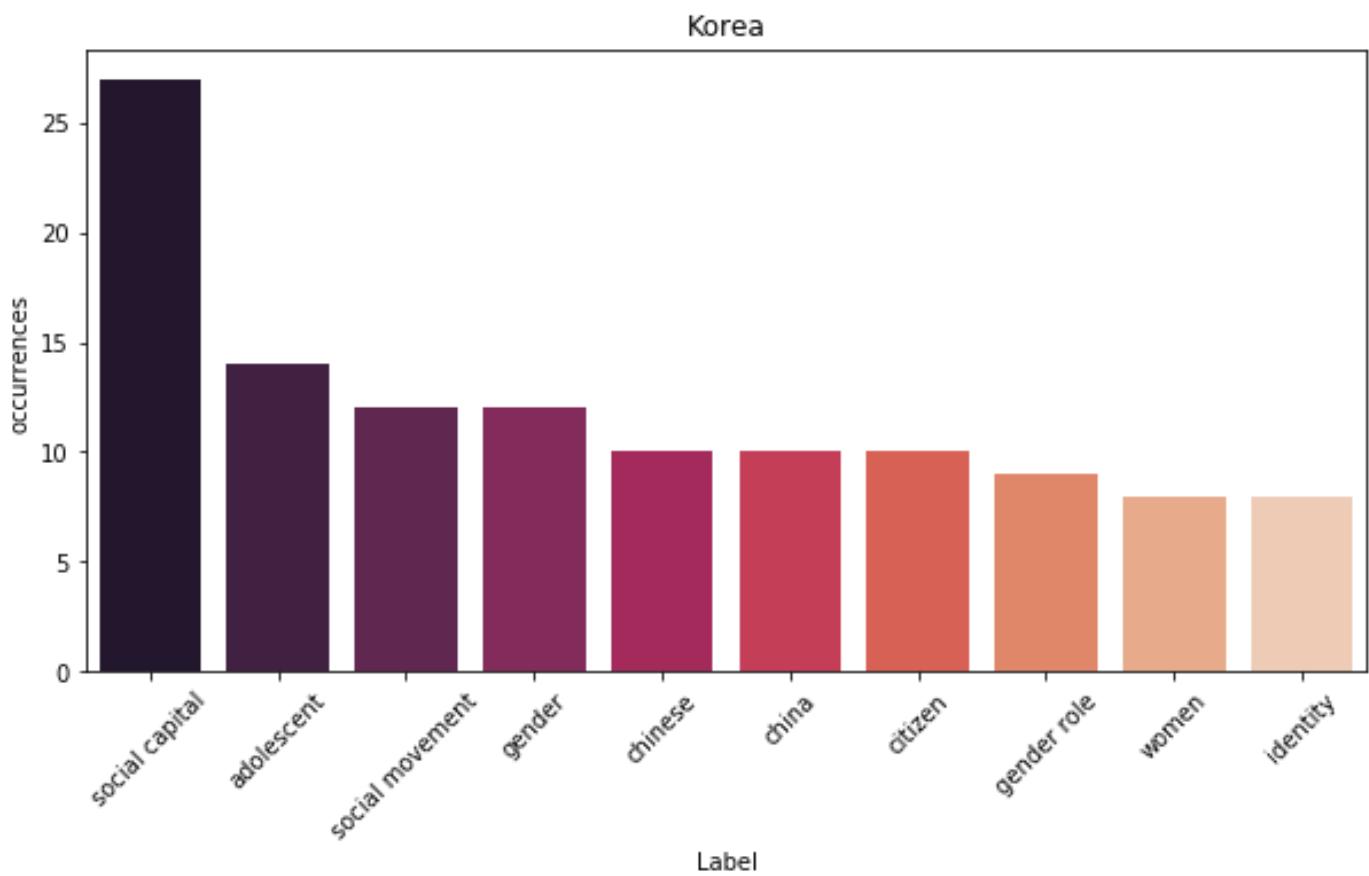


Figure 5. Keywords with High Frequency of Occurrence in Korea Co-Word Network of Sociology Degree Theses Collection (2014–2018)

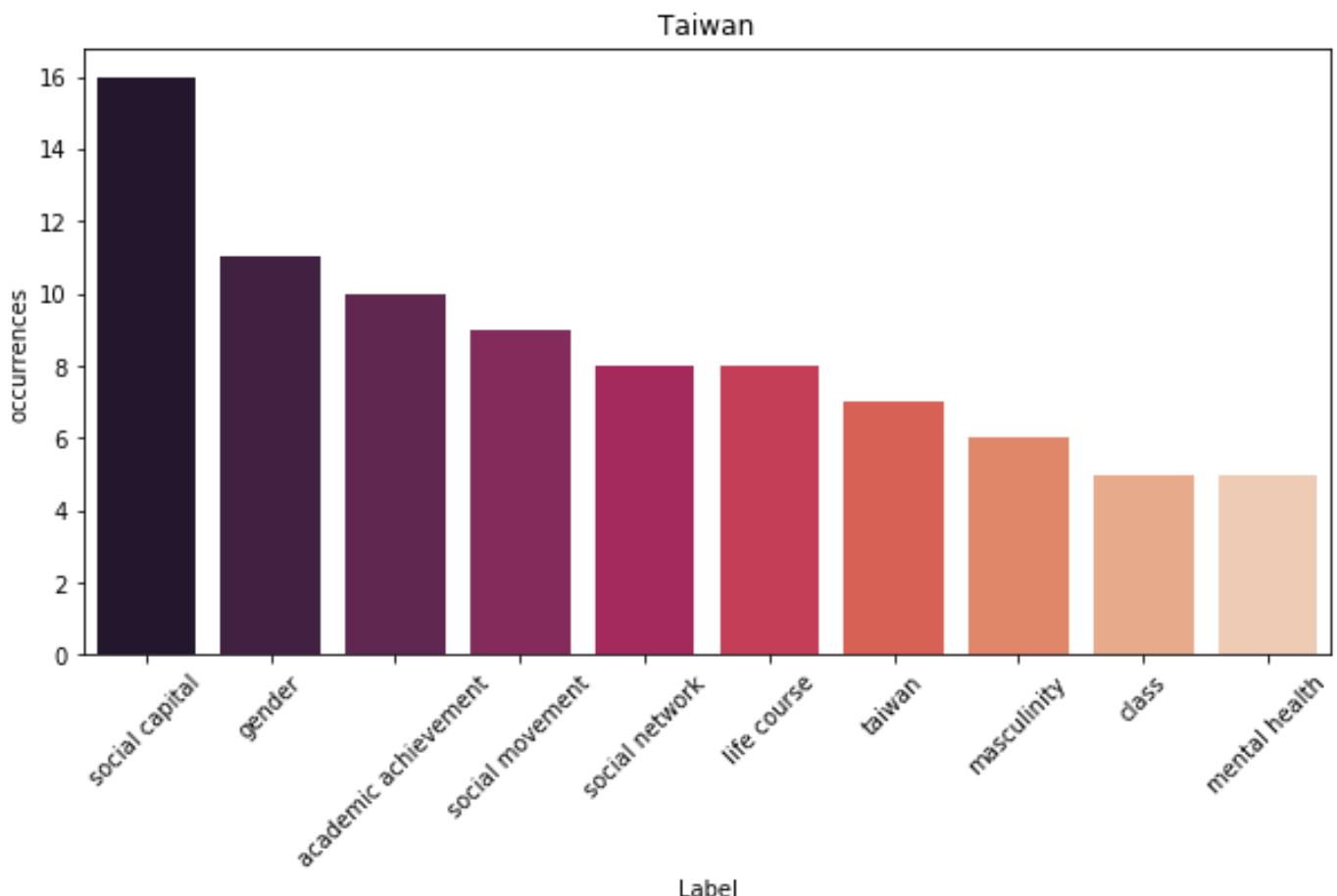


Figure 6. Keywords with High Frequency of Occurrence Taiwan Co-Word Network of Sociology Degree Theses Collection (2014–2018)

Chapter 4. Results

4.1 Co-Word Network Map

Overall, a co-word network map demonstrates the relationships among different themes. To better understand and visualize the interactions between the research themes chosen by graduate students presented in Figures 1 and 2, the same network analysis steps were performed to create visually and analytically effective networks,

respectively, for Korea and Taiwan. In such a context, we find it is most readable when using the “degree range” filter after applying the topology filter “giant component.” Since degrees in network graphs refer to the number of connections leading to or from a node, by filtering the range of degrees, we can reduce the complexity of the graphs. While adjusting the degree range to the value 78 in the Korea network and 32 in the Taiwan network, we can observe a drastically reduced set of nodes and focus on the most highly connected 24 nodes (co-words) at the same time in both networks (Figure 7).

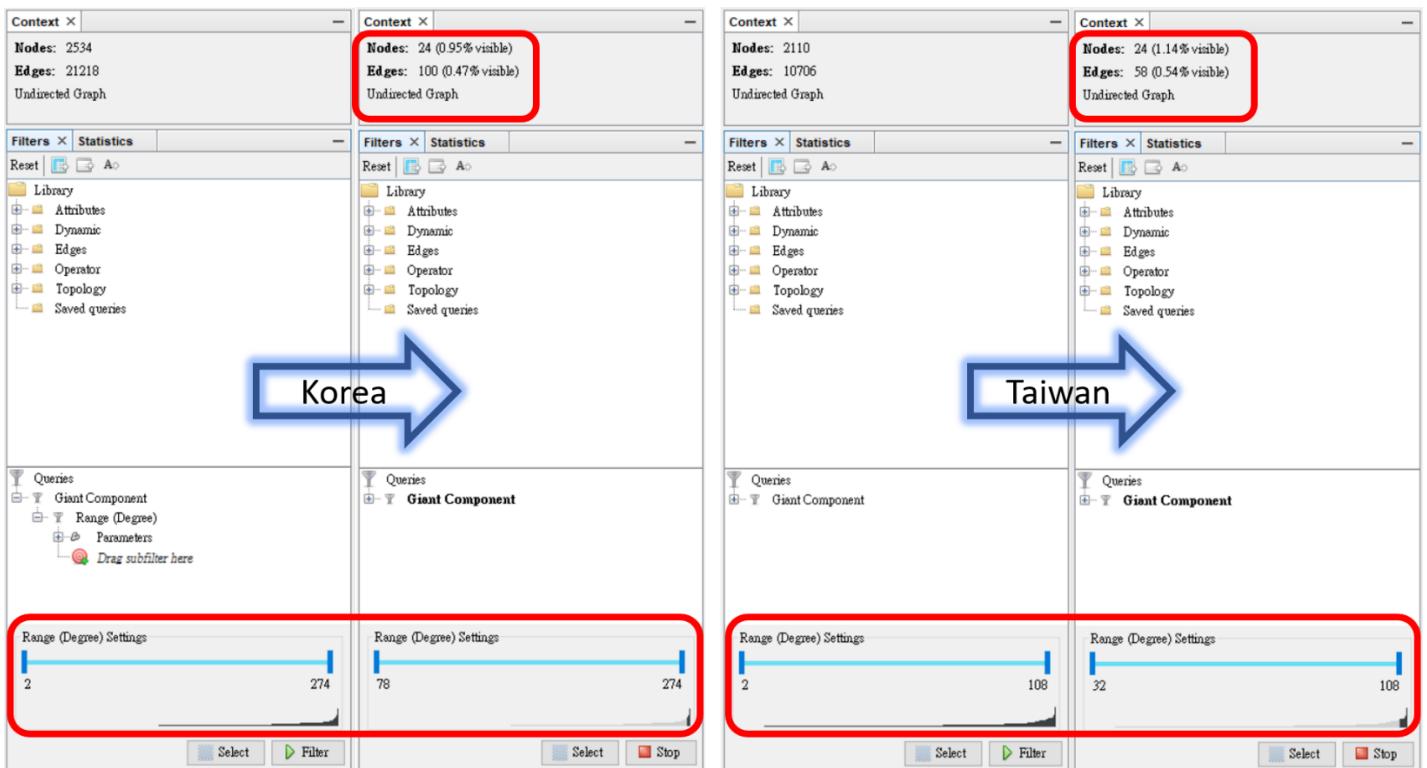


Figure 7. Adjusted Degree Range of the Two Co-Word Networks

4.2 Co-Work Network of Korea

The co-word network highlights the research of economic sociology, civil society, and social relation through terms with the high weighted degrees (Table 5), including “social capital,” “social movement,” “citizen,” “Pierre Bourdieu,” “discourse,” “community,” “governmentality,” “habitus,” “leadership,” and, of course, “social relation” itself. Meanwhile, the gender issue is also popular among Korean graduate students (Figure 3).

Furthermore, studies on globalization, the labor market, personal emotion, and educational environment are in the academic limelight, as well given rapid social changes. Notably, theoretical debates, such as Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault’s opinions, are widely adopted in Korean students’ works.

4.3 Co-Work Network of Taiwan

Looking at Figure 4, we can confirm that economic sociology, gender issues, Taiwanese identity, and academic achievement play important roles when speaking of graduate students’ shared interest in the field of sociology in Taiwan.

Additionally, topics related to civil society, social relation, personal emotion, self-exploration, and quality of life are found to be trending during the five years.

Table 5. Co-Word Ranking by Weighted Degree in the Filtered Networks

Korea				Taiwan			
Co-word	Weighted Degree	Co-word	Weighted Degree	Co-word	Weighted Degree	Co-word	Weighted Degree
1 social capital	274	12 transnationalism	94	1 social capital	88.6	13 image	32.666667
2 social movement	202	14 habitus	92	2 gender	64.324603	14 developmentalism	31.833333
3 gender	142	15 leadership	90	3 social movement	53.388889	15 self-identity	31.566667
4 citizen	138	15 work-life balance	90	4 academic achievement	52.033333	16 social status	30.666667
4 Pierre Bourdieu	138	17 depression	86	5 Taiwan	46.338095	17 subjectivity	30
6 adolescent	126	18 religion	84	6 social network	42.833333	17 memory	30
7 discourse	104	18 women	84	7 youth	41.966667	19 adolescent	27.83333
8 college student	102	20 temporary work	82	8 class	40.4	20 mental health	27.8
9 community	98	21 identity	80	9 life course	40.002381	21 risk	26.83333
10 Chinese	96	21 neoliberalism	80	10 living arrangement	35.866667	22 family	25.83333
10 globalization	96	21 gender role	80	11 masculinity	34	23 China	25.33333
12 governmentality	94	21 social relation	80	12 stigma	32.866667	23 citizenship	25.33333

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Similarities and Differences of the Research Subfields

Between Korea's and Taiwan's Graduate Students

Based on the analysis of two co-word networks, we can find interesting similarities and differences in the research diversity between Korea's and Taiwan's graduate students. The terminologies "social capital," "social movement," and "gender" mark top three in the ranking of the highest weighted degree co-words in both networks, while "adolescent," synonyms/related terms of "citizen and citizenship," "Chinese and China," "depression and mental health," "identity and self-identity" are often used as keywords

of degree theses by both countries' students at the same time.

Even though there are several of the same words or related terms that appear simultaneously in the two networks, they should not be interpreted within the same context. To be specific, take the word set “Chinese and China,” for example. The reason “Chinese” shows a high weighted degree in the Korea network is that China—being a neighbor country with meteoric rise as a world power—has aroused significant interest among graduate students. Additionally, Chinese students studying abroad in Korea often choose to conduct comparative studies between China and Korea. In contrast, while “China” ranks the 24th-highest weighted degree co-word in the Taiwan network, the country name “Taiwan” itself ranks at 5, with a weighted degree almost twice as high as “China” (46.338095 and 25.3333; see Table 5). Due to the complicated issues on Cross-Strait relations, Mainland-Taiwan relations, and Taiwan-China relations, a large number of related studies have been carried out.

As far as research diversity is concerned, differences can be observed when comparing the co-word network of sociology degree theses collection of Korea and Taiwan.

5.2 Graduate Students’ Research Diversity of Sociology in Korea

Researchers put a significant amount of effort into studies of globalization, the

labor market, and the educational environment in Korea. Meanwhile, the sociological theory seems to stir up many discussions, especially when bringing up Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault.

5.3 Graduate Students' Research Diversity of Sociology in Taiwan

By contrast, Taiwan researchers tend to be more interested in topics related to self-exploration, quality of life, academic achievement, as well as identity recognition problems. On top of that, it is impressive that both Korea's and Taiwan's students attach great importance to economic sociology, gender issues, civil society, social relations, and personal emotion.

5.4 Top Three Co-Words of the Highest Weighted Degree

5.4.1 Social Capital

Why do graduate students in both Korea and Taiwan value the topic “social capital” so much?

According to Lee and Briton (1996), there is no doubt that university prestige and

human capital are highly correlated in South Korea; that is the role that the entrance examination system plays, and it appears to play it well. Nevertheless, having a high social background is also correlated with attendance at the most elite universities. Still, the access of high-status individuals to large firms does not seem to occur through the mechanism of introductions by private connections or through the direct influence of social background. In Korea, being hired by large firms is instead related to formal application procedures, and students at the highest prestige universities are distinct in their successful use of institutional social capital to enter such jobs (Lee & Briton, 1996).

Meanwhile, Chang (2008) states that ever since the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime in the 1980s, Taiwan has experienced rapid economic and political development. These economic and democratic advances have led to a further opening up toward different individual beliefs, cultures, and global views that may impact traditional social and cultural structures in the establishment of behavioral norms and value systems for the accumulation of social capital. Chang's work identifies the links between various forms of social capital and subjective happiness in the case of Taiwan, where its socio-cultural context has changed with the interplay of Asian traditions and other values that have emerged, along with its economic and democratic advances.

5.4.2 Social Movement

Asia has two “third-wave” democracies: Taiwan and South Korea. Both countries share several features in their history and democratization, as each experienced Japanese colonization. The economies of the two countries mentioned above both snowballed under authoritarian governments and democratized at similar times. Each of their democratic regimes have faced issues of legitimacy, media that derive from the old authoritarian regimes, and judicial authorities that have been slow to democratize (Jacob, 2007).

However, the democratic transitions of Taiwan and South Korea also differed in several respects due to their diverging patterns of social movements. Moreover, since their democratization, both Taiwan and South Korea have had very divided polities. Each also has highly politicized media that convey an even higher image of division. Nevertheless, neither society wants to return to authoritarian rule (Jacob, 2007).

5.4.3 Gender

Back in 1984, the study “The Value of Daughters and Sons: A Comparative Study of the Gender Preferences of Parent” was carried out by Arnold and Kou and mentioned

the following: “The degree of boy preference ranges from weak in the Philippines Indonesia, countries with a common Malayo-Polynesian background, and in the United States to an extreme in Korea and Taiwan, both of which adhere to the patriarchal traditions of Confucianism.”

However, Lin (2009) makes a point in the article “The Decline of Son Preference and Rise of Gender Indifference in Taiwan Since 1990”: “In addition to ‘daughter preference,’ two forms of parental sex preference are likely to emerge to replace the traditional son preference as it has declined: ‘gender indifference’ or ‘gender balance.’” Gender balance is defined as desiring an equal number of boys and girls, in which “sex” is still the primary consideration. By contrast, gender indifference indicates a situation in which parents feel that the sex does not matter such that a boy is as good as a girl (or vice versa); therefore, no particular sex combinations are desired. Likewise, “Education is strongly associated with sex preference while employment or occupation is generally not; education reduces son preference and leads to a higher degree of gender neutrality.”

In sum, there is no doubt that social values regarding gender issues have changed significantly over the last 15 years, at least with the popularization of higher education.

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