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K- Popping: Korean Women, K-Pop, and Fandom

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Dedication

To my father, Sung Young Kim, who has made me everything I am. And to my mother, Soonja Kim, who is both my superstar and my everlasting fan.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

K-Popping: Korean Women, K-Pop, and Fandom

by

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Korean popular music (hereafter K-pop) can be understood as an inclusive cultural phenomenon. K-pop fandom constitutes a sizeable portion of this phenomenon and is characteristic, to a large degree, of K-pop culture. However, female fans, especially in Korea, are frequently disdained in mainstream Korean culture, and their fandom has been undervalued and derided. Challenging this negative view of female fans, I autoethnographically examine Korean female K-pop fandom, based on my field research in Korea from August 2015 to September 2016, and from the end of December 2016 to early January 2017. I first introduce and explain various Korean slang expressions describing fandom, including “*ppasuni*,” a disparaging expression to describe Korean female fans. Drawing upon the concept of musicking (music as an activity people do, functioning as a verb), I chart multiple forms of musicking, which Korean female K-pop fans do before, during, and after concerts. Focusing on musicking during concerts, I

analyze fan chanting and singing during musicians' live performances, also known as "*ttechang*." I also illuminate how female fans construct a K-pop soundscape through their different voices around the concert venue. In addition to these music-related fan practices, I explore a wide array of cultures and subcultures that Korean female K-pop fans build. Further, I investigate how Korean female fans perform feminist fandom, as well as how these fans participate in political activities through fandom. Thus, I contextualize K-pop fandom in a range of social and political phenomena. I then propose two concepts to reach a new understanding of K-pop and its female fandom – "K-popping" and "fanscape." Building on the concept of musicking, I suggest K-pop as an action, and re-conceptualize K-pop as a verb, that is, "K-popping" or "to K-pop." Also, to avoid confining Korean female K-pop fans and their activities to fan-"dom," which differentiates and even marginalizes the fans, I expand the terminology for K-pop fan practices to fan-"scape." This term, "fanscape" can be defined as not only a place or event where fans are present to perform their fandom, but also as a collage of different sounds, images, texts, and activities, which Korean female K-pop fans create.

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Note on Romanization of Korean and Translation

For romanization of Korean, I use the Revised Romanization of Korean, which the National Institute of Korean Language devised and the Korean government proclaimed as the official Korean language romanization system. The romanized Korean words are italicized except for place names, Korean popular music group names, and names of persons. In cases where romanization is given by persons or groups, I follow their own romanization. Although Korean names are basically given with the family name first, I write all the Korean names in Western order. All translations into English are made by me, unless otherwise noted. I also translate K-pop or Korean popular song titles in Korean into English, unless musicians provided English titles.

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Entry to a Concert: An Introduction to a Story of a Fangirl of Korean Popular Music

It was October 4, 1990 when I attended a popular music concert for the first time. I, a fifteen-year-old girl, was elated to participate in a concert for the first time, not only because I was a fan of Hae-chul Shin,¹ the singer featured in the concert (figure 1), but also because I was able to go on a day trip to Seoul with one of my best friends.² Since we lived in Suwon, approximately 25 miles from Seoul, we had to figure out how to go to the concert venue and when to depart from our hometown.³ Although it took one and a half hours to travel to Seoul by subway, we planned to leave the Suwon station four hours earlier than the show time, which was scheduled in the afternoon. We planned to arrive at the concert venue, purchase our concert tickets, and eat lunch around there before the concert. However, we were just fifteen-year-olds in our last year of middle school. It might have been difficult for us to complete these plans on our own. To help us facilitate our trip for the concert and protect us minors, my friend's mother accompanied us. Thankfully she bought us tickets to the concert and lunch. Entering the concert hall, I was overwhelmed by the people filling the seats. As the concert band tuned up, all audience members started to buzz with excitement. Shin appeared on the dark stage in the spotlight after the band finished tuning. He swung his head, shoulder, and legs rhythmically to the

¹ Hae-chul Shin or Hae Chul Shin (1968-2014) is a South Korean (hereafter Korean) male popular musician. Shin held two concerts at the 63 Building in Seoul on October 4, 1990.

² Seoul, as the capital city of Republic of Korea (South), is the center of all music concerts, encompassing popular, classical, and traditional musics.

³ Suwon is the capital city of Gyeonggi province or Gyeonggi-do, which surrounds Seoul.

instrumental intro of the first song of his concert. Upon his appearance, the audience began to yell. As he began to sing the first song, “Goodbye” with catchy and upbeat melodies, his fans’ cheering became louder.

Like a wrapping at a gift shop, your pretty-pretty smile
 Could enamor everybody, it’s no more than your illusion
 Gentle touches and sweet nothings, I didn’t want only them
 I didn’t love you, you deluded yourself that I love you
 I no longer want you, I can no longer tell a lie
 I no longer want you, I no longer want to be in tears
 (Rap) Many guys always turning your round I’m so tired of their terrible sound
 Darling you’re so cool to me and I was a fool for you
 You didn’t want a flower you wanted honey
 You didn’t want a lover you wanted money
 You’ve been telling a lie I just wanna say Goodbye
 (Lyrics of Shin’s “Goodbye,” translated by the author except for the rap, which was originally composed in English)⁴

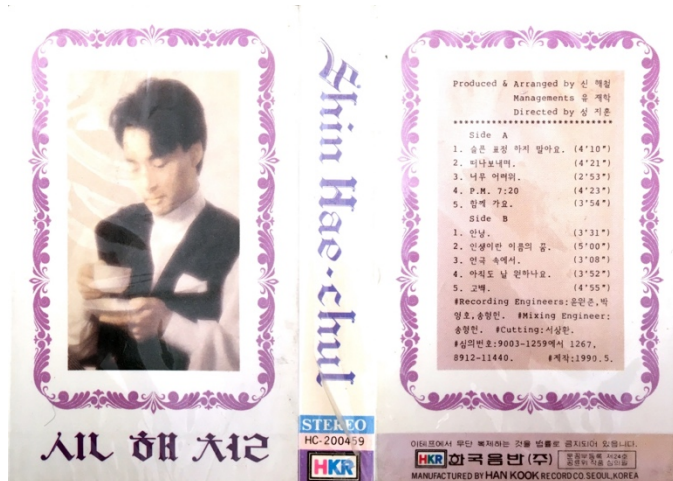


Figure 1. The front, side, and back of Hae-chul Shin’s first album as a cassette tape I bought in 1990, which includes “Goodbye.” Photo by the author.

⁴ For Korean lyrics, see at <http://www.genie.co.kr/detail/songInfo?xgnm=16232631>. Also, see his live performance of “Goodbye” on a TV show at https://youtu.be/XIXA7_TZ3uI.

When Shin ended a refrain in the first verse and started to rap, screaming fans in the back row stood up suddenly, pushed the people in front of them, and then moved forward to see him closer. Jostled by the audience advancing behind us, my friend and I fell down. Although I had held hands with her while listening to the music, I let go of her hand, pushed by other people. Trampled underfoot in their rush to the stage, I was unable to move or even call out for help. Someone pulled me out of the crowd and I was relieved to see it was my friend. I found that I had lost my shoes, but I did not want to elbow my way through the crowd again to recover them. As Shin greeted the audience and moved on to the second song with a slower tempo, the audience members calmed down, returned to their seats, and sang along to the song. My friend picked up some shoes that looked similar to mine and suggested I wear them. Fortunately, they fit my feet. We left halfway through the concert because my friend's mother had to return home and make dinner. On our way to Suwon, she asked us how the concert was. Talking about how good Shin and his performance was, we did not tell her that we fell down and other excited fans stampeded over us. We did not want her to consider popular music concerts and fans to be dangerous or bad for teenage girls. Also, as I arrived home, I did not tell my family anything I experienced at the concert, including that I wore another person's shoes. I did not want them to worry that I could have gotten hurt. Further, I was afraid that due to my experience at Hae-chul Shin's concert, my parents might forbid me from participating in popular music concerts again. I was worried they would even prevent me from listening to popular songs by confiscating all my cassette tapes, portable cassette player, and radio. Additionally, I was apprehensive that my parents would not have allowed me to get

together with my friend who took me to the concert. I wanted to maintain both my pastime and my friendship, which brought delight to this middle school student's monotonous daily life. I kept my experience of the loss of my shoes and of being jostled by other audience members at Shin's concert secret from my parents until I became a college student. I also did not go to any more popular music concerts until I attained adulthood in the mid-1990s, when I was able to not only manage my everyday life but also indulge and display my musical taste without parental involvement.

Since I learned that ethnomusicology does not exclusively research exotic music in a faraway land outside of my country but also studies a researcher's own community and culture, including popular music and its audiences (Post 2006), I have reflected on myself, a South Korean (hereafter Korean) popular music fan and my popular music practices, or "musicking." Also, I have thought about why my friend and I did not tell our parents about the whole episode of Shin's concert and our experience with his fans, as well as why I felt excited about my first participation in his concert because of a day out with my best friend. Following these personal queries, I have wondered: How and why do girls and women in Korea who love Korean popular music, or K-pop perform fan activities?⁵ Why do I pay attention to these female fans? Why are they important? How can they gain importance in Korean popular music culture as well as in Korean society at large? How can I, an ethnomusicologist, navigate Korean female popular music fans and their activities, including myself and my popular musicking? I embark on this dissertation

⁵ In my dissertation, the terms K-pop and Korean popular music are interchangeably used. I address why and how these terms can be compatible in Chapter 1.

by recounting my own experience as a fangirl of Hae-chul Shin and by introducing such overarching questions.

A Feminist Ethnomusicologist's Autoethnographic Study of Korean Popular Music Fandom

Engaging the questions mentioned above, I define my dissertation as an auto/ethnographic study of Korean female popular music fandom, in which I have participated for most of my life. For this research project, I rely on popular music studies, K-pop studies, and popular music fan studies. Also, self-identifying as a feminist, I discuss how a feminist lens can be applied to popular music fan studies. In this section, I review the existing scholarship and illuminate key concepts in my dissertation. As the focus of the study is primarily on concepts related to fandom, it is necessary to first elucidate these basic concepts of “fan,” “fannish,” and “fandom.”

Fan, Fannish, and Fandom

Appearing in England for the first time in the late seventeenth century, the term fan derived from an “abbreviation for ‘fanatic’” as “a religious zealot” (Cavicchi 1998; Duffett 2013b: 5). American journalists began to highlight this word to explain “the passion of baseball spectators” from the late 1800s (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; Duffett 2013b: 5). The application of ‘fan’ was then extended to “dedicated audiences for film and recorded music” (Duffett 2013b: 5). Accordingly, fans also encompassed persons with a “deep, positive emotional conviction about” practitioners of these cultural products—film and music—such as actors and actresses, directors, singers,

instrumentalists, composers, etc. (Duffett 2013b:18). However, the term fan has retained the negative overtones of “its earlier connotation of religious and political zealotry false beliefs, orgiastic excess, possession, and madness” (Jenkins 1992: 12). Thus, fans, suggesting fanatics and deviants, have been the people with “fragile self-esteem, weak or non-existent social alliances, a dull and monotonous ‘real’ existence” (Jensen 1992: 18). Mass media and literature have exacerbated the way in which fans have been unfavorably described as “obsessed loners” or “psychopaths whose frustrated fantasies of intimate relationships with stars or unsatisfied desires to achieve their own stardom take violent and antisocial forms” (Jensen 1992: 11; Jenkins 1992: 13). Due to this traditional implication and description of fans, they are still categorized as improper “in contemporary culture” (Jenkins 1992: 15). Moreover, fans’ “interests” are basically considered “alien to the realm of ‘normal’ cultural experience,” and fans’ “mentality” is also deemed “out of touch with reality” (Jenkins 1992: 15-16). This traditional description has recently been joined by other representations, in which fans are seen less as fanatic/deviant and more as harmless devotees. The concept of fans has been expanded to “neutrally” describe those who are fond of celebrities or famous products promoted through mass media, such as mobile devices, cars, food, clothes, places, activities, and so on (Cavicchi 1998: 39). This “neutral” representation of fans opens up space for one to “self-identify” as an “enthusiast, devotee or follower of a particular media genre, text, person or activity,” (Duffett 2013b: 293), creating a more positive connotation for the word “fan” in everyday language.

The term fan, as explored above, has a long history and it also enjoys very common usage. Fannish and fandom, on the other hand, have been recently and deliberately coined to describe fans and diverse phenomena related to them. As an adjective, fannish (fannishness as a noun) stands for “pertaining to fandom” (Duffett 2013b: 293) or being worthy of identification with fans. For example, if one writes a fictional narrative with her or his favorite stars featured as main characters, this fiction writing can be characterized as a fannish practice – the fiction featured by stars and written by their fans is also known as “fan fiction” or “fanfic.”⁶

Fandom has been discussed as a broader concept than fan and fannish. Fandom is a compound word of “fanatic” and “dom,” which implies a nation or a domain (S. Lee 2013). Thus, fandom means the nation or domain in which fanatics congregate around popular cultural forms (Lee 2011b; S. Lee 2013). As the term fan has an implied negative nuance due to its initial meaning, the term fandom also has provoked controversy due to its inevitable association with ‘fanatic.’ The tabloid papers have “stigmatized” fandom as related to “danger, abnormality, and silliness” (Lewis 1992: 1). Also, social science has viewed fandom as “a form of psychological compensation, an attempt to make up for all that modern life lacks,” and as “a deviant activity” (Jensen 1992: 16, 24). Accordingly, many people have hidden and even disowned their own fandom (Lewis 1992). Otherwise, they have dared “the stigma” as a member of fandom (Lewis 1992: 1). However, as the

⁶ I talk more about how Korean female K-pop fans produce and consume fanfics in Chapter 4.

usage of the term fan has expanded from a negative to a more neutral term, the understanding of fandom has been similarly diversified.

Indeed, it is impossible to describe fandom “as a univocal site” where a fan is located, or as one ‘thing’ that a fan has or does (Hills 2002: xxiii; Cavicchi 1998). I thus provide various interpretations of fandom to frame my dissertation. Fandom, grounded in both fans’ collective and individual practices, enables the fans to “explore and participate in fannish practice” (Duffett 2013b: 18). Doing this, fans not only occupy “social roles marked out as fandom” (Ibid.), but “feel freer in fandom than outside of it to express themselves, ask questions, and discuss alternative viewpoints” (Jenkins 2006b: 85). Therefore, fandom is about both “the *degree*” and “the very *quality*” of fans’ participation (Cavicchi 1998: 39; Duffett 2013b: 18). Since fandom is not only “collective” but also “personal,” it addresses “fundamental questions about who we are and how we understand ourselves and our relationships to others in this modern, mediated world” (Duffett 2014: 7; Cavicchi 1998: 6). Also, fandom “involves different experiences, concerns different practices and means different things in various contexts” (Duffett 2013b: 19). Fandom is then defined as follows: “a process of” being a fan (Cavicchi 1998: 59); a way in which one identifies oneself “on a deep level as being a fan and enacting that role” (Duffett 2013b: 293); “a functional operation enacted by each individual” (Ibid., 18); an “identity” which is not only “performative” and “(dis-)claimed,” but also “performs cultural work” (Hills 2002: x); “an important test site for ideas about active consumption and grassroots creativity” (Jenkins 2006a: 246); “a form of cultural creativity or ‘play’”(Hills 2002: 60); and “a sociocultural phenomenon largely

associated with modern capitalist societies, electronic media, mass culture and public performance” (Cavicchi 1998; Duffett 2013b: 5).

These definitions of fandom widen the function of fandom to “heighten our sense of excitement, prompt our self-reflexivity, encourage us to discuss shared values and ethics, and supply us with a significant source of meaning that extends into our daily lives” (Duffett 2013b: 18). In short, fandom is a useful way for people to reflect on their specific “historical and social moments” (Cavicchi 1998: 9). Therefore, fandom is understood as “an umbrella term for various potentials: elements like fascination, celebrity following, group behaviour and exuberant declarations of conviction” (Duffett 2013b: 20).

Musicking and Fandom

One of the key concepts my dissertation draws upon is “musicking.” Music scholars have conceptualized music in different ways. Ultimately, music, as agreed upon by music scholars, is “not a unitary art form” but “distinct types of activity that fulfill different needs and ways of being human” (Turino 2008: 1). Accordingly, musicologist Christopher Small claims that “music is an activity that people do” (1998: 2) – musicking. However, musicking is not limited to activities of music composition and rendition. “To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing” (Small 1998: 9). Thus, musicking can be applied to all people involved in a musical performance, those who are

selling the tickets, taking them at the door, opening the door, carrying musical instruments, setting them up, checking the sound in the hall, or cleaning up the hall after the end of the performance (Small 1998). Therefore, as Small theorizes, musicking is not a matter only “for intellectuals and ‘cultured’ people” (1998: 13). Rather, musicking is a significant element of “our understanding of ourselves and of our relationships with other people and the other creatures” in the world (Ibid.). Small then develops his idea of musicking:

...the way people relate to one another as they music is linked not only with the sound relationships that are created by the performers, not only with the participants’ relation to one another, but also with the participants’ relationships to the world outside the performance space, in a complex spiral of relationships, and it is those relationships, and the relationships between relationships, that are the meaning of performance (1998: 47-48).

In other words, he places emphasis on “relationships” in his theory of musicking.

He suggests:

If...musicking is an activity by means of which we bring into existence a set of relationships that model the relationships of our world, not as they are but as we would wish them to be...if through musicking, we learn about and explore those relationships, we affirm them to ourselves and anyone else who may be paying attention, and we celebrate them, then musicking is in fact a way of knowing our world—not that pre-given physical world, divorced from human experience, that modern science claims to know but the experiential world of relationships in all its complexity—and in knowing it...to affirm and celebrate our relationships through musicking, especially in company with like-feeling people, is to explore and celebrate our sense of who we are, to make us feel more fully ourselves (1998: 50, 142).

He also argues:

...through musicking...we learn how to live well in it (*our world*) ... “to music” is not just to take part in a discourse concerning the relationships

of our world but is actually to experience those relationships... (1998: 50, 137)

Although Small theorizes musicking through an analysis of performances of Western classical music, the concept of musicking can be employed for studies of non-Western music, as he himself claims. In this dissertation, I apply musicking to an elucidation of K-pop fans and their activities. For this application, I note that music fandom creates “much-needed meaning in the daily lives of ordinary people,” as “a way in which members of this modern media-driven society make sense of their selves and their relationships to others” (Cavicchi 1998: 8-9). Also, I pay attention to fandom not as a “particular thing” but as being “performative;” as “a process of being;” and as “the way one is” (Cavicchi 1998: 59; Hills 2002: x). These definitions and functions of fandom confirm that it can be analyzed using musicking, so I see K-pop fans as “musickers,” and their fandom as musicking.

Popular Music Studies across Different Fields

The first set of scholarship on which this dissertation relies is popular music studies. This field began from the sociological interpretation of mass culture and empirical research on youth culture, rather than from a musicological approach to popular music (Frith and Goodwin 2000). As a pioneer of popular music studies, Theodor Adorno analyzed popular music and critiqued its listeners. Comparing popular music with serious music or classical music, he claims that while serious music is composed of “the life relationship of musical details,” popular music lacks this organic relationship as well as originality (Adorno 1941: 19). According to Adorno, popular music, as part of the

surrender to capitalism, not only leads audiences to listen to music passively and even submissively, but also alienates audiences from social concern (Adorno 1941). Given his contributions as a philosopher, sociologist, composer, and musicologist, Adorno's work has not surprisingly been adopted within both music and non-music scholarship.

Inspired by this first academic approach to popular music, musicologists started turning their attention to popular music studies in the 1980s. Philip Tagg suggested a scholarly analysis inspired by, as well as incorporated into a hermeneutics, semiology, and sociology of popular music (1982). However, his methods are not distinguishable from a conventional musicological analysis based on musical scores. Examining rock and hip-hop, Susan McClary and Robert Walser point out that musicologists struggle with popular music studies (1988). More specifically, musicologists, defining music as creation free from social contexts, have not apprehended rock music's relationship to society and its social meanings. Also, musicologists traditionally have analyzed music as the structure of "pitches." This analysis cannot illuminate some features of popular music, such as rock singers' "microtonal inflection" (Ibid.). Due to this limitation of musicological research on popular music, musicologists have started understanding popular music as a discursive practice that produces social meanings. Musicologists also can explain popular music lyrics, performance styles, and music videos in relation to musical elements (Ibid.). Additionally, McClary and Walser suggest that musicologists can explore how popular music has been commercially produced and distributed, how star musicians' images have been shaped, how the history of popular music and musicians can be constructed, and how political issues in popular music, including class,

race, and gender, have been addressed (Ibid.). These suggestions informed succeeding studies of popular music in music scholarship.

In the 1990s, musicologists expanded their discussions of popular music in a larger framework by exploring specific musical examples. David Brackett demonstrates how to interpret popular music, focusing on analyses of songs by Billie Holiday, Bing Crosby, Hank Williams, James Brown, and Elvis Costello (1995). Drawing upon ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax, Brackett applies the concept of “music in culture” to his approach to popular music (Ibid.). He examines the social and cultural contexts of each popular musician and their songs, as well as cultural discourses surrounding them (Ibid.).⁷ He also analyses popular music based on its scores, as other musicologists have done (Ibid.). For this music analysis, he utilizes “spectrum photography,” which he invented, to describe pitches correlating to the particular timbres of individual pop singers as images (Ibid.). However, this new analytical tool, as he points out himself, is too technical for people in non-musical fields to understand. Thus, Brackett’s popular music analysis is not broadly accessible.

Mark Katz’s recent essay talks about how musicological approaches to popular music have changed (2014). According to Katz, the first stage was characterized by “classical and traditional” musicology, in which particular popular songs were considered “masterpieces” of popular music due to their musical scores (Ibid.) In the second stage,

⁷ In his article entitled “The Unbearable Whiteness of Popular Music Studies,” which was included in “Roundtable: The Future of Popular Music Studies,” Brackett claims that the issues of race (“people of color”) and gender (“women”) should be theorized in popular music studies (Grenier et al. 1999).

musicologists incorporated popular music studies with ethnomusicology to analyze recordings of improvised music or music without notation (Ibid.). Musicology has addressed broader issues in popular music, including aesthetics, faith, gender, race, regional identity, sexuality, and technology, while musicologists' ever-circular attention to "musical sound" has influenced other academic fields (Ibid.). Recently, musicologists have explored popular music through combining historical, analytical, and ethnographic methods, just as musicology, music theory, and ethnomusicology have intersected with one another (Ibid.). Katz then suggests "cross-disciplinary" discussion of popular music, stressing the need for reflection on researchers' experiences as popular music fans or practitioners of popular music studies (Ibid.).

There has been scholarship from fields outside music that has engaged with popular music studies: from sociology and cultural studies, for example. In his book, *Music for Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop*, Simon Frith examines a wide array of popular music styles, genres and musicians across the U.K. and the U.S., ranging from urban light music, jazz, and rock to punk, electronic music, and film music (1988). In this examination, he shows the history of popular music, covering industrialization, famous musicians' careers, media, and social and cultural contexts of popular music (Ibid.). Frith also addresses gender, sexuality, and class in popular music studies. Thus, he demonstrates how popular music can be analyzed socially, politically, and culturally beyond just musically. Frith discusses how cultural studies can approach popular music (1992). Frith not only suggests that academia should note both material and cultural

effects of popular music, but that fans should be considered “popular intellectuals” in the cultural study of popular music (Ibid.).

Keith Negus’ *Popular Music Theory: An Introduction* is one of the most common and the most significant works on popular music in non-music scholarship. In this book, Negus outlines the key issues involved in studying popular music, including “audiences, industry, mediations, identities, histories, geographies, and politics.” He explores how these issues frame popular music (1996). Through these issues, he examines popular musical practices as well as social and technological processes framing popular music (Ibid.). As those issues have served as places for scholarly discussions of popular music to start, Negus threw light on approaches to popular music and established popular music studies within academia.

Popular music studies can find its most evident strength in a cross-disciplinary approach. Music-focused scholarship has drawn issues, approaches, and methodologies from non-music-focused scholarship, and vice versa – musicologist John Shepherd’s suggestion of “socio-musicology” for popular music analysis (1982), or sociology-based popular music studies scholar Frith’s attention to musical sound and meaning (1996), for example. However, cross-disciplinary popular music studies have some weaknesses. After the Frankfurt School started academic discussions on popular music in the first half of the twentieth century, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies developed popular music studies in the 1970s throughout the 1990s. Since then, this field has been still British-dominated or Eurocentric scholarship. Moreover, it has focused on

examining Anglo-American popular music (Grenier et al. 1999). Thus, cross-disciplinary popular music studies have not crossed the borders of Europe and the United States.

Yet, despite this weakness, scholarship has effected a change in ways of understanding popular music, by re-conceptualizing it as a human activity that requires social relationships, identities, and collective practices (Cohen 1993; Maxwell 2002). Accordingly, scholars have argued for the necessity and importance of ethnographies of popular music (Ibid.). Sara Cohen conducted ethnographic research on music making by young members of Liverpool-based local and amateur rock bands (Cohen 1991). While conducting participant observations of their musical activities and ideas on music making, she also included biographies of each band (Ibid.).

Likewise, ethnomusicologists began moving solidly into popular music studies in the late 1990s, and non-Anglo-American popular music genres and performances around the world have been explored. Peter Manuel's *Popular Music of the Non-Western World* (1988), as one of the earliest studies on non-Western popular music in ethnomusicology, encompassed various popular music forms in Latin America, including the Caribbean; Africa; non-Western European countries, such as Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Yugoslavia; the Middle East; South and Southeast Asia; China, and Pacific areas. Andrew Weintraub researched the Indonesian local popular music *dangdut* (2010). Also, as ethnomusicology has extended its field to "one's own community," researchers have examined their own popular music (Post 2006: 3). American ethnomusicologist Harris Berger conducted ethnographic studies on four popular music scenes in Ohio, including scenes focused on commercial hard rock, death metal, African American jazz, and

European American jazz (1999). In this ethnography, Berger offered deeper and richer accounts of his research participants' musical practices and experiences in the political and economic contexts of Ohio (Ibid.) Ethnomusicologist Elizabeth Keenan from the U.S. carried out ethnographic research on "Ladyfest 2000," a punk- and indie-rock music festival held in Olympia, Washington (2008). Through this ethnography, Keenan articulated how women interpret the concept of femininity and present their sexuality through popular musical practices (Ibid.).

Additionally, some ethnomusicologists have explored a variety of popular music in which local and global styles are fused. In *Global Goes Local: Popular Culture in Asia* (Craig and King 2002), Mercedes Dujunco, Isabel Wong, and Rachel Harris investigate Chinese popular music in which local and global cultures are incorporated.

Ethnomusicologist Jeremy Wallach, focusing on the metal genre, dissects contemporary Indonesian popular music genres influenced by globalization (2008). Likewise, the a few ethnomusicologists have researched Korean popular music. I do not touch on the works here but I recount them next in a literature review of K-pop studies.

As mentioned earlier, since Negus suggested the primary issues involved in approaching popular music in his monograph *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction* (1996), topics such as fans, industry, mediation, subculture, style, genre, and identity have been the main topics discussed in popular studies. Now, I briefly look at these discussions, focusing on industry, mediation, genre, and identity. Reebee Garofalo categorizes the (popular) music industry as three organizations: publishers, record labels, and global or transnational entertainment corporations (Garofalo 1999). Suggesting plural

music “industries,” popular John Williamson and Martin Cloonan examine a diversity of interests and activities in different areas of music production, ranging from the production, management, and sale of music to physical/digital products, musical performances, and intellectual property rights (Williamson and Cloonan 2007).

Mediation stands for the way in which media such as radio and music video represent music to listeners. Explaining mediation, Negus suggests that sounds, lyrics, and images of popular music are composed, transmitted, and received through technological mediation, that is, media (Negus 1996). Roy Shuker points out that new forms for mediation, such as recording formats and transmission modes, have changed the processes of the production and consumption of popular music (Shuker 2001). Jonathan Stern argues that MP3, a digital medium for storing and representing popular music, functions as “a cultural artifact” enabling social, ideological, physical, and psychological listening practices (Sterne 2006).

Genre has been mentioned in almost all discussions on popular music and has been recently re-conceptualized. Fabian Holt claims that genre should be distinguished from styles. He re-conceptualizes genre as an “fundamental structuring force in musical life” (Holt 2007: 2). According to Holt, this concept of genre implies “how, where, and with whom people make and experience music” (Ibid.).

Identities have been more actively discussed in popular music studies since the 1990s. Gender and sexuality have been central in these discussions. Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie understand rock as representations of both masculinity and male sexuality (Frith and McRobbie 1978). *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*

(1997) has been one of the most significant works specializing in gender and sexuality in popular music studies. Each of sixteen essays in this book demonstrates how specific popular music styles and genres can be related to genders and sexualities, how these music styles and genres can construct social and cultural meanings, and how these meanings can be interpreted (Whiteley 1997). *Queering the Popular Pitch*, a collection of eighteen essays, focuses on queerness in popular music (Whitely and Rycenga 2006). Each article discusses and demonstrates how the issues of identities, including gender, generation, community, race, and sexuality, can be contextualized in popular music studies (Ibid.). Race has been another subject related to identities in popular music studies. This subject, however, has intersected with other identity issues such as gender, sexuality, and class. Therefore, popular music scholarship has discussed these subjects inclusively. Focusing on race, gender, and sexuality, Christi-Anne Castro conducts ethnographic studies of two Asian-American popular musicians – Mike Park and Magdalen Hsu-Li (Castro 2007). Through this ethnography, Castro examines how Asian American popular musicians create social meanings through their musical activities by challenging racial, gender, and sexual stereotypes of Asian Americans, which are fabricated by mainstream media culture (Ibid.).

Overview of K-Pop Studies

Although the term K-pop was coined in the end of the 1990s and has been commonly used since the 2010s (I will discuss the beginning and development of the term K-pop in Chapter 1), K-pop scholarship started with scholarly discussions of Korean

popular music both within and outside of Korea. First, I will discuss research on Korean popular music conducted by foreign and Korean ethnomusicologists outside of Korea.

Keith Howard examines “Korean pop” and “Korean songs” in the 1980s through the 1990s (Howard 2002, 2006). According to Howard, Korean pop musicians have not only referenced Western-oriented musical genres—including rap, hip-hop, reggae, and rock—to produce a diversity of musical styles, but incorporated Korean sentiments into these foreign genres (Ibid.). On the other hand, Korean songs, also known as *kayo* (or *gayo* in my romanization of the term, literally meaning songs) or *hankuk kayo* (literally meaning Korean songs), are defined as sentimental genres specific to Korea, such as ballads and trots, which were developed from the early twentieth century (Ibid.). Howard sees that these Korean songs have, under Confucian influence, dominated the domestic popular music industry, rather than foreign pop (Ibid.).

In the early 1990s, the boy band Taiji Boys introduced a rap-influenced new dance music to the Korean popular music scene and garnered tremendous popularity among young Korean audiences in their teens and early twenties. Korean media outlets interpreted this fandom as a social phenomenon. Correspondingly, American, European, and Korean ethnomusicologists discussed this prominent Korean boy band. Howard analyzes their lyrics and sampled sounds (Howard 2002, 2006). He claims that Taiji Boys created a new scene of Korean popular music in which rap was successfully assimilated into Korean popular songs (Ibid.). Highlighting the proliferation of rap, hip-hop, and dance music in Korea in the 1990s, Sarah Morelli explores the musical traits and performance styles of the Taiji Boys, as well as how they achieved “stardom” in Korea

(Morelli 2001). Roald Maliangkay, focusing on Taiji Seo, the leader of the band, argues that Seo not only brought remarkable changes to Korean popular music but also influenced the formation of individualism in Korean popular culture (Maliangkay 2014). Eun-Young Jung suggests that the Taiji Boys' rap and metal music represents the 90's "new generation" culture in Korea, the period when she experienced the group as a Korean audience member (Jung 2006).

Korean researchers have stressed the Taiji Boys as a watershed in the development of Korean popular music. Korean scholarship thus has considered this group as a trigger of the generational gap in popular music consumption (Cha 2012), as well as an experimenter with new sound or styles mixing different musical genres (Shin 2013).

Since the 2010s, both Korean and non-Korean scholars have discussed K-pop as either a new pop music genre separate from existing Korean popular music, or as a continuation of Korean popular music. These discussions have touched on diverse aspects of K-pop, including industry, cultural hybridity, gender and sexuality, fandom, and so on.

Dong-yeun Lee argues that K-pop constructs cultural nationalism to reproduce cultural capital in the neoliberal era (2011a). Yong-jin Won and Ji-mann Kim claim that the K-pop industry urges idol stars to engage in emotional labor in league with "soft-nationalism" (2012). John Lie discusses the South Korean government's role in the production of K-pop (2012). Lie points out that the government censored popular culture but has recently served as a promoter of K-pop along with other export products such as Samsung or Hyundai to enhance "Brand Korea" (Ibid.).

Dal Yong Jin and Woongjae Ryoo assert that the mixture of English and Korean words in K-pop song lyrics can be explained as cultural hybridity, that “local cultural agents and actors interact and negotiate with global forms, using them as resources through which local people construct their own cultural spaces” (2014: 116). According to Jin and Ryoo, K-pop’s inclusion of English lyrics not only builds “new local or regional identity,” but also develops “a creative form of hybridization” as “the third space, which works towards maintaining local identities in the global context” (2014: 126). Jin and Rye then suggest that commercialist and individualist values are represented through K-pop lyrics and embodied in K-pop culture (2014).

Some researchers have analyzed images of, and discourses on, K-pop performers, focusing on gender and sexuality. Stephen Epstein and James Turnbull examine how K-pop girl groups empower and disempower gender ideologies within Korean patriarchal society (2014). For this examination, Epstein and Turnbull decode song lyrics and visual elements of music videos of K-pop girl groups (Ibid.). Soo-Ah Kim points out that while Korean girl groups in the early 2000s created their innocent, asexual, and girlish images, K-pop girl groups in the 2010s have commercialized and objectified their bodies to target adult male fans (2011). Chuyun Oh furthers Kim’s analysis in her inspection of Girls’ Generation’s music video of “The Boys” (2014). Through an analysis of this song’s lyrics, choreography, and representations of the group members’ bodies in the music video, Oh claims that Girls’ Generation occupies a “non-racialized,” “non-classed,” and “non-sexualized” realm across Korea and the world, even though their performances demonstrate “hypergirlish-femininity” rather than the Western notion of femininity

(Ibid.). She also argues that this representation of femininity shapes “another stereotype of Korean womanhood” (Ibid.). Focusing on images of K-pop boy bands from their album covers, music videos, and live performances, Zee Hyun Byun and Hyun Zin Ko investigate how boy bands represent “machoism” (2013). Byun and Ko suggest three types of machoism represented through K-pop boy bands’ images: the funk-rockish machoism, the über sexual machoism, and the body exposed machoism (Ibid.).

Youngsoon Kim and Hyunjoo Bae conduct in-depth interviews with four female K-pop fans from Korea, Japan, and Taiwan (2013). Through these interviews, Kim and Bae suggest that these women’s experiences of K-pop create “multicultural citizenship” (Ibid.). Sang-Yeon Sung conducts an ethnographic study of K-pop fandom in Austria, in which she illustrates Austrian reception of K-pop as well as Austrian K-pop fan culture (2014). Based on her experience as a fan of the K-pop boy band JYJ, Seung-Ah Lee examines fandom from an insider’s point of view (2013). Lee not only explores the Korean pop entertainment industry, but also investigates how JYJ and its fandom have reacted to the K-pop industrial system (Ibid.). Through this examination, she argues that JYJ fans create a new role as active practitioners of popular culture beyond simply enthusiastic consumers (Ibid.). Further, these fans, as Lee claims, discover their own human value and subsequently realize a new way of living through their fan activities (Ibid.).

Michael Fuhr examines the globalization and production of K-pop, focusing on contemporary Korean idol pop (2015). Based on his field research in Korea, Fuhr provides an overview of diverse factors in K-pop, including history, song structure,

musical elements, industry, media, stardom, fandom, nation and so on, through musicological, ethnomusicological, and cultural analyses. Exploring these topics, he points out that K-pop shows “asymmetries” in its production and globalization.

Popular Music Fan Studies and Autoethnography

The core scholarship I reference in this dissertation is fan studies. As mentioned earlier, popular music studies began from criticism about popular music and its listeners (Adorno 1941). Thus, popular music fans and their listening have been critical topics in popular music studies since the 1940s. However, analytical research on popular music fans or fandom has recently emerged as “a relatively new area” in popular music scholarship (Duffett 2013a: 299). Of course, scholars have conducted research on fandom since the early 1990s (Jenkins 1992; Lewis et al. 1992).⁸ However, among these studies, only a few works have specialized in “popular music fans.”⁹ Mark Duffett points out that “popular music fandom scholars never had a very strong disciplinary framework within which to place their audience work,” because popular music studies mainly concentrated

⁸ Media studies scholar Henry Jenkins published his monograph *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* in 1992, which explores how fans construct their culture through writing texts responding to their favorite television dramas. *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, which was edited by Lisa A. Lewis and published in 1992, includes eleven articles by herself, Joli Jensen, John Fiske, Lawrence Grossberg, Cheryl Cline, Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, Gloria Jacobs, Stephen Hinerman, Sue Brower, Robert Sabal, Fred and Judy Vermorel, and Henry Jenkins, focusing on a variety of media fans, their culture and issues.

⁹ In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (1992), Cline provides female fans’ essays from a fan magazine; Ehrenreich, Hess, and Jacobs talk about female Beatles fans, relating their sexuality to social phenomena in the 1960s; and Hinerman analyzes female Elvis fans’ fantasies from a “psychosexual” view.

on musical “texts (musicology),” “production and distribution (sociology),” or on “subcultures or scenes” (2014: 6; 2013: 299). Despite a weak theoretical framework, a small number of works on popular music fandom have generated a stream of research since the late 1990s – mostly on “rock fan communities” and their activities (Duffett 2014: 6).¹⁰ Since the 2000s, research on fandoms of specific musicians or genres, such as Kate Bush (Vroomen 2004), David Bowie (Stevenson 2006), and Morrissey (Devereux 2012) have been published (Duffett 2014: 6). I do not explore what these works on popular music fandom specifically demonstrate but discuss how they approach their subject as models for my own inquiry into popular music fandom.

In *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, one of the earliest fandom studies, Henry Jenkins claims fandom as social (1992). He describes a circle of television fans, its social organizations and cultural practices, and its connection to mass media and consumer capitalism “ethnographically” (Ibid.: 1). This cultural and ethnographic work, as an anti-psychological approach to fandom, allows fandom scholars to avoid description or judgement of “the fan-as-obsessed-weirdo stereotype” (Hills 2002: xxiv). However, ethnographies of fandom, as Jenkins mentions, might not acquire “the power to construct theories” (Jenkins 1992: 292). Nonetheless, it could “disprove them or at least challenge and refine them” (Ibid.). Although Jenkins is not an anthropologist, he applies an ethnographic method and suggests its importance in examining fandom. Since this initial work, scholars have tended to conduct ethnographic

¹⁰ For example, Daniel Cavicchi’s *Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning Among Springsteen Fans* (1998) focuses on Bruce Springsteen fans’ community and delves into their activities and experiences.

studies of fandom. The reason for this research tendency is that, as explored in the previous section, fandom entails “different experiences,” relates to “different practices,” and stands for “different things in various contexts” (Duffett 2013b: 19). Thus, because it is impossible “to generalize about all fandom” (Ibid.), it is important to describe and interpret the fandoms by participating in and observing them.

Popular music fandom scholars also have employed ethnographic methodology. Drawing upon Victor Turner’s frame that culture is not interpreted “as a collection of timeless institutions and fixed rules for behavior but rather as a disorganized, varied, and never-finished process of creating behavior and values,” Daniel Cavicchi writes an ethnography of Bruce Springsteen fandom (Turner 1974; 1998: 9-10). Cavicchi does not theorize about fan culture but illustrates how fans, including himself, perform a variety of practices with music. Thus, fans are “members” of his “own culture” rather than “exotic others” throughout his ethnography (Cavicchi 1998: 10). He then articulates that “fans are not problems or theories or data but real people trying to make sense of their lives in the late twentieth century” (Ibid.). As he focuses on his own fandom and his fellow fans, Cavicchi’s ethnography attempts an autoethnography of Springsteen fandom. Why do we pursue autoethnographies in popular music fandom studies? Why is this methodology significant? Before finding the answers to these questions, I briefly explore a definition of autoethnography and general discussions on it.

Autoethnography is a “branch of experimental ethnography that takes the self-reflexive aspect of ethnographic work and brings it to the fore of ethnographic practice” (Luvaas 2017: 6). Autoethnography also applies “the techniques of ethnography to the

study of one's self as a social or cultural being" (Chin 2016: 4; Luvaas 2017: 4).

Autoethnography is different from ethnography in terms of "a matter of degree rather than type" (Luvaas 2017: 5). While ethnographers maintain their "distance from their research subject," autoethnographers "saturate their accounts with subjectivity" (Berry 2011: 166; Luvaas 2017: 5). Autoethnographers create ethnographies of "their own life and experiences, making themselves into the object of study" (Luvaas 2017: 5). Through autoethnography, researchers not only "learn about themselves" and "reflect on their own life," but also "understand a larger cultural phenomenon or structure in which" they themselves are "embedded" (Ibid.).

In autoethnographic research, "becoming" a research subject is an essential practice (Luvaas 2017). For autoethnography, it is important for ethnographers "to consciously *become* without previous awareness of the outcome of such becoming" (Luvaas 2017: 4). Thus, "[a]utoethnographers *become* in order to understand what we just became" (Ibid.). Through this becoming, autoethnographers achieve "a useful corrective to more abstract and less grounded forms of social science research" (Ibid.).

An autoethnography of fandom, therefore, require its researchers to become fans. It is notable that some of these autoethnographers were already fans before conducting their research. For instance, Cavicchi was a member of Bruce Springsteen fandom before starting his research project on Springsteen fans. As described in the very beginning of this dissertation, I have been a Korean popular music fan since the 1990s. After almost two decades of being a fan, I now write an autoethnography of Korean female K-pop fandom. This suggests that autoethnography of popular music fans can be not only an

ethnographic but also historiographic practice illuminating both researchers' current, new experiences and past lives.

Returning to my earlier questions about methodology, I reference Matt Hills to find the reason for the importance of autoethnographic research on popular music fan studies. Hills defines the ethnography of fans as "fan-ethnography." He points out that "fan-ethnographies have focused on fans of single text or narrow intertextual networks, treating these fans as naturally-occurring (and spectacular) communities" (2002: 59). Thus, this tendency of fan-ethnographies has discouraged us to investigate "how we may, as subjects, negotiate our way through multiple fandoms of varying intensities at different times" (Ibid.). Hills suggests autoethnography as a complement to fan-ethnographies. According to Hills, the goal of an autoethnography is to catalog "traces" accumulated within "the self" through "cultural and historical processes" (Hills 2002: 43). Based on this objective, autoethnographies can complete "something which fan-ethnographies to date have neglected" (Hills 2002: 52). In other words, autoethnographies of fans can detail "how multiple fandoms are linked through the individual's realisation of a self-identity" (Ibid.). He also articulates that autoethnography can facilitate "the microscope of cultural analysis" of "the taste, values, attachments and investments of the fan" (Ibid.).

Stressing that an autoethnography enables one to avoid the misunderstanding of fan culture as singular, Hills then formulates four propositions:

1. Autoethnography must constantly seek to unsettle the moral dualisms which are thrown up by the narcissism of 'common sense' and its narrative closure. This requires the constant use of self-reflexive questioning.
2. Autoethnography must constantly seek to unsettle the use of theory as a disguise for personal attachments and investments; good

autoethnography does not simply validate the self and its fandom by twisting theory to fit the preferences of the self. Again, this requires the constant use of self-reflexive questioning.

3. Self-reflexivity cannot legitimate autoethnography as an exercise. The concepts of 'intellectual rigour' and heroic reflexivity act as another form of academic 'common sense' which sustains the critical 'us' versus the duped 'them.' When self-reflexivity is subjected to 'self-reflexive' critique then it becomes apparent that this term supports a fantasy of academic power and a fantasy of the idealist transformation of society. At this point, self-reflexivity acts as part of academia's 'critical industry.'
4. Autoethnography should treat self and other identically, using the same theoretical terms and attributions of agency to describe both (2002: 51-52).

Inspired by Hills's suggestion, I apply autoethnography to my project on Korean female K-pop fandom not just as a research method but as the objective of this research. Also, I find out why I, a K-pop fan, cannot help but involve myself in my study as a research subject, and how this autoethnographic project should be framed.

Applying a Feminist Lens to Popular Music Studies

As explored earlier, identities, including "gender" and "sexuality," have been heavily discussed in popular music studies since the 1990s. These discussions have owed much to feminist scholarship. A feminist perspective on popular music studies has been applied since the 1990s.

In *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, one of the pioneering musicological works motivated by second-wave feminism, McClary discusses the pop star Madonna, her music, and music videos in terms of gender dynamics (2002[1991]). As a feminist musicologist specializing in popular music studies, Sheila Whiteley has conducted research focusing on genders and sexualities since the mid-1990s. Examining

British rock musician Mick Jagger and his performance style, Whiteley demonstrates how a male popular musician and his performance can represent “ambivalent” gender and sexuality, and how his fans react to this representation of gender and sexuality (1997). She also explores how and why female performers have struggled against the male-dominated and sexist popular music industry, how they have positioned and identified themselves within the industry, and what changes they have brought to the industry (2000). Looking at cases of various popular music styles, genres and performers, including Janis Joplin, Joni Mitchell, Patti Smith, Annie Lenox, Madonna, k.d. lang, Tori Amos, and Tracy Chapman, Whiteley discusses their gender, sexuality, and subjectivity from a feminist perspective (Ibid.). Like other musicologists, Whiteley analyzes musical elements of popular songs, but focuses more on the social contexts of music and musicians.

Research on popular music fandom from a feminist perspective remains rare. Tracing young female Beatles fans, also known as Beatlemaniaics, in the 1960s, Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs argue that through fandom, teenage girls realized their sexuality, which was repressed by social circumstances, and that this realization was “women’s sexual revolution” (1992: 85). In a short autoethnography of Elvis Presley fandom, Sue Wise ruminates on her own experiences as both a feminist and a fan of his (1990[1984]). Although feminist works have been scarce in popular music fandom studies, feminism can be a useful lens to look at fandom, a “performative identity,” since feminists have addressed identity issues. In particular, feminist writing

and feminist ethnography can play a role both ideologically and methodologically in creating an auto/ethnography of female fandom.

Since Virginia Woolf positioned a “woman” as a “writer” throughout her essay *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), feminists have been concerned with feminist writing. Distinguishing “female” writing from “male” writing, Helene Cixous contends that women’s writing should address how to write about “her self” and “women,” as well as how to encourage women to write about themselves (1976). As a way of practicing “visionary feminism” that criticizes and conquers the multiple oppressions of racism, male domination, and capitalism, bell hooks suggests feminist writing (1984, 1990). She performs it to speak to everybody and guide them to establish new and broad feminist movements (1984, 1990). Trinh T. Minh-Ha argues that writing allows third world women to redirect their double objectification by both men and first world women (2003). She also articulates feminist writing as listening to others’ languages; as reading through others’ eyes; representing the other’s otherness; as being organic; as nurturing; and as resisting (Ibid.).

Feminism has influenced the work of ethnography. Ruth Behar advocates women as writers of culture (1993). Behar claims that the commitment to feminist ethnography can move female ethnographers toward the perceived center, which has been unappreciative of women’s ethnographies and even rejected them (Ibid.). Kamala Visweswaran points out that the intersection of women’s autobiographies and ethnographies has laid the groundwork for a feminist ethnography (1994). Visweswaran emphasizes that a feminist ethnography re-creates subjectivity, reflexivity, and the

relationship between “self” and “the other” (Ibid.). Therefore, feminism not only inspires autoethnographers with self-reflexivity, but also enables them to reconstruct self and the other. Nourished by feminist writing and feminist ethnography, I infuse feminism into my dissertation project in ethnomusicology, an autoethnography of Korean female popular music fandom.

Research and Methodology

My dissertation investigates the construction and performance of K-pop fandom by Korean females. For this investigation, I conducted a yearlong autoethnographic field study in Korea, both online and offline, from August 2015 to September 2016. Also, I did short-term follow-up research during my visit to Korea between December 28, 2016 and January 9, 2017. My major fieldsite was Seoul, the capital city of Korea, in which most K-pop events frequently take place and where fans gather to attend these events. However, I also traveled to cities for research on events held outside of Seoul. More specifically, I undertook participant observation of female fandoms of multiple K-pop musicians, including solo singers and idol groups, at these musicians’ concerts, K-pop-related exhibitions, a K-pop musicians’ meet-and-greet event (also known as a fan meeting in Korea), K-pop-related stores, and a popular culture awards ceremony featuring K-pop musicians (all in Seoul). I also did fieldwork on a music festival (in Gapyeong),¹¹ and three musicals starring a K-pop musician (one in Seongnam and others

¹¹ Gapyeong is a county located in the northeastern part of Gyeonggi province, approximately 45 miles away from Seoul.

in Seoul).¹² In addition to these K-pop events, I carried out participant observation of a non-K-pop event (in Seoul) in which female K-pop fans not only took part but also played an important role in manifesting fandom (all the events I observed and participated in are detailed throughout the chapters).

Since I not only accompanied my research participants at such K-pop events but also conducted interviews with the participants at places near their homes outside of the events, my fieldsites extended to Daejeon,¹³ Incheon,¹⁴ and Goyang.¹⁵ The interviews encompassed conversations and chats with the interviewees both in person and via text messages using mobile phones and social network services (hereafter SNS). Additionally, as fans organized their communities, found information about their favorite stars, discussed issues with other fans, and interacted with one another through the Internet (Duffett 2013b), I performed field research in cyber space (my online fieldwork has been continually conducted during dissertation writing in the United States). Online fields for research included K-pop musicians' online fan clubs, fans' personal websites for K-pop musicians (also known as fan sites), and social media websites (I specify these online fields throughout the text).

¹² Seongnam is one of satellite cities of Seoul in Gyeonggi province, approximately 17 miles from Seoul.

¹³ Daejeon is a metropolitan city located in Southern Chungcheong province or Chungcheongnam-do, approximately 101 miles from Seoul.

¹⁴ Incheon is a metropolitan city surrounded by Gyeonggi province, approximately 25 miles from Seoul.

¹⁵ Goyang is one of satellite cities of Seoul in Gyeonggi province, approximately 17 miles from Seoul.

To navigate Korean female K-pop fandom, it was necessary to specify the subject population for my dissertation. For this, I consulted Korean online ticket sales sites and portal sites that provide demographic data by gender and age of K-pop concert ticket buyers and Internet commenters on K-pop-related news websites. According to this data, I determined the subject population as females in their teens, twenties, thirties, and forties. Of this population, women in their twenties and thirties constituted the majority of the ticket buyers, ranking a close first and second among online ticket buyers. Women fans in their forties were ranked third in the ticket buyers of many popular music concerts, with the exception of certain K-pop “idol” groups. Teenage fans, meanwhile, converged on the concerts of those particular K-pop idol groups as well as on the comment sections of news stories about those idols.¹⁶ As a result of this demographic distribution of concert attendees and Internet commenters, I ultimately conducted interviews with four teenage girls, ten women in their twenties, fifteen women in their thirties, and five women in their forties out of thirty-five participants in my research (I, as an autoethnographer, include myself in research participants but do not count me as interviewees).

A fan of several Korean popular musicians over the past twenty years, I have shared my K-pop fandom with many friends. Accordingly, I recruited some of them as research participants before launching dissertation field studies in August 2015. These

¹⁶ Among concerts of which I did participant observations, One K Concert (in Seoul on October 9, 2015), Infinite’s concerts (in Seoul on February 21-22, 2016), and BTS’s concerts (in Seoul on May 7-8, 2016) included female teenage fans as the majority of audience members.

participants then recommended their fellow fans to me. Other friends, although they did not engage in K-pop fandom, knew of my dissertation research and also introduced their friends or acquaintances who were female K-pop fans to me. These fans also let me know their cohorts. Thus, I recruited my research participants using snowball sampling. Moreover, I contacted female fans online through social media, which functioned as online fan communities, as well as offline at sites of K-pop-related events. Explaining my dissertation on K-pop and its Korean female fandom, I requested those fans to participate in my research. Some of them consented to my requests, and were recruited as additional research participants.

As an autoethnographer, I revealed my identity as a Korean popular music fan during interviews. I shared my experience of fandom with participants rather than just ask interview questions and receive answers. As described at the very beginning of this dissertation, I have been a Korean popular music fan and have performed fandom since I was a teenager. I elaborate on my fan practice throughout the text. In short, as a teenager, I used to send fan letters and gifts to my favorite popular singers; collect their albums, their photographs, and magazines featuring them; watch almost all television shows my favorite musicians appeared on; and listen to radio shows hosted by or featuring the musicians. As an adult, I continue to attend concerts; make prompt reservations for concerts even within minutes of going on sale to get a ticket as well as to occupy a seat I want; visit online fan communities to obtain information about music and musicians; upload photographs of the concerts I took to these communities; and purchase goods related to my favorite musicians, which other fans make using images of a musician,

through the online communities. Listening to these stories about the fandom I have performed, participants in my research treated me as a fan friend rather than as an interviewer, and were willing to disclose their thoughts and experiences to me. Moreover, knowing that our favorite musicians or our musical taste overlapped, we empathized with each other. Thanks to this interactive, empathic interview style, I was able to establish a good rapport with my research participants. As this harmonious relationship between us continued even after the end of my field study in Korea, follow-up interviews were comfortably conducted via emails, mobile phone text messages, and SNS while I wrote my dissertation in the United States.

In addition to female K-pop fans, various K-pop or popular music practitioners took part in my research. The practitioners I interviewed included a concert band conductor (composer and arranger), a concert band director (violinist, arranger, and composer), jazz musicians (faculty members of the applied music department at various colleges),¹⁷ and a producer of digital multimedia content used for concerts. Their participation in my research as additional interviewees allowed me to better understand K-pop as an inclusive cultural phenomenon (Shin 2005a), where the different interests, perceptions, and experiences of K-pop practitioners conjoin. In particular, the concert band director and the content producer were involved in concerts I attended. The interviews I conducted with them enabled me to grasp how musicking by popular

¹⁷ In Korea, popular music is in the curriculum in the applied music department at colleges. Also, private institutions for applied music provide popular music education. Along with popular musicians, such as singers, instrumentalists, composers, and producers, many jazz musicians, engaging in both colleges and private institutions, teach popular music.

musicians, producers, and labels either met or disappointed fans' expectations. Like the recruitment of female fans, I was introduced to such practitioners by my friends working in contemporary music and arts administration.

All participants in my research provided me their personal information such as names, ages, occupations, and locations. However, I do not use their real names but rather anonymize their names in my dissertation. I arrange a list of all participants' names in Korean alphabetical order and give them uppercase alphabetical letters respectively (A, B, C, D, etc.). Since the number of the participants are thirty-four, the twenty-eighth through thirty-fourth names are given A2 to H2 to distinguish them from the first set of A to H participants. The participants' occupations and locations are generalized throughout the text (for example, I do not detail graduate student participants' degrees and their majors but generalize graduate students). Of the personal information that was gathered, Korean female K-pop fans' ages are specified when their interviews are quoted in the text.

Because my dissertation research has been on "Korean" females in "Korea," the Korean language only was used during fieldwork, including media sources, interviews, and so on. I translate all interview and media materials in the Korean language into English throughout the text. However, I try to minimize losses in translation to convey research participants' original narratives and voices: I quote Korean lingo of K-pop fandom, which my interviewees frequently use, by romanizing the Korean words and explaining them rather than translating them into English.

Dissertation Outline

In Chapter 1, I first outline Korean popular music or K-pop. I explore the existing K-pop-related studies and re-define K-pop. After this review and re-definition of K-pop, I examine how K-pop fandom is constructed, by referring to and accounting for staple vocabulary normally used among K-pop fans (*ppasuni, deokhu, deokjil, ipdeok, hyudeok, taldeok, seongdeok, sasaeng*, etc.). Also, through analyzing specific slang terms, which are commonly spoken to describe K-pop fandom, I unpack how K-pop fandom has been perceived, represented, and discussed in Korean society. On the other hand, I not only address some issues of K-pop fandom but also provide new facets of it, illustrating female K-pop fans' cases I have met during my fieldwork. I then suggest how our understanding of Korean female K-pop fandom can be revised.

Chapter 2 focuses on fans' musical practices. I illustrate what fandoms perform before, on the day of, and after K-pop concerts. Drawing upon the concept of musicking, I label these practices as pre-concert musicking, concert musicking, and post-concert musicking, respectively. Of these three types of musicking in which Korean female K-pop fandom is involved, I elaborate on musicking on the day of the concert. For this, I analyze fan singing and chanting (also called *ttechang*) both inside and outside of concert venues. I suggest that K-pop fans broaden their musical learning and experiences. I also highlight how the fans play a role as music producers and performers beyond their usual role as pop music consumers in the K-pop scene through concert musicking. I argue that these fans' musical practices not only feature in participatory performance but also can

incorporate listenership into musicianship. Moreover, I demonstrate that a variety of fans' musicking on the day of the concert builds soundscapes surrounding concert venues.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I describe a wide array of cultures or subcultures of/by/for Korean female K-pop fans, ranging from fan art, fan fiction, and fan video to fans' dancing, donation, and economic activities. Since "fan cultures cannot be pinned down through singular theoretical approaches or singular definitions" (Hills 2002: xi), I do not merely frame the cultures or subcultures within the existing, relevant scholarship. I rather elucidate and interpret each case of participatory fan cultures and subcultures in different ways. I then argue that a diversity of fan cultures and subcultures characterizes Korean female K-pop fandom. Also, I map the fandom onto K-pop as an inclusive cultural phenomenon.

Chapter 5 addresses feminist and political activities performed in Korean female K-pop fandom. Before exploring these actions, I outline Korean feminism to interweave it with fans' behaviors. Contextualizing them in current gender and sexuality issues in Korea, I conduct case studies of particular K-pop "boy band" fandoms – JYJ fandom, B1A4 fandom, and BTS fandom. Through these case studies, I demonstrate how female fans recognize feminism and realize it through their activities as fandom. I also examine Korean female fans' political practices. For this examination, I scrutinize a non-K-pop event, that is, a protest in which K-pop fans, manifesting their fan identity, take part and come to the fore. Additionally, I look at the variety of power dynamics that emerge among fans. I then challenge the most common bias against fandom, namely that fans, as unquestioning and uncritical followers of stars, create "antisocial forms" (Jenkins 1992:

13). I do so by arguing that through fandom, Korean women not only politicize their fan practices but also engage politically in society. Furthermore, I claim that Korean female K-pop fandom can re-direct traditional Korean feminism, inspire a new phase of feminist activism, and diversify Korean protest culture.

In Chapter 6, diverse factors and issues of Korean female K-pop fandom investigated throughout previous chapters are integrated with one another. Based on this integration, I propose two concepts to reach a new understanding of K-pop and its female fandom in Korea – “K-popping” and “fanscape.” As music is not an artistic work but an activity “people ‘do’” for their “different needs” in “ways of being human” (Small 1993: 2; Turino 2008: 1), musicking is conceptualized as a verb. Likewise, K-pop functions as an action, since it is also defined as an inclusive cultural phenomenon (Shin 2005a) in which people from all walks of life are involved with different interests in K-pop. I thus re-conceptualize it as K-popping, an activity that its practitioners “do.” Additionally, I expand the terminology for K-pop fan practices to “scape,” which is, as a scene, defined as remarkable but applicable to everyone’s surroundings, rather than confining them to “dom” to differentiate and even marginalize them. I re-define this expansion as fanscape.

Following the conclusion of this dissertation, one will find three attached appendices. Appendix A, as a glossary, includes all Korean terms and K-Pop fandom lingo used throughout the text. Appendix B lists all K-Pop musicians whom I mention throughout the text and their industry information (group name, music label, etc.). In Appendix C, I provide a list of all participants, who are anonymized and re-named as alphabetical letters, from A1 to H2, and the fandoms in which they participate.

Chapter 1. Between “*Ppasuni*” and “*Deokhu*”: Revising Understandings of Korean Female Fandom

The first step to understand Korean female K-pop fandom would be to consider K-pop, the object that these female fans are fond of, enthusiastic about, and involved in. The next and most fundamental stage would be to learn the fans’ cultures and subcultures. As part of this process, one would also need to get accustomed to (slang) terms used to describe these cultures and subcultures as well as how these terms are contextualized in society by the fans, themselves. This chapter will provide a guide to these basic levels in getting to know Korean female K-pop fandom. In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss how to define and re-define K-pop. From the second section to the last section of this chapter, I will introduce and explain K-pop fandom lingo to explore the process of the construction and performance of fandom. Additionally, I will look at female fans’ self-identification, self-analyses, and self-reflection. By the end of this chapter, I will suggest a revised understanding of Korean female K-pop fandom.

Korean Popular Music or K-Pop

Throughout the summer and fall of 2012, the South Korean singer PSY’s hit song “Gangnam Style” was everywhere. The rapid and dramatic spread of this song worldwide was driven by its comical music video, as well as by amusing fan-made videos parodying PSY’s original music video on YouTube. Since the international craze for PSY’s “Gangnam Style” occurred, both journalists and academics outside of Korea have become interested in K-pop. However, K-pop-related practitioners in Korea have cast

doubt on whether PSY is indeed a K-pop singer and whether his song even represents K-pop music (Shin 2013).

In terms of musical styles, K-pop is characterized by “danceable rhythms” and “catchy tunes” (Shin 2009a: 507; Lie 2012: 356). Using these characteristics, PSY’s “Gangnam Style” can be termed a K-pop song thanks to its simple melodic hooks with repetitive lyrics, “Oh, sexy lady, oh, oh, oh, *oppa gangnam style*,” as well as its up-tempo beats and steady rhythms, to which PSY and backup dancers are dancing (Shin 2013). However, K-pop also features performers in their teens and early twenties, also known as idols, who have “fit,” “attractive” bodies (Shin 2009a: 507; Lie 2012: 356). However, PSY, turning forty in 2017, is not an idol, and he is far from attractive and fit. Therefore, PSY really cannot be called a K-pop musician. Additionally, his music was not created in the same manner as K-pop, which is popular music “made in Korea for non-Koreans” (Shin 2013: 31). PSY’s “Gangnam Style” was made in Korea but he did not mean to export this song to other countries, even though it won huge popularity among international listeners, ranking as number two on the Billboard Chart. Looking at this musician and this song, it is clear that K-pop can be difficult to define. Nonetheless, in order to provide a clear understanding of Korean female K-pop fandom, I define K-pop by looking at four keywords: “idol,” “fandom,” “media,” and “trans- or internationality.”

The term K-pop was first used at the end of the 1990s on the television music show *K-Pop Station*, which aired on Channel V in Mainland China and Taiwan (Lee 2016). Since the 2000s, China and Japan have used this term to label Korean popular

music along with the “Korean wave,” also known as *hallyu*, which literally means “flow of Korea.”¹⁸ As a new term, the Korean wave stands for the popularity of Korean popular culture outside of Korea. Korean television dramas, movies, and popular music have been central to generating the Korean wave in foreign countries. The Korean wave was disseminated throughout China, for instance, in the early 2000s by the first-generation idol groups, such as H.O.T., S.E.S., Shinhwa, NRG, and Baby V.O.X., and their music (Fuhr 2016). In the mid-2000s, the idol boy band TVXQ touched off a K-pop boom in Japan, and led Korean popular music, labeled as K-pop, to win further popularity in East and Southeast Asia (Lee 2016).

However, Korean people themselves rarely used the term K-pop until the 2010s, preferring the Korean word *gayo* (meaning songs) over K-pop, as this word embraces all genres of Korean popular music (Kim 2012a; Shin 2013; Lee 2016). Korean people perceive K-pop as a subgenre of Korean popular music (Lee 2016). More specifically, in the 2000s, K-pop was defined as idol groups’ music that targeted international listeners as well as teenage fans in Korea.¹⁹ Thus, *idol* is a keyword to define K-pop.

¹⁸ Chinese commentators coined the term *hallyu* (韓流) to describe the great influence of Korean television dramas and movies in Chinese-speaking countries (Fuhr 2016).

¹⁹ The Korean wave in Japan is attributed to the tremendous popularity of the Korean television drama entitled *Gyeongju* (Japanese title: 冬のソナタ; English title: Winter Sonata) in the early 2000s (Chua and Iwabuchi 2008). As this drama gained popularity among Japanese middle-aged females, many Japanese people became interested in Korean culture, including popular music. However, before this Korean wave that came along with *Gyeongju*, Korean popular music had been exported to Japan. As Japanese pop music practitioners labeled domestically-produced but globally-consumed Japanese popular music as “J-pop,” they coined the term “K-pop” to label popular music made in Korea but consumed in Japan. Accordingly, this word appeared in Japan in 1998 to label the Korean idol boy band H.O.T.’s albums. In addition to H.O.T., S.E.S., Jae-wook Ahn (Korean male ballad singer), Hwayobi (Korean female singer

Korean idol groups appeared in the mid-1990s before the term K-pop was coined and applied. Inspired by the production process of American and Japanese idols, Korean popular music labels decided that they should focus on developing groups of young musicians targeting young listeners in their teens and twenties, a demographic that had emerged as powerful consumers in the Korean popular music scene. Thanks to financial support from their parents, these young listeners had purchasing power to buy popular music albums and concert tickets. Belonging to the middle and upper class and drivers of industrialization and economic growth in Korea, these parents were willing to use their disposable income for their children's leisure and pastime. Moreover, these young pop music consumers, already acquainted with American and Japanese pop music culture through media, were ready to accept new forms of Korean popular music performed by young musicians who would be promoted as idol stars.²⁰

Accordingly, Korean popular music labels selected talented or good-looking teenagers, trained these teenagers as singers, rappers, or dancers, and then debuted them

specializing in R&B), Jaurim (Korean modern rock band), and Lee Tzsche (also known as Sang-eun Lee) (Korean female folk singer) released their albums labeled as K-pop in Japan in the late 1990s (Shin 2013). Looking at these phenomena, Changnam Kim suggests that the term K-pop not only describes mainstream music featuring “Korean idol groups” rather than Korean popular music in general, but also a particular style of Korean popular music recognized in part of Asia during a specific period (Kim 2012a; Kim 2012b).

²⁰ Thanks to these young pop music consumers, young boy bands, such as Taiji Boys and DEUX, appeared in the early 1990s, and they introduced a new style of dance music, featuring rap parts, to the Korean popular music scene. This rap-influenced dance music gained great popularity with young Korean listeners and became the mainstream of Korean popular music. Due to this contribution to the diversification of pop music consumers and musical styles in Korea, Taiji Boys and DEUX are regarded as the pioneers of Korean idol groups.

as idol groups specializing in dance music.²¹ The first Korean idol group H.O.T., consisting of five teenage boys, was established by SM Entertainment in 1996. Following H.O.T., several idol boy bands and girl groups made their debut: Sechskies, an idol boy group (1997); NRG, an idol boy band (1997); S.E.S., the first idol girl group in Korea (1997); Baby V.O.X., an idol girl group (1997); Shinhwa, an idol boy band (1998); Fin.K.L., an idol girl group (1998); and g.o.d., an idol boy band (1999). These groups made up the first generation of Korean idols in the late 1990s and early 2000s.²² As mentioned earlier, several of these first-generation idol groups made inroads into the East Asian pop music market, which led to the creation of the term K-pop. Acknowledging the contribution of these groups to the beginning of the usage of the word, I refer to Korean idols as K-pop idols from here on.

As the pop and entertainment industry has developed in Korea, popular music labels have developed into entertainment management companies incorporating multiple functions, ranging from artists and repertoire (A&R); music composition and arrangement; sound recording and engineering; and music production, promotion, and marketing. They are also purveyors of music education, choreography, acting and foreign language lessons, and styling fashion (costumes and makeups) since the 2000s (Cha and Choi 2011).²³ Accordingly, the second-generation K-pop idol groups, making their

²¹ Dance music was one of the most famous popular music genres alongside ballads in Korea in the 1990s (Lee 2002).

²² In addition to boy bands and girl groups, there were a few mixed groups among the first-generation idols.

²³ Most K-pop labels have their own music educational system to train idols. These idol trainees learn vocal techniques, instruments, and music composition through their labels. At the same time, popular music education in Korea has been institutionalized through

debut in the middle and late 2000s, not only acted as singers and dancers in the popular music scene, but also worked as actors/actresses, models, emcees, and entertainers for the promotion of the groups through their non-musical activities (Ibid.).²⁴ Engaging with the public through non-musical actions through broadcasting media, these K-pop idol group members were able to gain a fan following and promoted their musical activities. Like the idols who preceded them, the second-generation idols performed overseas activities, taking advantage of the language skills gained during their training. Currently, this promotion through non-musical activities is still utilized by almost all K-pop musicians and their labels.

As briefly described in the beginning of this section, K-pop is musically defined as “infectious beats” and a “simple, earworm-inducing melody” (Lie 2012: 356). This music is realized through K-pop musicians’ singing and rapping, as well as through their “skillful dancing” (Ibid.). Additionally, and importantly, meaningless English lyrics are employed for hooks or refrains in K-pop songs. These English lyrics make K-pop music “difficult to decipher from listening just briefly whether the song is in Korean or any

curricula in the applied music department at colleges. Also, private institutions for applied music provide popular music courses in Korea. Along with popular singers, instrumentalists, composers, and producers, many jazz musicians are engaged in both colleges and private institutions to teach popular music. According to the Korean jazz musicians I interviewed, there are several students who enroll in the applied music department to become K-pop stars. However, these jazz musicians, as educators, articulate that they do not teach their students how to become stars but how to become musicians. This explanation suggests that the K-pop music education offered by the labels focuses on the cultivation of pop stars as intermediators maximizing the commercialization and commodification of pop music.

²⁴ As entertainers, these idol groups were featured in television reality shows. Also, the group members worked as emcees for TV music and entertainment shows.

other language” (Ibid.). These characteristics of K-pop music were established throughout the period of the second-generation K-pop idols in the middle and late 2000s.²⁵

In addition to the label-dominated recruiting, training, producing, and promoting system in the industry, *fandom* played an important role in promoting K-pop idol groups. It also helped to develop a participatory K-pop culture (I will elaborate on how K-pop fandom promotes K-pop and creates a participatory culture throughout the text). For example, once H.O.T. became popular after their debut, the group’s label SM Entertainment made use of fandom to promote the group more effectively. The label organized the group’s official fan club, named “Club H.O.T.,” in 1997 and recruited fan club members, collecting membership fees from them. Also, to draw attention to this official fan club, SM set white as the symbolic color of Club H.O.T (Cha and Choi 2011; Lee 2013). This color was printed on official goods, such as raincoats and balloons, which were distributed to the official fan club members (I will explore how fans utilize these colored goods in Chapter 2). Following the creation of the color symbolization of H.O.T. fandom, subsequent idol groups in the 1990s established their fandom’s particular colors. For instance, Sechskies used yellow for their official fan club “D.S.F.” (acronym for “Dear Sechskies Friend”); S.E.S. assigned shiny purple to their official fan club

²⁵ See examples of these K-pop songs at <https://youtu.be/BIHv3BbBv6A> (Wonder Girls “Tell Me”), <https://youtu.be/QZBn1e9pr2Q> (Wonder Girls “Nobody”), <https://youtu.be/x6QA3m58DQw> (Super Junior “Sorry Sorry”), <https://youtu.be/cUgReo37ECw> (2PM “Again & Again”), <https://youtu.be/rougtzsCDI> (Shinee “Ring Ding Dong”), <https://youtu.be/5bwb-ybEDPs> (T-ara “Bo Peep Bo Peep”), and <https://youtu.be/U7mPqycQ0tQ> (Girls’ Generation “Gee”).

“*Chingu*” (meaning “friends”); and Shinhwa used orange as a symbolic color for their official fan club named “*Shinhwa Changjo*” (meaning “the creation of Shinhwa”).

In addition to those symbolic colors representing their official fan clubs, K-pop labels have created official logos for idol groups. Identifying and symbolizing the groups, these logos are printed on official goods produced and sold by the labels. Through purchasing, possessing, and using logo-printed items, such as light sticks and clothes, fans incorporate their consumption of K-pop into their connection to K-pop stars. Thus, K-pop star merchandising making use of the official logos confirms that K-pop is defined through the relationship between the stars and their fans, which is forged through the fans’ consuming practices as a part of fandom. In other words, although K-pop idols’ musical skills and their “pop-star persona” are carefully programmed under the labels through management, they only become K-pop stars through their fans’ consuming practices (Shin 2013: 100).

As discussed previously, K-pop idols have taken advantage of *media* to promote themselves.²⁶ With the development of mobile network and social network services, current K-pop stars maximize these new technologies and media to pitch their music.²⁷

²⁶ K-pop idols have not only appeared on media but also applied various multimedia forms to their musical performances. For example, Jae Joong Kim, a member of JYJ, held a solo concert making use of holography during his hiatus due to his military service. According to a producer of this concert (producer of digital multimedia content) I interviewed, Jae Joong Kim first filmed his lip-synching performances against a blue screen for the concert. These images were converted into holographic images. His holographic images were then screened on the stage along with the sound of his pre-recorded singing and speaking.

²⁷ John Lie points out that “K-pop performers are, appropriate for the age of music video, extremely photogenic (often enhanced by plastic surgery and other interventions)” (2012: 256).

Utilizing social media websites or applications, the stars do not merely promote themselves but communicate and interact with their fans. This strategy of communication and interaction with fans through social network services (SNS) stimulates the promotion of K-pop musicians and their music. One example of this is the K-pop boy band BTS. At first, this boy band was not as popular as other K-pop boy bands, including EXO, WINNER, and GOT7, which are promoted by major K-pop labels such as SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment, and JYP Entertainment. However, since their debut in June 2013, BTS has run their own social media accounts, including a Twitter account, YouTube channel, and V Live channel (Korea-based social media website and application for live broadcast), and utilized these media for the promotion of themselves as well as for the interaction with their fans. In fact, their presence on social media allowed BTS to gain more fans, leading to them recently winning the Top Social Media Artist Award at the 2017 Billboard Music Awards in May 2017. The group owed this award to their worldwide fans, who did *ipdeok* (becoming a fan or entering fandom) through the group's social media promotion. These fans aggressively participated in posting, tweeting, and voting online to boost BTS' chance to win the award. The group receiving this award demonstrates how idol stars, their fans, and media function symbiotically to characterize K-pop.

I have pointed out that the term K-pop began with Korean idol groups' international activities. This suggests that K-pop has been defined by its *transnationality* or *internationality*. In addition to K-pop musicians' overseas expansion, the transnationality or internationality of K-pop has been shaped through the introduction of

the global trend of popular music to the Korean music scene or the modification of this trend in accordance with K-pop production (Cha and Choi 2011). More specifically, K-pop labels have recruited foreign (especially Northern European) composers, who work globally, to make K-pop songs (Shin 2013: 54). Also, the labels have hired foreign (mainly Asian or ethnic Asian), Korean mixed-race, or ethnic Korean (born and raised abroad) members in their idol groups. For instance, the K-pop girl group f(X) consists of four multiethnic and multinational members: a Korean (Luna), a Korean American (Krystal), a Chinese (Victoria), and a Taiwanese American (Amber). Additionally, the K-pop labels collaborate with local music promoters on the K-pop musicians' concerts in other countries (Cha and Choi 2011). This transnational or international music production and promotion define K-pop.

Up to this point, I have defined K-pop looking at four keywords – idol, fandom, media, and trans- or internationality. Now, I will briefly re-define K-pop by bringing Korean non-idol musicians, their musical and non-musical activities, and their fans into the K-pop domain. Currently, the iTunes store labels all styles or genres of popular music from Korea and by Koreans as K-pop. For instance, non-idol musicians making their debut before the term K-pop appeared, such as Jong Shin Yoon, Si Kyung Sung, and Dongryul Kim, are listed under K-pop in the iTunes store.²⁸ Moreover, Korean indie bands, such as No Reply, and their songs are also categorized as K-pop. In addition to this categorization of K-pop in accordance with place of origin of the music and the

²⁸ Of course, the female solo singer-songwriter IU is not an idol either. However, she made her debut in 2008 when the term K-pop was already used.

music performers' nationality or ethnicity, I will talk about how non-idol stars' music can be categorized as K-pop.

Although the product of the glocalization of popular music, K-pop also has its roots in Korean popular music genres popular in the 1990s.²⁹ As mentioned earlier, young listeners in their teens and early twenties emerged as new consumers of Korean popular music in the 1990s. These young listeners preferred Korean ballads, which had been popular since the 1980s, as well as a new style of dance music featured with rapping. Thanks to this generation's consumption, ballad and dance genres came to occupy two prominent positions in the Korean popular music scene in the 1990s (Lee 2002). It should be noted that both ballads and dance music were not Korean indigenous popular music genres. Korean ballads' musical idioms, structures, and instrumentation adopted those used in Western classical music as well as Western and Japanese pop. The 90's dance music was also inspired by hip-hop or electronic dance music from both America and Japan. Thus, Korean ballad and dance genres in the 1990s were the fruits of the "indigenization" of Western and Japanese pop music styles (Shin 2013: 66). Moreover, these two dominant genres neither competed with nor ignored each other, but became musically blended, even as Korean ballads and dance music were rivals in terms of their fandoms (Lee 2002).³⁰ With this background, Korean idol groups and their music,

²⁹ Global pop genres, including hip-hop, rhythm and blues, and electronic dance music, have been adopted in Korean popular music and then localized through various styles of K-pop. K-pop is currently globalized via the Korean wave.

³⁰ For example, the ballad genre was combined with other genres to form subgenres, such as rock ballads, folk ballads, dance ballads, pop ballads, and so on in the 1980s and the early 1990s (Lee 2002). Also, in the middle and late 1990s, as Korean ballads were

especially rooted in the rap-inflected dance music, appeared in the middle and late 1990s. These idols then led the invention and usage of the term K-pop through their overseas expansion. Considering this history and context of K-pop, I categorize Korean ballads as K-pop, and suggest that Korean non-idol ballad singers can be K-pop musicians.³¹

Non-idol musicians' activities may also allow them to be identified as K-pop stars. For instance, the female singer-songwriter IU was not promoted as an idol upon her debut in 2008 when K-pop was coming into maturity through the music of second-generation idols. Although she was not trained as an idol, IU has participated in joint concerts featuring K-pop musicians along with these idols. She also has appeared on television dramas and shows as an actress and an emcee as idols do. Thus, non-idol musicians are involved in the K-pop scene through idol-inspired or idol-related activities.

Some non-idol stars have practiced trans- or internationality in their musical practices, swept up in the Korean wave. For example, Si Kyung Sung, a male ballad singer-songwriter who made his debut in 2000, is very popular in East and Southeast Asia. He has sung his ballads for the original soundtracks of several Korean television dramas. As these dramas have won popularity in Japan, China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asian countries, such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, Sung has become popular among drama viewers in those countries, and gained fans outside of Korea. Further, like idol musicians, Sung has participated in overseas musical

mixed with new external genres of global pop, additional subgenres were created, including hip-hop ballads and R&B ballads (Ibid.).

³¹ K-pop idols have included ballad songs on their albums and performed these songs at their concerts. Accordingly, listeners do not consider ballads an outdated or minority genre of K-pop.

activities: he has his official fan club, named “Purple Ocean,” in both Korea and Japan; he has released his albums in Japan; he has held his concert tours in Japanese cities; he has been featured in Japanese pop magazines; and he has appeared on a Japanese television show to promote his ballads in Japan. These transnational activities enable me to label Si Kyung Sung as a K-pop singer regardless of the musical style or genre he specializes in.

Jong Shin Yoon has also specialized in Korean ballads, along with Si Kyung Sung and Dongryul Kim, since he debuted as a guest singer for songs created and produced by the group 015B in 1990.³² Yoon is thus recognized as an old-generation singer-songwriter in the Korean popular music scene and has never been considered a K-pop musician. However, like many K-pop stars, Jong Shin Yoon has utilized media to promote his music. Further, presenting *Monthly Project* since 2012, he has made use of a mobile application as a form of monthly magazine to release his new songs every month. Given the utilization of media as a key factor characteristic of K-pop, Yoon’s musical practice through the *Monthly Project* application can be categorized as K-pop even if he is from an older generation of Korean popular musicians.³³

³² One could dispute the identification of Dongryul Kim, a Korean male ballad singer-songwriter as a K-pop singer in this dissertation. Kim was not trained and promoted as an idol as he made his debut in 1993 long before Korean idols appeared in the popular music scene. Also, he did not try overseas musical activities like Si Kyung Sung. However, Kim has practiced trans- or internationality in his music by collaborating with foreign orchestras on instrumental parts of his songs.

³³ Moreover, Yoon has collaborated on his *Monthly Project* with many K-pop idol stars, such as Zico (member of the K-pop boy band Block B), Ken (member of the K-pop boy band Vixx), the K-pop boy band Seventeen members (Jeonghan, Joshua, DK, Seungkwan, and Woozi), Seulong Lim (member of the K-pop boy band 2AM), and the

I conclude this section by providing a photo I took at “Melody Forest Camp,” a Korean popular music (*gayo*) festival held annually by Mystic Entertainment in September in Jaraseom Island in Gapyeong, Korea (figure 1.1). The illustration in this picture depicts a man speaking to a woman, saying, “I enjoy listening to DEEP POP songs. Hey girl, how about you? You don’t listen to puerile K-POP, do you?” but the woman gives him a dirty look and says to herself, “Such an idiot...” The man’s statement indicates that K-pop and its fandom is gendered and therefore denigrated by implication. In the next section, I will discuss the gendering of K-pop fandom and negative representations of female K-pop fans, through examining the term *ppasuni* and some issues around this expression.



Figure 1.1. Paper floor chair distributed to audience members at “2015 Melody Forest Camp.” A sarcastic illustration, implying tensions around K-pop in the popular music scene, is printed on back of the chair. Photo by the author.

K-pop boy band WINNER members (Mino and Seungyoon). These idol musicians have participated in the project as vocalists or rappers.

“*Ppasuni*”: Colloquialism and Slang for Female K-Pop Fandom

Fandom occupies a big part of K-pop culture. However, members of K-pop fandom have been treated as mere celebrity worshipers who are easily co-opted by the popular entertainment industry. Moreover, K-pop fandom has been strongly gendered both nationally and internationally through mass media that have spotlighted young female fans squealing, sobbing, and swooning with enthusiasm for K-pop stars. Furthermore, common public discourses in Korea have specifically disparaged female K-pop fans by describing them with the slang term “*ppasuni*.”

Of course, it is not only in Korean fandom that a gendered term focusing on women and their fan practices is coined and deployed to describe fandom. For example, the terms “groupie” or “groupie girl” have long been used in the Western popular music scene. The term groupie appeared in the 1960s to delineate young “female fans who aimed to create a real sexual or romantic liaison with their favorite rock or pop musician” (Duffett 2013b: 40). Groupies were “misrepresented” as “eroticized” fans through media, including the British film *Groupie Girl* (Ford 1970) and the American indie film *Tamara Drewe* (Frears 2010) (Jenkins 1992: 15; Duffett 2013b: 109).

While the concept of groupies is related to the misperception and misrepresentation of female sexuality, Korean *ppasuni* is associated with sex and class discrimination against female fans. The term *ppasuni* derives from other Korean slang words “*gongsuni*” or “*bar-suni*.” The word *gongsuni* is an expression degrading female factory workers, as a compound word of “*gong*,” which derives from the Korean word *gongjang*, meaning a factory, and “*suni*,” one of the most popular first names for young

Korean women in the 1950s and 60s. The other slang term, *bar-suni*, a combination of the words “bar” and “*sun*,” hints at prostitute barmaids, and is used to degrade these women and their sex service at bars (Kim Lee and Park 2001). In Korean language, bar can be pronounced “*ppa*” as tensification according to Korean pronunciation rules. Both *gongsuni* and *bar-suni* were a group of young females in their late teens and early twenties who had to work to maintain their poor, lower class families in Korea in the 1970s and 80s. Given the origins of the word, *ppasuni*, when used to describe female K-pop fans, implies they are young women who are hierarchically and sexually disdained in Korea.

Let me elaborate on the syllable *ppa* to explain how fandom has been deeply feminized in Korea. *Ppa* not only indicates bar in Korean, but is the closest approximation to the English word “fan” available using the Korean alphabet. It also functions as an abbreviation for “*oppa*.” To understand Korean female fandom’s enthusiasm for male stars, one should know the Korean word *oppa*. *Oppa* literally means an elder brother. This term is specifically used by women to address or refer to older men in both a kinship relationship and in general. For example, a woman can call her boyfriend or male friends *oppa* when they are older than her. To express their affection for older male stars, fangirls call these men *oppa* in the Korean pop cultural scene. These fangirls were originally termed *oppabudae* in the 1980s. At that time, Yong Pil Cho was the most popular male pop singer in Korea. In response to Cho’s singing, his fangirls

shrieked at him, “*oppa!*” This scene frequently appeared in television music shows.³⁴

Media then defined these girls as *oppabudae*. Thus, the term *oppabudae* describes fangirls who call their favorite male stars *oppa*.³⁵ *Budae*, the latter word of the compound word of *oppa* and *budae*, literally means military corps. This word suggests a group of people acting together. Therefore, the term *oppabudae*, likening fangirls to a corps, highlights these girls’ collective fandom in a systematic and organized way.

As idol boy bands and their female fans have occupied the Korean popular music scene since the 1990s in Korea, *oppabudae* evolved into another epithet, *ppasuni*. While the former stresses female fandom’s collectivity, the latter specifies female sexuality and class in a disparaging way. This deterioration in the wording for female fandom results from negative representations of female fans by both mass media and academia. For instance, Korean cultural researcher Dong-yeun Lee pointed out that most cultural phenomena of fandom in the early 2000s were caused by (female) fans’ excessive obsession for the stars or their private lives (2001).³⁶ Tracing the history of Korean fandom, Korean journalist Hwanpyo Kim presented some peculiar cases of female fandom in the Korean popular music scene: a fan letter, which was written by a female

³⁴ Although I do not remember the exact date, I still remember hearing this term in a television music show in the early 1980s. My family was watching the show with my aunt (my mother’s younger sister in her twenties). Yong Pil Cho was performing in the show. His fangirls were screeching in the pause of his singing and screaming at him, “*oppa!*” Like these girls, my aunt called Cho *oppa* in front of the television. She was his fan too.

³⁵ In addition to stars in popular culture such as singers and actors, male sports stars are also called *oppa*. In the 1990s, there were many fangirls enthusiastic for male basketball players, forming a basketball *oppabudae*.

³⁶ Although Lee did not specify fans’ gender, he cited the cases of fandoms of male musicians whose fans were mostly female.

fan in her blood and sent to the male singer Boksu Ko in the 1930s; battles between idol boy bands' fangirls since the 1990s; and female fans, also known as *sasaeng* fans, who stalk the stars and follow their private lives (I discuss *sasaeng* fans in a later section) (2012, 2013). Further, these one-sided observations and descriptions of Korean female fandom through both media and academia have intensified the public's perception of female fans as deserving to be derided and disdained as "*ppasuni*" due to their senseless fan practices.

As K-pop has been booming both inside and outside of Korea since the 2010s, its fans also have increased within Korea. The demographics of Korean K-pop fans also have been diversified in terms of their gender and age. For instance, women in their thirties and over have become fans of K-pop boy bands (or young male solo singers) and express their fannishness in their own ways (sending expensive restorative herb medicine to the young male stars as a gift, for example). These female fans are specifically termed "*imo*-fan (aunt fan)." ³⁷ As a counterpart to *imo*-fans, one can find "*samchon*-fans (uncle fans)" in K-pop fandom. ³⁸ The term *samchon*-fan thus describes middle-aged male fans of K-pop girl groups. Like *imo*-fans, these male fans present the girl group members with

³⁷ *Imo*-fan is a mix of the Korean word "*imo*," meaning aunt on the mother's side, and the English word "fan." Since the age gap between middle-aged female fans and young male stars in their teens and early twenties seems similar to the age gap between aunts and nephews, the term *imo* is used for the description of the female fans. Also, *imo*-fan suggests that these fans' generous support for the stars is comparable to what aunts do for their nephews. In relation to *imo*-fandom, Song-Hee Kim and Dong-Ouk Yang published a research paper on Korean middle-aged female fans of pop musicians from reality TV auditions (2013).

³⁸ The Korean word *samchon* means uncle. In the K-pop context, *samchon*-fan implies familiarity, like an uncle, and that the person is an adult male fan.

expensive gifts such as designer bags.³⁹ However, K-pop fandom as a whole is still represented by the word *ppasuni*, along with images of young female fans screeching, sobbing, and swooning in the presence of K-pop stars.

“We” Korean female K-pop fans are fully aware of this unpleasant nickname as well as its scornful tone towards us. That is why many of us do not reveal our identification with fandom to most people, as they have a bias against *ppasuni*. Further, some of us pretend not to be members of fandom. This pretense of being outsiders to fandom is termed “*ilko*” in K-pop fandom lingo – the combination of “*il*,” the first syllable of the Korean word *ilbanin*, which literally means general people but indicates non-members of fandom, and “*ko*,” the first syllable of the English word “cosplay.” Nonetheless, we still use *ppasuni* as a colloquialism to identify and portray ourselves. Indeed, my research participants, including myself, do not hesitate to call ourselves *ppasuni*. Sometimes, we abbreviate *ppasuni* to *sunni*, and apply this word to describe our fan practices. For example, when acknowledging nice photos of our favorite K-pop stars taken by other fans, we praise their photography in our lingo, saying they have used a “*sunni*-filter.” This term indicates that the quality of the stars’ pictures is more enhanced than those shot by general photographers (I will explore these photographer fans’ activities in Chapter 3). In this case, *sunni*, the abbreviation for *ppasuni*, can be utilized in

³⁹ *Samchon*-fandom has become an issue in the context of the visualization and sexualization of K-pop girl groups – *samchon*-fans’ consumption of both eroticized and innocent images of the girl group members projects adult men’s sexual desire (pedophilic voyeurism) onto the girls (J. Kim 2011; S. Kim 2011). However, some male researchers have justified *samchon*-fans, claiming this male fandom is a demonstration of quasi-familism or an expression of nostalgia for their boyhood (Jeong 2011; Kang 2011).

a self-respectful manner. Additionally, some of us, sharing jokes with one another, employ the term *ppasuni* for self-parody. Yet, we neither sneer at our fandom nor internalize a contempt for female fans, but just redirect a signifier of *ppasuni* to self-affirmation.

This self-appropriation of the term *ppasuni* can undermine negative connotations surrounding the word among the general public.⁴⁰ Drawing from Judith Butler, Hyun-jae Lee suggests that when someone says “Hey woman!” in a scornful tone, and the woman being scorned responds, “Ok, I’m a woman, so what?,” she can change the negative implication given to the appellation “woman” into a positive one (Lee 2016; Butler 1997). Lee claims that a reiteration of femininity through this self-affirmation does not reinforce the established negative ideologies about womanliness but can be “recontextualization” and “ex-citable” iteration transforming negative ideologies about womanhood into more positive ones (Ibid.). Building on Lee’s argument, I reemphasize that through the self- or re-appropriation of *ppasuni*, we Korean female K-pop fans not only recognize our existence and the value of our fandom, but also recontextualize our fannishness. Then, we can overcome, resist, and transcend other people’s contempt, derision, and hatred towards us as *ppasuni*.

In the next section, I define some selected slang expressions for K-pop fandom by citing my research participants’ cases. These expressions are widespread among K-pop fans and will appear frequently in this dissertation.

⁴⁰ In her blog post, Korean columnist Jinsong Lee argues that the term *ppasuni* connotes derision, contempt, and hatred towards female fans (2015).

“Ipdeok,” The Moment When We Became Fans

There are many slang terms used within fandom at large in Korea (not exclusively specific to female K-pop fandom). Some of these terms have even been utilized by Korean media outlets as titles for articles covering celebrities. For instance, one could easily see the Korean phrase “*ipdeokeul bureuneun*,” which means “inducing *ipdeok*,” in entertainment news titles on *NAVER*, one of the largest internet portal sites in Korea.⁴¹ In this phrase, *ipdeok* is not standard language but a slang word that originates from fandom lingo. In this section, I define some fandom slang expressions including *ipdeok*.

In the previous section, I explained the term *ppasuni*, the best-known K-pop slang term. This extremely feminized expression has been gradually joined by another slang word, “*deokhu*,” which is more gender neutral (or more masculinized) than *ppasuni*. *Deokhu* is an abbreviation for “*odeokhu*,” and the term *odeokhu* is associated with the Japanese word *otaku*. As already recognized outside of Japan, *otaku* means a young person who is obsessed with popular cultural products, such as video games, *manga* (comics), and *anime* (animation), or other items, including electronic goods and vehicles. Since this type of person, immersed in objects of their interest, mostly stays indoors, the Japanese words “*o*” (お), an honorific prefix, and “*taku*” (宅 (たく)), meaning house, were utilized to coin a name for these people. *Otaku* was introduced to Korea as a Japanese subculture in the 1990s. Korean media started to employ the term *otaku* to

⁴¹ I searched for news articles including this phrase in the titles on *NAVER*. From May 2015 to October 2, 2017, there were 408 news headlines featuring the phrase “inducing *ipdeok*.”

describe any similarly obsessed people in Korea, including fans, and their subcultural practices.

Meanwhile, to ridicule persons described as *otaku*, Korean young people wrote this Japanese-oriented word in their own Korean orthography online – *odeokhu* (Kim 2016). Among youth in Korea, *otaku* or *odeokhu* were recognized as unsociable and fat young male geeks in coke bottle glasses (Kim 2017). Thus, while *ppasuni* is a slang word disdainful towards girls and young women, the term *deokhu* describes boys and young men disdainfully. However, while *ppasuni* is only appropriate to female fans, *deokhu* can be applicable to both males and females who are enthusiastic for the stars (fans) and a variety of other objects from classical music and audio equipment to photography and travel. Therefore, *deokhu* can be gender neutral as well as masculinized.

The word *deokhu* is abbreviated to “*deok*.” This abbreviation for *deokhu* (*deok*) is the most commonly used to label fans in general in Korea today. Previously, to refer to fannishness and fandom in Korean subcultural lingo, one would say “*fansim* (fannishness)” and “*fanjil* (the performance of fandom)” respectively – the syllable “*sim*” of *fansim* means mind or heart in Korean, and *jil* of *fanjil* is a Korean suffix to describe occupations or acts in a disparaging way.⁴² Currently, slang expressions containing *deok* are more common and more preferred to describe fans and their practices than those making use of the word fan. Accordingly, the word *deok* (fan) has been combined with

⁴² In addition to these expressions, *fansim* and *fanjil*, A1, a participant of my research and an old friend of mine, used to say “*ppasim* (fannishness)” and “*ppajil* (the performance of fandom),” making use of the syllable *ppa* of *ppasuni* in a self-parodying way. She thus employed *ppa* synonymously with fan.

sim (mind or heart) to stand for fannishness – *deoksim*. *Deokjil*, as a compound word of *deok* and *jil* (acts), has become a byword for fan practices or the performance of fandom. Thus, *deok* not only defines fans but suggests fandom itself. Also, to refer to the intensity or strength of fannishness or fandom, fans have coined and use the term *deokryeok* which mixes *deok* with *ryeok*, meaning power in Korean.

Now, I elucidate some “*deok*-related” expressions popular among K-pop fans. For this explanation, I, as an autoethnographer, cite my research participants’ interviews, including mine. The first word I explore is *ipdeok*, mentioned in the beginning of this section.

Ipdeok: This term, literally meaning entering (*ip*) fandom (*deok*), describes becoming a fan. The phrase “inducing *ipdeok*” in the online entertainment headlines I cited earlier, thus stands for “inducing those who were not interested in the stars or not yet fans to become fans or enter fandom.” K-pop fans usually refer to these people – those not interested in stars or fandom – with the English word “muggle” in fandom lingo.⁴³ What then induces muggles to become fans and step into fandom? There are countless reasons for *ipdeok* among K-pop fans – every participant in my research has their own motivations for entering fandom. As examples of *ipdeok* from my field research, I introduce my own experience of *ipdeok* and F1’s case.

As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, I have been a Korean popular music fan since I was a teenager. Among many pop musicians I liked, Jong Shin

⁴³ The term muggle, originating from the Harry Potter book series, refers to a person born in a non-magical family or without any magical ability. In the context of K-pop fandom, a muggle is a person who is largely irrelevant to K-pop or its fandom.

Yoon and XIA Junsu are my favorite ones.⁴⁴ I did *ipdeok* for (became a fan of) Yoon when I was fifteen years old. A friend of mine, a huge fan of Hae-chul Shin presented me 015B's 1st album in which Shin participated as a guest singer (I mentioned this friend at the very beginning of this dissertation, relating an anecdote of my attendance at Shin's concert with her).⁴⁵ Playing the first track of this album, I became fascinated with this song that starts with a piano intro and ends with a pipe organ. Also, I was completely entranced by the mellifluous voice of a male singer singing this song. I then became a fan of this singer, Jong Shin Yoon. Thus, I did *ipdeok* for him, finding aural pleasure from his music.

A motivation of my *ipdeok* for Junsu is associated with my identification as an autoethnographer specializing in Korean popular music in addition to his actual musical talent. Preparing for my qualifying examination and dissertation prospectus, I read a stack of books and journal articles. Among these works, Seung-Ah Lee's monograph *JYJ Republic: Nation for/by/of Fans* was one of my favorites (this book was originally written in the Korean language. I translated the original Korean title into English). As a member of JYJ fandom, Lee autoethnographically charted K-pop boy band JYJ's lawsuit against SM Entertainment, JYJ's pre-JYJ and post-TVXQ activities, and JYJ fandom reacting to

⁴⁴ XIA Junsu is a stage name. His real name is Junsu Kim. When working as a member of JYJ, a K-pop boy band, he just employs his first name Junsu without his surname Kim. He also works as a solo singer without other members of JYJ. As a solo singer, he labels himself as XIA Junsu, his stage name. Additionally, he is a musical actor. He performs musicals under his own name, Junsu Kim. In this dissertation, I interchangeably use all his names of XIA Junsu, Junsu, and Junsu Kim throughout the text.

⁴⁵ 015B is a Korean pop music producers' group.

the lawsuit and the group members' activities as the former TVXQ and the current JYJ (and I will detail these events and fan practices in the next section).

While I learned an autoethnographic research method from this book, I also got to know about JYJ and JYJ's case in relation to an issue of unjust contracts between K-pop stars and their labels in the Korean entertainment industry. I became interested in the group and their music. Also, I sympathized with them in their litigation with their former label and their resulting disadvantage in performing musical activities given the label's influence on the K-pop scene. I was about to become a fan of JYJ. I first searched and listened to Junsu's solo songs because I liked his vocal style (and his appearance) even though I had been a muggle when he had been a member of TVXQ. After listening to his ballad song "Hate Those Words," I was touched by his expressive, husky voice, and gradually reached a stage of *ipdeok* for Junsu and JYJ to a certain extent. Further, while conducting fieldwork at his concerts, I completed *ipdeok* because his stage performances – live singing and dancing at the same time – totally stole my heart. At this point, I can self-identify as a fan of Junsu and J(Y)J.⁴⁶

I feel very lucky and even grateful to have a long-term friend of mine as a participant in this dissertation research (F1) and observe the ongoing process of her fandom (from *ipdeok* to *deokjil* in progress) up close and personal. F1's *ipdeok* for Jiwon Eun and Sechskies occurred unexpectedly. In early June 2016, F1 desperately and urgently texted me, using the slang term "*ipdeok*." According to her, she was watching a television talk show alone at night time because her two boys were sleeping and her

⁴⁶ I will specify why I parenthesized Y here in Chapter 5.

husband was out of town. The show featured Sechskies, a group from the first generation of K-pop boy bands (I already talked about this group in an earlier section). To celebrate their reunion after originally disbanding in 2000, the group members sang and danced on the show. Watching this performance, F1 was suddenly captivated by the group leader Jiwon Eun's vocal timbre and dance movements. As soon as the show ended, F1 started searching on YouTube for old videos of Eun's performances as a member of Sechskies. She then made *ipdeok* abruptly but successfully. Like F1's case, the process of a sudden infatuation with the stars followed by *ipdeok* is termed "*deoktongsago*" in fandom lingo. This slang originates from *kyotongsago* meaning a traffic (*kyotong*) accident (*sago*) in Korean. Replacing the first syllable of *kyotongsago*, *kyo* with *deok*, fans (*deokhu*) coined this new slang expression, *deoktongsago*.

However, F1 felt embarrassed to find herself as a member of K-pop fandom because she had never been fond of any idols even when she had been a teenage girl.⁴⁷ She had no idea how to deal with the restless fannishness that sprang up within her. Also, she worried about how to engage with fandom in her daily life as a housewife who took care of two young boys. Nonetheless, after coping with *deoktongsago*, F1 continues to develop her *deoksim* (fannishness) and enjoy *deokjil* (the performance of fandom).

⁴⁷ I met F1 in 2001 for the first time when she was a high school student. Before meeting in person, we already had gotten acquainted with each other online. She was the youngest member of a chat room I ran for Western classical music fans. Chatting about German Lied or French symphonic poems with her, I was impressed that she, a seventeen-year-old girl, preferred classical music to the Korean idol music mainly popular among teenagers in Korea. We attended a year-end classical concert together with my brother. When entering college in 2003, F1 started listening to Korean indie music and became a fan of female indie singers. However, her indie music fandom did not last long. This is what I remember regarding her music fandom during her teens and twenties.

K-pop *deokhu*'s *deokjil* is not limited to listening to music, collecting albums, or going to concerts.⁴⁸ As explored in previous section, K-pop is not merely produced as a particular style of musical sound, but as an aural and visual package of performances combining K-pop stars' sweet voices and charming faces. Thus, K-pop fans (*deokhu*) can focus on photos and videos to just appreciate the musicians' images in addition to music. Indeed, most participants in my research are constantly searching, downloading, and collecting photos and videos of their favorite stars. Expressing happiness in the stars' appearance, the participants showed me their collection of the photos saved in their mobile phones. Among these participants, C2, labeling herself as an *eolppa* (*ppasuni* enthusiastic about K-pop musicians' faces), has downloaded over twenty-five gigabyte image files of her favorite stars from fan sites (*homes*), and added hashtags to these images to make them searchable sooner and easier. I must confess, I have downloaded pictures of Junsu taken and edited by photographer fans, also known as *jjikdeok* in K-pop fandom lingo after attendance at his concerts or musicals, even though I never identify myself as an *eolppa*.⁴⁹ I just wanted to see his facial expressions during his performance, which I was unable to observe in my seat far away from the stage.

To facilitate *deokjil*, fans (*deokhu*) find and build their own communities. As explored in an earlier section, the '90s idol musicians' fans joined official fan clubs formed by the idols' labels to perform fandom more collectively and systematically than

⁴⁸ Moreover, K-pop *deokhu* listen to music not just to satisfy their musical taste or aural pleasure but to raise their favorite musicians' ranking on a music chart through using online music streaming services. Thus, they play roles as both listeners and promoters of K-pop.

⁴⁹ I will explain the term "jjikdeok" in Chapter 3.

individually. Through these official fan clubs, fans acquired the most basic information necessary for *deokjil*, such as the stars' bios and schedules, and met up with fellow fans to share a mutual interest in fandom (I elaborate on friendship among fellow fans within fandom in a later part of this section). In the 1990s, some fans like myself, who used PC communication networks, built their own online communities unrelated to the official fan clubs. Utilizing services like emails, chatrooms, and discussion boards, which were offered to users by network providers, fans not only re/produced and shared self-created content, such as texts and images related to the stars, for *deokjil*, but also socialized with fellow fans in cyberspace.

Since these domestic PC communication network services terminated and were replaced by the World Wide Web in the mid-2000s, fan-created and -managed web sites (also known as fan sites) have functioned as communities for Korean pop musician *deokhu*.⁵⁰ Also, fans have created their own communities, also known as “cafes,” in Korean major portal sites, such as *NAVER* and *DAUM*.⁵¹ In many cases, K-pop labels make use of these cafes as their stars' official fan clubs, having the stars registered as members of the fan cafes. Sometimes, the stars post greetings to the fan cafes. These label-dominated fan cafes are also called *gongka* in Korean (the combination of “*gong*,” as an abbreviation for *gongsik* meaning official, and “*ka*,” the first syllable of cafe).

Through these online communities, such as fan sites and *gongka*, fans not only obtain and

⁵⁰ I will detail K-pop fan sites, also known as homes, and fan practices there in Chapter 3.

⁵¹ Although the English word cafe is employed, it does not mean a place selling coffee, tea, or food, but adopts the implication that a cafe is a site for people to meet up and have a talk.

share various information about their favorite stars, but also express their *deoksim* (fannishness) in glowing terms.

Another type of online community for K-pop *deokhu* are discussion boards, also known as “galleries” or “galls” (the abbreviation for gallery), hosted by the Korean community-based portal site *DC Inside*. These are specifically called DC galleries or DC galls (hereafter DC galls).⁵² As a matter of fact, DC galls are a *deokhu*’s paradise because they include a wide variety of special interest communities, ranging from communities focused on plants and animals to communities oriented around TV programs and celebrities.⁵³ Through discussion boards in these communities, *deokhu* gain information they need, and share information they already possess. Also, they have conversations with other gall users about various topics, from culture, economy, politics, and society to personal matters. These *deokhu* communities are named by combining the object of interest and the word gall (or gallery). For instance, a community created by K-pop boy band BTS’s fans is called “BTS gall.” *Deokhu* in DC galls, as a whole, are also nicknamed “gays” or “gallers.”⁵⁴ It should be noted, however, that the term gay in *DC Inside* galls does not refer to homosexual persons, but rather is used as a gender-neutral pronoun.

K-pop fans who prefer to conduct *deokjil* outside of *gongka* or fan sites build their communities through DC galls. There are hundreds of Korean popular musicians’ galls in

⁵² Similar to the usage of *cafe*, *gallery* does not mean a place for an exhibition of art works as it does in English.

⁵³ <http://gall.dcinside.com>.

⁵⁴ Gay (gays) or galler (gallers) are not English words but are romanized from Korean words.

DC. As an autoethnographer, I have been visiting Jong Shin Yoon gall, JYJ gall, Dongryul Kim gall, Si Kyung Sung gall, and Sechskies gall. I will detail what I have participated in or observed in these online communities in Chapters 2, 3, and 5.

K-pop fans not only learn and develop *deokjil* through fan communities such as official fan clubs or *gongka*, fan sites, and DC galls, but also act cooperatively with other fans around certain issues. Thus, to collectively manifest the degree of fannishness and the power of fandom, the fans occasionally cooperated with one another through the fan communities (or across the communities) in various ways.⁵⁵ This united power of fandom is likened to the Korean word “*hwaryeok*,” which literally means firepower. *Hwaryeok* is also one of the most common terms used among K-pop fans.

Deokgye: As social network services have grown, *deokhu* currently utilize Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for their *deokjil*. It is interesting that many *deokhu* have social media accounts only for *deokjil*. In like fashion, K-pop fans open and run their Twitter and Instagram accounts exclusively to perform fandom. These social media accounts used only for fandom are termed “*deokgye*” in K-pop slang, which is a compound word of *deok* and “*gye*,” the first syllable of “*gyejeong*” meaning accounts. Among participants in my research, there are several *deokgye* holders. For example, F1 has two Instagram accounts: one is her personal account used to post photos of her daily life and family; and the other is a *deokgye* where she shares photos and videos of her favorite star, Jiwon Eun (leader of Sechskies), which were taken by herself or other fans

⁵⁵ I will elaborate on this collective expression of fannishness and fandom in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

as well as published through media outlets. Using her *deokgye*, F1 also follows Eun's social media account. When he replied to her comment on Instagram, F1 felt greatly flattered by his response. As soon as she became a fan of K-pop boy band EXO, G2 opened an EXO *deokgye* in Instagram. Through this *deokgye*, G2 not only got information and images of EXO members posted to other fans' *deokgyes*, but also communicated with many other EXO *deokhus* online.

Deok-mate: As a combination of *deok* and the English word “mate,” the term “*deok-mate*” stands for fellow fans within the same fandom. K-pop fans meet *deok-mates* in two ways. First, the fans can see *deok-mates* when their actual friends follow the same stars or become the same stars' fans. For instance, K, a Shinhwa fan in her twenties, has a *deok-mate*. They go to the group's concerts with each other.⁵⁶ K and her *deok-mate* were already close – they attended the same art institute and became friends in 2013. Since they realized they are both Shinhwa fans, K and her friend, as *deok-mates* with each other, have become closer by sharing the same interest in Shinhwa, a K-pop boy band.⁵⁷ C1 and L are sisters and both are fans of Korean ballad singer Si Kyung Sung. These sisters became Sung's fans at different times for different reasons: while C1 became his fan after being touched by his ballads in 2004, L was impressed by his musical selections

⁵⁶ I met K and her *deok-mate* at the Shinhwa concert on August 23, 2015. These two young women asked me to take pictures of them together in front of the concert hall. After photographing them, I gave them my business card and a letter explaining my dissertation project and recruiting research participants just in case. A couple of days later, one of these two female fans of Shinhwa contacted me to consent to participate in my research. I then interviewed K on September 2, 2015.

⁵⁷ Although both K and her friend are members of Shinhwa fandom, their favorite members of the group are different. While K likes Hyesung the most, her *deok-mate*'s favorite Shinhwa member is Jun Jin.

in 2005 when listening to a radio show he hosted.⁵⁸ Also, C1 conducts her *deokjil* focusing on music listening, but L is interested in the singer in terms of both his musicality and personality. Despite these differences in the motivation for their fannishness, C1 and L feel happy to perform fandom together as sisters.

Second, K-pop fans meet their *deok*-mates in fan communities. For example, P and B2 became *deok*-mates by working together as managerial members of Jong Shin Yoon's official fan club. B1, F1, M, and X, who I saw all together at the Sechskies concert on September 11, 2016, are *deok*-mates with one another.⁵⁹ These women in their early to mid-thirties got to know one another within Sechskies's official fan club. As peers, these *deok*-mates made friends with one another more easily than with younger fans. However, not all *deok*-mates are similar in age. For instance, N, a forty-seven-year-old female fan of Sechskies communicates with several *deok*-mates in their thirties. She met these fellow fans through an online fan community (Sechskies fan cafe in NAVER). N and her *deok*-mates get along with one another by going together to the group's musical and non-musical events, as well as frequently having mobile chats with one another. This case of N and her younger fellow fans suggests that K-pop fans can de/reconstruct age cohorts within fandom through forming, developing, and maintaining fellowship with cross- or intergenerational *deok*-mates.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ The sisters say that C1's *deokjil* did not influence L's *ipdeok* – they did not mention the terms *deokjil* and *ipdeok* during a small group interview with them, however.

⁵⁹ F1 introduced her *deok*-mate X to me, and then X introduced her *deok*-mates B1, M and D2 to me as participants in my research even though I did not see D1 at the concert.

⁶⁰ As mentioned in an earlier section, K-pop has developed by targeting teenage consumers so that its fandoms have formed specific age cohorts.

A Big Bang fan, Q (in her forties) became *deok*-mates with young women in their twenties and thirties from Japan and China. When these women visit Korea to attend Big Bang's concerts, Q not only goes to the concert with her foreign younger *deok*-mates but also hangs out with them outside of the concert venue. Q and her fellow fans demonstrate that *deok*-mates can be made internationally as well as intergenerationally.

F1, who has a small group of *deok*-mates that all follow Jiwon Eun of Sechskies as their favorite member of the group, articulates the importance of *deok*-mates in fandom:

F1: While a [K-pop] singer is an important factor for *fanjil* (the performance of fandom), the relationship with *deok*-mates has a big influence on *fanjil* as well. It's fun to go with *deok*-mates [for *fanjil*]...Moreover, *deokjil* with *deok*-mates is a whole other level than individual *deokjil* in terms of obtaining information about the star's schedules and having mobility [of fandom].

Me: That's right. I've heard that there are several fans doing *hyudeok* and *taldeok* out of their fandom because they have a falling out with their *deok*-mates (I will define the terms *hyudeok* and *taldeok* in a later part of this section).

F1: You're right. Excessive friendship with *deok*-mates might harm *deokjil*. Oh, I and my *deok*-mates gathered and held an overnight party at a hotel room (figure 1.2)...Also, it is important that *deok*-mates must be fond of the same member of K-pop groups.
(Mobile messenger chat, May 21, 2017)



Figure 1.2. F1 and her *deok*-mates watching their favorite Sechskies member Jiwon Eun's performance video during their gathering in a hotel room. © F1, used with permission.

F1's explanation of *deok*-mates allows one to reconsider the directivity of fandom, from star-oriented fandom to fan-oriented fandom in the K-pop scene. Throughout the chapters of this dissertation, I will demonstrate how Korean female K-pop fans create horizontal, interactive relationships with one another beyond a vertical star-fan relationship.

Yeongeop and Gyeomdeok: The term *yeongeop* literally means business in Korean. K-pop fans utilize this word to describe a promotional activity to draw others to their fandoms, and vice versa (to be drawn to others' fandoms). For example, when she visited Japan in 2008, U was given TVXQ's singles album by a Japanese woman who recommended she become a fan of the group. U then entered the group's fandom. In this case, U was done *yeongeop* by a Japanese female fan of TVXQ. An Infinite fan, R tried *yeongeop* with me. When we met up for an interview, she carried Infinite's albums with her, gave them to me as presents, and asked me to listen to the group's songs. Also, R wanted to show me the group's live performances at concerts, and recommended I go to

the concert with her. Consequently, I became interested in Infinite and came to know that the group's music is much more sophisticated than expected (I analyze Infinite's "Bad" as an example to look at the musical structure of K-pop in Chapter 2).⁶¹

Some fans, persuaded through others' *yeongeop*, conduct *deokjil* for multiple K-pop musicians at the same time. These fans are termed "*gyeomdeok*" in fandom – the combination of the Korean word *gyeom*, meaning "concurrently" or "at the same time," and *deok*. Among participants in my research, there are some *gyeomdeoks*: R, a member of Infinite and Sang Yoon (Korean popular singer-songwriter and producer specializing in electronica) fandoms (her primary fandom is involved in Infinite, and the secondary one goes to Yoon)⁶²; U, a fan of JYJ and Sechskies (she used to be a Sechskies fan before the group's disbandment in 2000, and re-entered Sechskies fandom after the group's reunion in 2016); M doing simultaneous *deokjil* for Hyo-shin Park, Si Kyung Sung, and Sechskies; A1, a *gyeomdeok* of Sechskies and Daniel Kang; and C2 following and liking multiple K-pop idol groups (her favorite idol group is the boy band EXO, and her next favorite is the girl group Red Velvet).

Hyudeok and Taldeok: Although many of my research participants, including myself, have performed long-term fandom, *deokjil* does not always last long.⁶³ When dealing with something complicated in fandom, some fans pause their *deokjil* for a while

⁶¹ I also attended the Infinite concert on February 21, 2016 with R. After watching this concert, I was impressed by the group's live singing and dancing skills. Now, I self-identify as a light fan of Infinite.

⁶² Yoon has produced the K-pop girl group Lovelyz. Also, he collaborated on his song with Sung Kyu, a vocalist of the K-pop boy band Infinite.

⁶³ For instance, I have been Jong Shin Yoon's fan since 1990, and J has been a fan of Taiji Seo (Taiji Boy) since 1993.

or a long time, and others no longer engage in *deokjil*. The resting state of *deokjil* is termed “*hyudeok*” in K-pop fandom. The first syllable of this word, *hyu* stands for “rest” in Korean. The situation of giving up *deokjil* is called “*taldeok*” – *tal* literally means “get out of” in Korean, but implies “stop,” “quit,” or “give up” in the context of *deokjil*.

Let me briefly give a couple of examples of *hyudeok* and *taldeok* through the cases of X, D1, and M. When Sechskies suddenly disbanded in 2000, the group’s fangirls were in shock and panic. These girls had to unwillingly stop their fandom. However, since some Sechskies members continued their careers as musicians and entertainers (not as the idol group Sechskies), some fans were able to keep their fandom of individual members of the group.⁶⁴ During this period when former Sechskies members pursuing their activities separately, X, D1, and M were in a state of *hyudeok*. As soon as Sechskies reunited and came back to the K-pop scene in April 2016, X, D1, and M returned to fandom and resumed *deokjil*.⁶⁵

M had already experienced her favorite Korean pop group breaking up unexpectedly in 1996 when she was ten years old – the dissolution of Taiji Boys and the group’s retirement from the Korean popular music scene. Although she no longer could be a member of Taiji Boys fandom, M did not give up her fannishness for the group leader Taiji Seo. After that, she became a fan of Sechskies in 1997. However, this

⁶⁴ After Sechskies’ disbandment, Jiwon Eun worked as a rapper and an entertainer; Sung Hoon Kang and Jae Jin Lee engaged solo singers respectively; and Jae Duk Kim and Suwon Jang formed the duo J-Walk.

⁶⁵ During *hyudeok*, D1 became interested in TVXQ and attended the group’s live performances along with her friends, TVQX fan girls.

fandom did not last long either, since the group was dissolved in May 2000.⁶⁶ M had to take a rest from Sechskies but restored her fandom of Taiji Seo because he came back as a rocker in summer 2000. While continuing *deokjil* for Seo, M did *ipdeok* for Hyo-shin Park, a Korean male pop singer. Also, she became a fan of Si Kyung Sung. Thus, M was a *gyeomdeok* of Seo, Park, and Sung. In addition to these Korean male musicians, she followed a Japanese male rock group. However, although she kept her fannishness for Seo even during the years of his absence (Seo stayed in the United States for four years after his retirement), M carried out *taldeok* from Taiji Seo fandom after Seo got married in 2013. This was not due to the marriage itself, but M was disappointed at his treatment of his fans in relation to his marriage. Since this *taldeok*, M has liked Hyo-shin Park the most. In the meantime, as Sechskies staged a comeback, M finished *hyudeok* for the group, and has been performing *deokjil* for Park, Sechskies, and Si Kyung Sung concurrently.

Up to now, I have explored major slang expressions applicable to K-pop fandom alongside some cases of my research participants. It is important to learn Korean slang terms used in fandom so that one will be able to grasp the context of buzzword-laden quotations from my interviews with Korean female K-pop fans in this ethnographic dissertation. I will introduce and define additional slang expressions throughout the text. In the next section, I will categorize the various types of K-pop fans through their practices.

⁶⁶ M's first fandom of Taiji Boys lasted from 1992 to 1996, and her second fandom of Sechskies continued from 1997 to 2000.

From *Anbang-Fan* to *Seongdeok*

As there are multiple forms of fan practices in K-pop fandom, there are also various types of K-pop fans depending on their ways of performing fandom. Also, the fans' relationships with the stars or other fans, generated through fandom, determine the type of fan. Considering these methods of fan practices and the fan-star or fan-fan relationships, I will categorize K-pop fans and describe some of these types of fans.

Defining fandom, Duffett talks about "closet fans." Although fandom is regarded as performative and defined as "an activity in public life," there are "fans who pursue their passions in private and sometimes in secret" (Duffett 2013b: 28). Duffett terms these fans "closet fans." As "a minority of people" in fandom, the closet fans "live their lives as fans without making it a talking point with others" (Duffett 2013b: 244). In K-pop fandom, there is a similar type of fan to closet fans. Korean fans call these fans "*anbang-fans*" in their language. As the Korean word *anbang* means a master bedroom, this term refers to a fan who makes fan practices in their room. Among my research participants, Z and J have been *anbang-fans*. Based on interviews with these women, I describe what K-pop *anbang-fans* practice in their rooms.

An *anbang-fan* of the female K-pop solo singer IU, Z has never attended IU's concerts or other musical and non-musical events featuring IU. Z just conducts her *deokjil* online. Her identification as an *anbang-fan* is related to her social status. She just graduated from college in February 2016. As a college student, she could not earn enough money to purchase tickets to the concerts. Moreover, since her parents were unhappy with her being a K-pop fan, she was unable to get financial support from them to go to

the concerts.⁶⁷ However, Z found the best way for herself to engage in fandom given her light pockets – engagement in online fandom at home.

As an *anbang*-fan, she then has been actively performing fan practices in cyber space. For instance, Z has participated in online votes to secure music awards for IU, even by creating multiple IDs on the award sites. Also, she has repeated playing IU's songs all day long for several days through online music streaming services to raise IU's ranking on Korean pop music charts. When news or news comments criticizing IU and her activities have been posted online, Z has disliked all these posts. In addition to these individual online activities, she has done *deokjil* for IU in online fan communities, such as IU's official fan cafe, IU fans' homes (fan sites), *DC Inside IU* gall, and so on.⁶⁸ Through these communities, Z has earned various materials related to the star, including photos and audio/video recordings of IU and her musical performances. Appreciating these audios and videos shared by other fans online, Z has felt as though she has been at IU's concerts even though as an *anbang*-fan she has never attended. After learning Z's fan practices, I understood that K-pop fans in low socio-economic groups, who cannot

⁶⁷ Although Z never mentioned her social class during our interview, I assumed that she was from a lower class than other participants in my research. When we confirmed the interview date, she asked me to consider her schedule for a part-time job at her relative's small store selling Korean rice cakes at a local market. The type of business her relative conducts and the location of the market outside of Seoul imply that Z and her family belong to the lower middle class.

⁶⁸ I joined an online IU fan community in Facebook for research, and posted a message explaining my dissertation project to this community to recruit participants from the community members. After seeing my posting, Z reached out to me and gave an interview.

afford to buy K-pop albums and concert tickets, could become *anbang*-fans in an effort to be economical with money while still performing fandom.

J was an *anbang*-fan of Taiji Seo (Taiji Boys). She did *ipdeok* for Taiji Boys in 1993 during the group's six-month break for the preparation for their new album. As the group released their second album in June 1993, J started her *deokjil*. Her fandom was "old-fashioned," according to her expression. She bought Taiji Boys' albums (CDs and cassette tapes) and listened to the group's music. She collected popular music magazines providing the group's autographed pictures and posters. While many other fangirls of Taiji Boys mailed fan letters to the group's label address specified in these pictures or posters, she just tacked these pictures and posters to the wall of her room.⁶⁹ Since she did not have free time in her daily life as a high school student, J did not watch many television shows featuring Taiji Boys. Additionally, she was not able to go to the group's concerts because as a passive teenage *anbang*-fan, she did not figure out where and how to buy a ticket to the concerts.

Upon her planned matriculation in March 1996, J was determined to get out of her identification as an *anbang*-fan and become an active fan through attending Taiji Boys' concerts and other events. However, the group declared their dissolution and retirement in January 1996. Thus, J was unwillingly forced to be in a state of *hyudeok* as an *anbang*-fan. Nonetheless, she maintained her affection for Taiji Seo, a leader of the group. As Seo released his solo album in 1998 during his hibernation but stayed in the U.S. without any

⁶⁹ Comparing other fangirls with herself, J described herself by using the phrases "not active" or "not enthusiastic."

musical performances in Korea, J continued her fandom as an *anbang*-fan by purchasing and listening to this album. Although Taiji Seo made his comeback on the Korean popular music scene in 2000, J's *anbang*-fan status continued, as by the mid-2000s she had to travel back and forth between Korea and France for her studies and career as a Korean-French translator. In 2008, J got rid of her identification as an *anbang*-fan by attending Seo's concert tour. Since then, she has conducted her *deokjil* for Seo through online fan communities, including DC Taiji Seo gallery and Seo's official website *Seotaiji* (or Seo Taiji) *dotcom* that contains an official fan community. Further, she has attended video screenings of Taiji Seo's performances, which other fans held at movie theaters.

Seen from J's example, *anbang*-fans can attain their new identification as active fans through their attendance at concerts. In K-pop fandom, these concert attendees are termed the Korean word "*saeujeot*" (literally meaning salted shrimp used as a dressing for the Korean food *kimchi*), as likened to countless tiny shrimps due to a distant view of their sitting densely in the auditorium (figure 1.3). Thus, the term *saeujeot* signifies and stresses K-pop fandom as a collectivity. The fans usually use this word to categorize themselves as so crowded that they can rarely be recognized and identified by the stars.



Figure 1.3. Likened to a swarm of tiny shrimps, audience members closely sitting at the Korean ballad singer Si Kyung Sung’s concert (December 31, 2015). Photo by the author.

Among *saeujeot* (collective fans), some lucky ones may become acknowledged by their stars so that they can get a backstage pass at K-pop concerts, meet the stars in person, take pictures with the stars, or communicate with the stars online. These fans are called “*seongdeok*” in a slang expression for Korean fandom in general. As the combination of *seong*, the first syllable of the Korean term *seonggong*, meaning success, and *deok*, *seongdeok* refers to K-pop fans who have careers in the music industry, or fans who are able to meet their favorite stars as a result of their unique fan activities.⁷⁰ For instance, I researched my favorite musician Jong Shin Yoon’s *Monthly Project*, made presentations on this project at conferences in 2014, and published my paper on this research in a Korean journal in 2015. I did not want to merely listen to music, go to his concert, and purchase Yoon’s albums as well as Yoon-related non-musical goods, but as an ethnomusicologist, I wanted to study my favorite musician’s activities. Also, I wished

⁷⁰ I will explore this type of *seongdeok* in Chapter 3.

my research to be a demonstration of my fannishness as a part of my fan practices.

Thanks to this research, I was able to interview Jong Shin Yoon in person even though it was very hard to make an appointment for an interview with him. Moreover, after his concerts, I was able to personally see and say hello to him as well as take photos because Yoon's manager already acknowledged me as a researcher fan and allowed me to come backstage. After hearing about my research on his music, interview with him, and photographs with him, my research participants called me *seongdeok*.

While *anbang*-fans and *seongdeok* do not carry negative connotations, there is another category indicating unwanted fans and their practices within fandom. The term “*akgae*,” an acronym for *akseong* (vicious) *gaein* (individual) fan, refers to idol fans who only focus on individual *deokjil* for their favorite member of K-pop idol groups, but intentionally denigrate other group members or spread malicious rumors about these members. *Akgae* insist that their favorite members suffer a disadvantage in developing their career as K-pop idol musicians because of other group members who pursue their non-musical careers, such as actors/actresses, emcees for television shows, and entertainers, rather than concentrating on musical activities. However, as explored in an earlier section, it is expected that members of K-pop idol groups engage with non-musical activities within the pop entertainment industry in Korea. Nonetheless, *akgae* do not consider the larger system of K-pop production and consumption. Instead, they

criticize all-round idols (except their favorite ones), expressing concern about the idols' identities as a group and musicians.⁷¹

As *akgae* post their criticism on group members other than their favorites on Twitter, fans of the members censured by *akgae* dispute these vicious tweets through re/tweeting, mentioning, and sending direct messages to *akgae*. Reacting to other group members' fans, *akgae* post tweets again to tear the members' reputations, as well as their fans', to shreds. Thus, an online fight breaks out among fans of the same K-pop groups. Furthermore, *akgae* demand an explanation and apology from other group members about their favorite member's perceived disadvantage and sacrifice within the group.⁷² In other words, *akgae*'s overattachment to and overprotectiveness of their favorite stars occasion a schism between fans as well as between fans and the stars. These *akgae*'s practices antagonize other members of the same fandom. My research participants hold an unfavorable opinion of *akgae*, and have been even hurt by *akgae*'s attacks on the stars as well as other fans.

But *akgae*'s notoriety within fandom is somewhat limited compared with that of *sasaeng* (stalker fans). In the next section, I examine *sasaeng*, an even more disreputable type of K-pop fan than *akgae*.

⁷¹ Some *akgae* criticize other group members' musical activities as solo singers separate from the group.

⁷² F1 went ballistic when her favorite, Jiwon Eun, made an apology to *akgae* and their favorite members of his group, Sechskies.

***Sasaeng*, the Darkest Side of Fandom**

While I mostly discuss and illuminate positive and productive aspects of Korean female K-pop fandom through this dissertation, as an autoethnographer I must also address a controversial issue that causes a negative view of fandom more generally – fans stalking stars. These fans have been perceived as problematic both in society and in fandom. Some stalker fans have even committed serious crimes. For instance, John Lennon was murdered by his stalker Mark David Chapman, who was a former fan of the Beatles.⁷³ Madonna’s stalker fan broke into her homes (Radnedge 2011; Duffett 2013b). In relation to these cases, researchers have analyzed obsessed fans and their stalking of stars from psychopathological or socio-pathological perspectives (Jenson 1991; Duffett 2013b). In this section, I do not reiterate these analyses but discuss how Korean female fans perceive and cope with stalker fans.

K-pop fans who stalk the stars are specifically termed “*sasaeng*” or “*sasaeng* fans.” The term *sasaeng* is the abbreviation for the Korean word *sasaenghwal*, which means a private life. Combined with fans, *sasaeng* fan stands for fans who obsessively follow K-pop stars’ private lives twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. *Sasaeng* fan is also shortened to *sasaeng*. Thus, *sasaeng* indicates both *sasaenghwal* and *sasaeng* fan. Connected to the suffix “*jil*” (like examples of *fanjil* or *deokjil*), *sasaeng*’s acts including stalking of the stars are termed *sasaengjil*.

⁷³ However, Duffett points out that Chapman was “*not* a fan driven insane, but an insane man *pretending* to be a fan in order to meet John Lennon” (2013b: 108).

Although the term *sasaeng* appeared in the 2000s, this type of fan, abnormally obsessed with popular musicians' private lives, was already present in Korea since the 1970s (Kim and Yun 2014).⁷⁴ Since idol groups occupied the Korean popular music scene in the late 1990s, these fans have become emboldened (Ibid.). Moreover, some pop music labels have colluded with *sasaeng* fans stalking the idols' private lives because the labels regarded the existence of these fans as a barometer of popularity or a result of promoting the idol groups (Ibid.). Further, commodified as idol stars in the Korean (and global) pop music market, the musicians have been trained to endure any deeds done by their consumers, that is, their fans, no matter how intrusive.

While I have participated in various K-pop events, I have not yet encountered *sasaeng*. My research participants have not seen any *sasaeng* fans either. That is because our fan practices do not involve stalking our favorite stars or following them in their private lives. We have simply heard of the presence of *sasaeng* and their *sasaengjil* through the grapevine and media. For example, in early March 2012, the news media disclosed that Jae Joong Kim, a member of JYJ, had cursed and even attacked female *sasaeng* fans who approached him in 2009 when he had been a TVXQ member. In response to this news, Jae Joong apologized for his past acts to *sasaeng* during a press conference before JYJ's concert in Santiago, Chile (Yun 2012). Before his apology, JYJ

⁷⁴ In their ethnographic paper, Hyeongsik Kim and Jeongmin Yun state that these fans were present from the 1980s. However, I am anecdotally aware of at least one case from the 1970s where a rabid fan of Jin Nam, then one of the most popular male singers in Korea, took a job as a maid in his house specifically in order to spy on his private life. Whether this story is true or not, it suggests that there were fans interested in and obsessed with the stars' private lives already in the 1970s in the Korean popular music scene.

members spoke out about their experiences of *sasaeng* fans. According to Junsu Kim, another member of JYJ, these fans stole his ID; surreptitiously installed a GPS tracking device in his car to chase him; frequently broke into his place and attempted to kiss him asleep; and intentionally crashed into his car to see him getting out of the car (Ibid.).

As indicated by the installation of GPS car trackers, *sasaeng* fans collect information about the stars' movements and even chase them by cars. For this, *sasaeng* mainly take taxis. These cabs carrying *sasaeng* fans are also known as *sasaeng* taxis. Although I have not encountered *sasaeng*, I did observe these taxis after a Sechskies concert. A couple of taxi drivers were standing by outside of the concert hall. These drivers were whispering, "*sasaeng, sasaeng,*" and touting their willingness to take on *sasaeng* fans and chase Sechskies members' cars (figure 1.4).



Figure 1.4. *Sasaeng* taxi drivers waiting for their guests (*sasaeng* fans) after a Sechskies concert (September 11, 2016) at a parking lot in front of the exit from the concert hall. Photo by the author.

An EXO fangirl, D1, relates an EXO member's reaction to *sasaeng* fans and vice versa on social media:

D1: There are many *sasaeng* in EXO fandom. Some *sasaeng* found out a cellphone number, which Chanyeol (EXO member) used, and distributed this number to other *sasaeng* fans. Several *sasaeng*, getting his number, kept calling and texting him. Chanyeol captured text messages sent by those *sasaeng* fans and posted them to his Instagram. He not only warned but also begged *sasaeng* to stop contacting him anymore. However, the *sasaeng* fans did not feel sorry about that but rather felt disappointment that they weren't included as senders in the captured images Chanyeol posted on his Instagram.

(Small group interview, February 13, 2016)

D1 has never sympathized with *sasaeng* but felt pity for her favorite EXO member, Chanyeol. Likewise, most K-pop fans object to *sasaengjil* and disavow *sasaeng* as members of fandom. Some fan groups ban *sasaengjil* in their regulations. For instance, JYJ's female fans, using a gall or a gallery (discussion board) of *DC Inside* (Korean portal site) as their online community, prohibit themselves from any types of *sasaengjil* or *sasaeng*-like acts, such as going backstage after concerts, taking pictures of JYJ in daily situations outside the group's official schedule of musical and non-musical events, and posting these photos or talking about the group members' private lives. JYJ fandom thus specifies that the group's *sasaenghwal* (private life) begins the moment the group members leave the stage or the sites of other non-musical events. O and U, participants in my research as JYJ fans, articulated that they (JYJ female fans) decided to root out *sasaengjil* and any *sasaeng* fan-like acts disturbing the group members. Their decision to do so was influenced by JYJ's experiences with withdrawing from TVQX as well as the annulment of an unfair contract between the group members and SM Entertainment (I will describe this case in relation to fan activism in the next section). JYJ fans defined

sasaeng and *sasaengjil* as a vice of TVXQ fandom that they needed to eliminate.⁷⁵ Once I saw two girls in the area where Junsu's car was parked after he gave a solo concert, and I was surprised since this seemed like *sasaeng* behavior. I asked U about it, and she said that the girls must have been Chinese or Taiwanese fans, as Korean fans now follow the anti-*sasaeng* regulations of JYJ fandom.⁷⁶

Although many other fandoms exclude *sasaeng* fans and disapprove of *sasaengjil*, these obsessed fans persist. Moreover, international K-pop *sasaeng* fans have recently increased, come to Korea, and engaged in their *sasaengjil* stalking and following K-pop stars' private lives. An Indonesian friend of mine, staying in Korea for her studies, met a Japanese female *sasaeng* fan at a guest house. Ethnomusicologist Sang-Yeon Sung knew that when K-pop stars were in Taipei for their concert tours, Taiwanese *sasaeng* fans followed the stars' every move outside their concerts by using call taxis, as the Taiwanese version of *sasaeng* taxis.⁷⁷ D1 says that there are several international *sasaeng* fans on social media.

D1: International fans openly identify themselves as *sasaeng* through their social media profiles. I saw a foreign girl labeling herself as “Chanyeol Sweet Sasaeng” on her Instagram account.
(Small group interview, February 13, 2016)

⁷⁵ JYJ fans claim that for the promotion of TVXQ, SM Entertainment connived with *sasaeng* fans to feel free to stalk TVXQ members and follow their private lives.

⁷⁶ Attending Junsu's solo concert on November 7, 2015, I was not able to find a space to pull over my car within the parking lots for visitors. I lit upon an available area distant from the visitor parking lots and parked in this area. I then realized that the area I parked my car was reserved for Junsu and concert staff.

⁷⁷ Sang-Yeon Sung conducted field research on Taiwanese *sasaeng* fans but has not presented or published this research yet. She let me know about it through a personal conversation with me.

Since *sasaeng* fans have been marginalized within fandom, there has been little research on these fans. After interviewing and doing participant observation of an EXO *sasaeng* fangirl, Hyeongsik Kim and Jeongmin Yun suggest that *sasaeng* fans practice *sasaengjil* as a goal-oriented game, regarding K-pop stars as prizes in this game rather than as celebrities in the popular music scene (2014). Thus, *sasaeng* stalk the stars and follow their private lives for fun (Ibid.). Kim and Yoon also argue that *sasaeng* fans in groups develop a sense of solidarity with one another, and they acquire cultural power within fandom through the collection and possession of information about the stars' private lives that many fans might want to know (Ibid.).

Su-jeong Kim and Soo-ah Kim argue for the influence and distinctiveness of K-pop *sasaeng* fans. First, they point out that Korean *sasaeng* fans' behavior pattern (*sasaengjil*) has spread to K-pop fans in other Asian countries as a way of performing fandom (2015). Also, because Korean *sasaeng* fans act as a group to share information (needed for *sasaengjil*, such as K-pop stars' movements and current location) and collaborate with one another on *sasaengjil*, Korean *sasaeng* fans are different from more solitary Western stalkers (Ibid.).

As a fandom researcher, I appreciate the ways in which other researchers approach and interpret Korean K-pop *sasaeng* fans. However, as a member of K-pop fandom, I am also strongly against *sasaeng* fans playing "their own game" (*sasaengjil*) within fandom as a whole. Yet even with this game making our favorite stars feel uncomfortable and even threatened, we non-*sasaeng* fans still have found amusement

from various fan practices and developed them into our own cultures and subcultures.⁷⁸

Of course, I empathize with fans who want to get to know K-pop musicians beyond their music. Nonetheless, K-pop stars are not merely music-producing robots or commodities marketed by Korea's pop music industry, but human beings whose rights must be secured so they can exercise their cultural agency.⁷⁹

In the next section, I discuss how Korean female K-pop fans identify, analyze, and reflect on themselves.

Our Self-Identification, Self-Analysis, and Self-Reflection

In an earlier section, I have discussed that “we” Korean female K-pop fans self-identify as *ppasuni*. Through this self-identification, we parody, prove, respect, and recontextualize our fandom. Also, we portray ourselves in a humorous way by likening our fandom as a collectivity to *saeujeot* (a swarm of salted tiny shrimps).

Further, we attempt to analyze our fandom to grasp what we are engaging in. For instance, after tracing and dissecting her own fandoms, T claims that musical (theatrical performance) fandom is considered the acme of all popular cultural fandoms. More specifically, she identifies herself as a follower of a genealogy of SM-produced idol boy bands: her first fandom started with the first Korean idol boy band H.O.T.; after H.O.T. disbanded, T became a fan of Shinhwa; her third fandom went over to Black Beat; as

⁷⁸ I will explore these forms of cultures and subcultures in Chapters 3 and 4.

⁷⁹ During a press conference on March 8, 2012 in Chile, Junsu, a JYJ member said, “I can’t verbalize how we (JYJ) have a hard time [dealing with *sasaeng* fans and their wrong doing in our daily lives]. I would like to beg for a *human life* we can live at least” (cited from a news article and translated by the author).

Black Beat's activities waned, T followed TVXQ; and then she transferred her affection from TVXQ to Shinee. Ultimately, T completed *ipdeok* (entering fandom) for Korean musicals. Currently, she is conducting her *deokjil* (the performance of fandom) for Chang Yong Lee, a Korean male musical actor, and follows Junsu Kim not as a JYJ member but as a musical actor.⁸⁰ After going through multiple fandoms, she has paused her *deokjil* for idol boy bands produced and promoted by SM Entertainment (*hyudeok*). Looking at a personal history of her own fandoms, T realized that being a fan of musicals is a notch above other popular cultural fandoms in terms of the cost of fan practices because musicals typically have long runs, from weeks to months, and ticket prices for musicals are even more expensive than K-pop concerts. Moreover, musical *deokhu* (fans) always want to get seats in the front row so that they can look closely at musical actor/actresses' facial expressions, the essential ingredients for the appreciation of musicals.

C2 is also self-analytical about her fandom. I met up with her for the first time at a lecture on K-pop fandom in France, which was given by a professor at a gender research institute I had worked at in 2006 and 2007. After the professor's lecture, I, as a fandom researcher, actively participated in the discussion session. C2 came up to me after the discussion, and said that she is also a member of K-pop fandom. She wanted to tell me more about her fandom. We then met again two days later.⁸¹

⁸⁰ T is a Ph.D. candidate in Cultural Studies, conducting her dissertation research on Korean musical producers and their cultural practices. She said that those who are not *deokhu* for musicals would not be able to attempt this research.

⁸¹ C1 is one of my research participants with whom I talked the most throughout my fieldwork. She gave me much information about fan practices that young Korean female idol fans perform.

C2 identifies herself just as a K-pop idol fan. Indeed, while she likes D.O., a member of the K-pop boy band EXO the best, C2 is interested in many other K-pop idols (in an earlier section, I already mentioned her as a *gyeomdeok* who conducts *deokjil* for multiple stars concurrently). Following multiple idol groups from her favorite EXO to APRIL, a rookie K-pop girl group, she not only watches these idol groups' music videos on YouTube, but also searches for various information about each member of the idol groups online. She self-identifies as a *ppasuni* enthusiastic about K-pop idols' cute faces (*eolppa* in K-pop fandom lingo), so that she focuses on googling the idols' photos and downloading them through fan sites also known as homes. Based on her performance and observation of fandom, C2 classifies Korean female K-pop fans into three types. The first type of fans act as mothers of their favorite male stars. Nicknaming themselves "moms," these fans are excessively concerned about the stars' future or personal affairs.⁸² Second, some female fans are categorized as a type of fangirl who conduct *deokjil* reflecting their dream to have their *oppa* as a boyfriend (I already defined the term *oppa* in the context of Korean fandom). C2 terms the third type of fans as those doing *homo-jil* or *fanfic-jil* (as defined in an earlier section, *jil* is a Korean suffix to describe acts in a disparaging way). This type of fan, absorbed in reading or writing homoerotic fan fiction about K-pop boy band members, focus on coupling the male stars and imagining homosexual relationships between the stars.⁸³

⁸² I will explore a different form of female fans' motherlike practices with K-pop star dolls in Chapter 4.

⁸³ I will explore Korean female K-pop fans' production and consumption of fan fiction describing same-sex relationships in Chapter 4.

F1 and V attempt a self-analysis on their fannish attitude toward their favorite stars. F1 associates her fannishness for her favorite Sechskies member Jiwon Eun with a mother's affection:

F: I feel sympathy for Jiwon Eun, so I'm worrying about him even though he is richer than me... Well, for me, he is no longer a celeb, but I feel that he is an acquaintance whom I worry about and wish happiness... I thank him for the way he turned out... I feel sort of like a mother thinking of him as a son.
(Mobile messenger chat, May 27, 2017)

Analyzing her fannishness for IU, V relates her impression of the K-pop female singer IU's music video to a queer identity, even though V is not an actual lesbian:

V: I watched a music video [to IU's "Peach"]... The music video was produced like a movie where IU was composing the song "Peach." After watching it, I felt love for IU because she looked terrifically lovely in the music video so that I was confused about my sexual orientation.
(In-person interview, February 25, 2016)

"We" Korean female K-pop fans not only identify and analyze ourselves, but also reflect on ourselves. A fan of the Korean ballad singer Si Kyung Sung, C1 looks back upon her teenage life as a prospective coloratura soprano whenever attending Sung's concerts. C1 majored in vocal performance at a high school for the arts. However, she was suddenly unable to make high pitches due to anxiety. Eventually, she gave up on entering a music college or becoming a vocalist. Attending Si Kyung Sung's concerts, C1 wonders how Sung feels standing on the stage in the spotlight. C1 identifies with Sung as a vocalist, which is a dream she abandoned.

While C1, performing fandom, reflects on herself on a personal level, JYJ's female fans practice a self-reflection at a collective level. As mentioned in the previous section, JYJ fans prohibit themselves from *sasaengjil* (stalking the stars or obsessively

following their private lives), defining this bad fan behavior as a vice of their former fandom. This regulation within fandom results from the female fans' self-reflection that was stimulated while they supported the group's lawsuit against SM Entertainment.

JYJ members made their debut in 2003 as ex-members of TVXQ, a K-pop five-member boy band formed by SM Entertainment. TVXQ gained tremendous popularity both within and outside of Korea throughout the middle and late 2000s. As described above, the group stirred a K-pop boom in East and Southeast Asian countries. However, despite the group's national and international triumph as the best K-pop boy band at that time, three members of the group, Xia Junsu, Micky Yu Chun and Hero Jae Joong declared their withdrawal from TVXQ and separation from their label SM Entertainment, one of the biggest K-pop labels in 2009. These three members, making an issue of their unfair "13-year" contract with the label, filed litigation with SM Entertainment (Lee 2015). They then organized themselves as JYJ in 2010.

Remarkably, female fans of JYJ (Junsu, Yu Chun, and Jae Joong) took part in the case. As a matter of fact, this case was not publicly supported by any fellow K-pop musicians or those interested in the entertainment industry (Ibid.). Moreover, SM Entertainment exerted its influence on broadcasters to block JYJ members' appearance on music shows. When the members struggled by themselves to contend with their former label in the legal arena, JYJ fandom stepped in to support the group. To make known the group's unfair contract with the label to the public, the group's female fans made their statements in support of JYJ through newspapers and transit advertising (Ibid.). Also, these fans filed petitions against the unfair contract between JYJ members

and SM Entertainment with both the court and the national human rights commission (Ibid.). Fans working as lawyers volunteered to review the law and write petitions. After conducting participant observation of these fans' activities supporting JYJ's lawsuit against SM Entertainment, the author of *JYJ Republic* Seung-Ah Lee suggests the JYJ fan practices as "fan activism." Thanks to their female fans' actions, JYJ members achieved a partial victory against an eight-hundred-pound-gorilla in the K-pop industry, and instigated changes in legislation related to the K-pop industry (Ibid.).

Building upon Lee's suggestion of fan activism, I propose that JYJ fans' activist practices are connected to their self-reflection on fandom. After JYJ members left TVXQ and SM Entertainment, female fans who followed these three members contemplated what to do as a fandom. Realigning themselves as JYJ fandom, these female fans reflected on what they had done as TVXQ fandom. Under the aegis of the label utilizing fandom as a way of promoting the idol group, many fangirls of TVXQ dug up and made known everything about the group members, including their private lives, through stalking and photographing the members. The fangirls did not know how to express their fannishness, but thought that their behaviors toward the stars would be allowed because of their role as the majority of idol pop consumers in Korea. Further, they believed that such fan practices could be helpful to promote their favorite idol stars. The fangirls were consequently stigmatized as *sasaeng* fans in addition to the derogatory identification with *ppasuni*. JYJ's female fans repented of their wrongdoings as TVXQ fandom while they supported JYJ's withdrawal from TVXQ and separation from SM Entertainment. These

women then renounced their bad habits representing rash fandom, and reshaped themselves as a mature fandom, and even as activists.

Up to now, I have elucidated Korean female K-pop fans' self-identification, self-analyses, and self-reflection. I assert that this self-identified, self-analytic, and self-reflexive fandom enables outsiders to K-pop fandom to re-understand "us" (Korean female K-pop fans) beyond the colloquialism "*ppasuni*."

Conclusion

This chapter provided a guide to some rudiments of K-pop fandom terminology before turning to an ethnographic study of the diversity of Korean female K-pop fans' sub/cultures presented in the subsequent sections of this dissertation. First, I defined and re-defined K-pop, drawing on keywords including "idols," "fandom," "media," and "transnationality or internationality." This definition and re-definition of K-pop is intended to embrace Korean popular musicians and their musical styles or genres, which my research participants are fond of, enthusiastic about, and involved in.

In the second section, I examined the Korean slang word *ppasuni*, a disparaging expression to describe Korean female fans, as well as *ppasuni*-related issues focusing on gendered fandom. Also, I addressed Korean female K-pop fans' self-appropriation of the term *ppasuni* to recognize the value of fandom and recontextualize fannishness.

From the third section to fifth section, I examined multiple Korean slang expressions describing fandom, which are widespread among Korean K-pop fans – *deokhu*, *deokjil*, *ipdeok*, *hyudeok*, *taldeok*, *deokgye*, *deok-mates*, *yeongeop*, *anbang-fans*,

saeujeot, *seongdeok*, *akgae*, *sasaeng*, and so on. Through this examination, I illuminated diverse instances of K-pop fandom colloquialisms in relation to the construction and performance of K-pop fandom, including the moment of becoming fans (*ipdeok*), the situations of pausing or quit fandom (*hyudeok* and *taldeok*), the relationships among female K-pop fans (*deok-mates*), K-pop closet fans (*anbang-fans*), and K-pop stalker fans (*sasaeng*). To illuminate these terms, I introduced and cited my research participants' examples.

In the sixth and last section of this chapter, I discussed Korean female K-pop fans' self-identification, self-analyses, and self-reflection. I then proposed a revised understanding of Korean female K-pop fandom.

In the next chapter, I chart a variety of K-pop fan activities before, during, and after concerts. Applying the concept of musicking, I categorize these activities as pre-concert musicking, concert musicking, and post-concert musicking, and then write an ethnography of each musicking. I analyze these musicking activities at K-pop concerts in terms of soundscapes. These discussions on musicking around K-pop concerts will not only elucidate the core part of popular music fandom (participation in musicians' live performances), but also illuminate K-pop and its fandom as a participatory musical culture.

Chapter 2. From Screaming Audiences to *Ttechang* Performers: The Formation of K-Pop Concert Soundscapes through Women’s Voices and New Audienceship Practices

The noise of video game sounds, such as *bam!*, *clink!*, and *rat-tat-tat-tat!*, filled an Internet cafe on a weeknight. I did not understand why the gamers did not use headsets. I was a little annoyed at the sounds, but I tried to keep calm because I was there to accomplish a mission to help my family and friend. Clicking a mouse and typing on the keyboard rapidly, I began the process of ticket reservation for Si Kyung Sung’s concerts, which would be held in Seoul on May 14 and 15, 2016. When the reservation icon was activated, I clicked it on very fast, and selected available seats on the seating chart at lightning speed. I succeeded in booking four tickets in just one minute – three for my cousin’s family and one for C1 (I elaborate on why I made others’ ticket reservations in the next section). I captured the screen of the reservation completion, and messaged the screen shot to my cousin-in-law and C1. They texted me back soon, “You’re incredible, Jungwon!” I deserved the compliment because Sung’s concerts were always sold out in minutes after ticket sales opened. Although my cousin-in-law and C1 made their own reservations, they preferred my tickets, since the seats I chose (thanks to my quick reservation) were much better than their seats. Rewarded by their decision to go to the concerts with my tickets, I left the Internet café.

It made me happy to imagine how much the women (my cousin-in-law and C1), as Sung’s fans, were excited to get ready for his concerts. My cousin-in-law would change a profile picture of her messenger into the concert poster to express her fannishness and excitement at the concerts. C1 would listen to Sung’s songs via her

smartphone when she has the time. On the day of the concert, they would sing along to the chorus of his songs, waving purple glow sticks.⁸⁴ They would scream when he is dancing awkwardly on the stage. Afterwards, they would chat about his concert with their friends and family. In particular, my friend C1 would want to talk to me about his repertoire, his vocality, and his interpretation of the music. It would also make me happy to listen to their experiences at Sung's concerts.

As briefly described above, fans do various activities before, during, and even after popular music concerts – this is audiences' musicking (music as an activity people do, functioning as a verb, as I discussed in the introductory chapter in this dissertation). This chapter illustrates Korean female K-pop fans' musicking as specifically related to concerts. I offer a three-part model for pre-concert, concert, and post-concert musicking to show that fans make music in a broad range of contexts that include but extend far beyond the actual concert. I examine the diversity of these three forms of musicking, that is, fans' activities before, during, and after K-pop concerts. Also, in focusing on audiences' musicking during the concerts, I analyze how fans participate in the concerts as music performers and producers, as opposed to solely listeners. They do this through *ttechang*, meaning singing together or collective singing, which is demonstrated through fan chanting and singing at concerts. I suggest that *ttechang* enables K-pop fans to expand their musical learning and experiences. I then claim that *ttechang* not only characterizes the participatory culture of K-pop fandom, but also incorporates listenership

⁸⁴ Since the name of Si Kyung Sung's official fan club is "Purple Ocean," his fans are given purple glow sticks by his label to wave during his singing at the concerts (especially at his concerts held in the spring season).

into musicianship. Additionally, I explore how fans' various forms of musicking on the day of the concert create soundscapes around concert venues.

Pre-Concert Musicking Step 1: *Picketing*, Listening, and Crooning

As depicted above, fans conduct diverse activities before going to their favorite musicians' concerts. Drawing upon the concept of musicking, I label these activities as 'pre-concert musicking.' The pre-concert musicking also consists of several stages. In this section, I look at how fans perform their musicking before the day of a concert.

In the introduction of this chapter, I touched on an episode of reserving tickets for Si Kyung Sung's concerts. This episode shows the first stage of pre-concert musicking. Thus, musicking is initiated by ticketing for concerts.⁸⁵ K-pop fans always stay informed about the news of their favorite musicians' concerts. Once K-pop labels announce information about the concerts, including dates, venues, and reservations, the fans keep themselves updated on ticket sales opened at online ticket sales websites. While the fans conduct these types of musicking on their own, they share what they discover regarding reservations with one another through their online communities. While they sometimes pass on their know-how to help each other get tickets, it is very competitive for fans to book their concert tickets, since there have been too many fans for the limited seats at concerts. In K-pop fandom, it is common to describe this stiff competition for ticket

⁸⁵ In general, the term ticketing means the process of issuing and selling tickets. However, in the K-pop scene, ticketing stands for the process of booking and buying concert tickets from the point of view of consumers, that is, K-pop fans. I use this word to describe ticket reservations and purchases throughout the text.

reservations for concerts with the term “*piketing*.” *Piketing* is a mixed word using “*pi*,” which means blood in Korean, and “*ticketing*.” This lingo indicates that those who want to reserve K-pop concert tickets are engaged in intense competition likened to a bloody battle. The fans who complete their ticket reservations successfully are thus portrayed as survivors of *piketing*. For the record, I survived *piketing* twenty-three times (including *piketing* for other fans) during my field research. However, I was killed in some bloody combats (specifically the notorious *piketing* for concerts by Big Bang and EXO).

To increase the probability of succeeding in ticket reservations for concerts, fans ask people in other fandoms to join *piketing* and help get tickets. That is why I carried out booking Si Kyung Sung’s concert tickets for my cousin-in-law and C1. Those fans helping other fans’ *piketing* are described as mercenaries (*yongbyeong* in Korean) in fandom. However, they are not paid for their participation in *piketing*, but are provided food or drinks. Otherwise, they ask for help in making their ticket reservations from fans they previously helped. Veterans, who have a lot of experience in *piketing*, are mostly preferred to help with other fans’ ticket reservations. As both a longtime fan of Jong Shin Yoon and a member of J(Y)J fandom, I was a veteran myself and was asked to enter *piketing* for concerts by WINNER (K-pop boy band promoted and managed by YG Entertainment), Si Kyung Sung, and Sechskies. Gaining victories in such bloody battles, I was able to present concert tickets to my niece, cousin-in-law, C1, and F1. I also asked other veterans to help me reserve tickets. For instance, to get a ticket to Jae Joong Kim’s holographic concerts, held on April 9, 2016, I asked R (a member of Infinite fandom), T

(a former fan of TVXQ), and A2 (a Dongryul Kim fan) to join *piketing*. R and T succeeded in making ticket reservations.

Do the veterans of *piketing* then have any key to surviving these bloody combats? I do. Many veteran fans, including me, point to agility, concentration, and quick decision making as crucial to their ability to get tickets. The speed is required for both the fans and the devices used in making reservations. Although Korea is well known for the fastest Internet speed in the world (Mosher 2016), Korean K-pop fans, hoping for a one-hundred percent success rate in booking their concert tickets, prefer to reserve at Internet cafes, which provide a faster and more secure Internet speed than their homes networks do. Fans rehearse ticketing (reservation and purchase of tickets) by measuring time, even at Internet cafes. For example, I simulated the process of ticket reservation for Sung's concerts by making reservations for other pop concerts or musicals, and timed this simulation. In addition to swiftness, the fans should be able to concentrate on finding available seats and select where to sit without hesitation. However, despite intensive preparation with *yongbyeong* (mercenary fans to help make reservations) joining *piketing*, fans fail to get tickets because they are too nervous to accurately and quickly click a mouse, and because too many other fans rush into *piketing* at the same time. In a word, they are unlucky at the moment of ticketing.

It is uncommon for those unfortunate fans, failing to obtain their ticket reservations, to abandon searching for their concert tickets.⁸⁶ To get a ticket, the fans try

⁸⁶ Ultimately, I gave up seeking tickets to Big Bang and EXO's concerts due to my financial condition.

all things they can do. They are frequently in and out of ticket sales websites to find cancelled tickets. The ticket sellers give an update on cancelled tickets and make the tickets available to sell around 2 AM. Thus, fans must keep awake after midnight to buy cancelled tickets. Some fans stay awake until 2 AM. Others wake up at 2 AM. To purchase a cancelled ticket for IU's concerts, which were held in Seoul on November 21 and 22, 2016, I used to set an alarm every night to awaken around 2 AM, and I ultimately reserved a ticket. In this way, many fans disrupt their sleeping pattern of their own accord to have a chance to get concert tickets. The series of processes through which fans purchase cancelled tickets is termed "*chwiketing*" among K-pop fans. *Chwiketing* is a new compound word of "*chwisso*," meaning cancellation in Korean, and "ticketing."

Among those attempting *chwiketing* are several fans who have already completed buying their tickets. Although they succeeded in their ticket reservations, participants in my research also sought new tickets closer to the stage than their original seats through *chwiketing*. The reason they seek for another ticket is they want to see their favorite musicians' performances more closely. Those fans successful in *chwiketing* cancel the original tickets, paying a cancellation charge. In this case, other fans can take the cancelled tickets at ticket sales websites. Otherwise, the fans resell their first tickets to other fans at the original price through fan communities. This type of resale within fandom is termed *yangdo* among K-pop fans, which means handover in Korean. Some fans resell their tickets to others at online second-hand markets outside of fandom. In addition to fans, scalpers, who buy K-pop concert tickets in bulk at reservation websites using illegal software, resell these tickets online and charge a premium. Fans know that

buying tickets from the scalpers is illegal, but do it anyway because they also know how much their participation in concerts is important for their musicking. However, several fandoms have reported the scalpers to the managers of the online markets, and even to the police. As a result of the fandoms' continued accusations of unlawful online ticket reservations, a member of Korea's National Assembly proposed an amendment for the punishment of scalpers' online ticket purchase and resale in early March 2017.

After finishing musicking in relation to ticket reservation for concerts, fans discuss and forecast which songs might be performed in the setlist, using online discussion boards and fan communities. Consulting with the discussion and predictions within fandom, fans listen to the tentative setlist over and over through mobile phones, MP3 players, CD players, computers, and car audio players. In preparation for my participation in concerts, I preferred to listen to songs, purchased and downloaded at iTunes or other digital music stores, at home, in cars or subways, and while walking via my iPhone. Also, preparing for an Infinite concert, I used CD players in my laptop and car to listen to the group's songs because I had their CD albums given by R as presents for *yeongeop* (promotional activity to draw me to her fandom). As teenage fangirls attending high school, H1 and S, preparing for their attendance at Sechskies concerts, listen to the group's songs while they commute to school:

H1: I listen to [Sechskies] songs [with my smartphone] via Melon (Korean online music store) streaming service, commuting to school. (Email interview, September 19, 2016)

S: I listen to [Sechskies] music [with my mobile phone] while I commute to school, go to a private academy, and do self-study at school, as well as even before I go to sleep. For listening, I mainly download songs [from online music stores]. Also, I use YouTube a lot to search for fancams [of

Sechskies concerts] (I will talk about fancams in Chapter 3). Although I tried to memorize some song lyrics, even before hearing them, I did not perfectly memorize the song lyrics of solo performances by Black-Kies (Jiwon Eun, Jae Jin Lee, and Jae Duk Kim).⁸⁷ That [imperfect memorization] did not prevent me from watching [the Sechskies] concert. Nonetheless, I am very eager to memorize all the group's songs for the next concert.

(Email interview, September 23, 2016)

In this stage of musicking to prepare for their participation in concerts, fans not only listen to music, but also practice singing. Fans' singing practice helps them sing along to a repertoire during concerts, and enjoy themselves at the concerts. Before Sechskies's comeback concerts, F1 was enthusiastic about performing these types of musicking – listening and singing – although she was a “newbie” in both Sechskies fandom and K-pop culture:

F1: As you go to [Sechskies] concerts, you know that you need to memorize [the group's] songs, right? Here is the setlist the fandom considers essential: “Comeback,” “Chivalry,” “Road Fighter,” “Hunch,” “Couple,” “Letting You Go,” “Love,” “Buff,” “Will You Remember,” “Come to Me Baby,” and “Foolhardy Love.”

Me: LOL. I'll prep that. Thanks!

F1: You can listen to those songs as a playlist by using music streaming services. Streaming the playlist, *croon* the songs (so that you can memorize them). You might know most songs cause they were hits.

Me: OK!

F1: Also, here are songs with a great likelihood of being on the setlist: “New School Tune,” “Taming of the Tomboy,” “Feeling of Betrayal,” “Now is the Time,” “Stay There,” “To You Who I Love,” “Until that Day,” “Doggedness,” “Escape,” and “Bye.” LOL.

ME: LOL. It's obvious that you were a former top student!⁸⁸ You apply your close preparation [for studies] to your *deokjil*. LOL

⁸⁷ Sechskies has had two units within the group – Black-Kies and White-Kies. Of six members in total, Jiwon Eun, Jae Jin Lee, and Jae Duk Kim constituted Black-Kies, and Suwon Jang, Sung Hoon Kang, and Ji Yong Ko (currently retired from the group) formed White-Kies.

⁸⁸ As an old friend, I knew that she had been an excellent student at high school and college.

F1: At my age (she is in her thirties), it's too hard to memorize rapping in songs. LOL.

Me: I already gave up rap. LOL. I don't know how to sing along to that rap parts in Junsu's songs and even in Jong Shin Yoon's songs.

F1: I can memorize all the rap lyrics [in Sechskies songs] but can't keep time to music. LOL. How sad an old lady fan is!

(Mobile messenger chat, August 20, 2016)

In addition to listening to and crooning songs in the tentative setlist, K-pop fans learn and practice the chanting of slogans specific to particular songs as part of pre-concert musicking. These slogans are formulated and circulated by K-pop labels to encourage fans to perform *ttechang* at musicians' live performances (I detail how the labels make and distribute the slogans, and how the fans learn and practice the slogans in the third section of this chapter). I suggest that through such pre-concert musicking of listening and practicing singing/chanting, fans incorporate their listenership with musicianship. Now the fans are poised to dive in to the auditoriums, looking forward to the day of the concert.

Pre-Concert Musicking Step 2: Buying, Displaying, Giving/Taking, Photographing, and Singing/Dancing

How can I articulate my excitement on the day of the concert? How can I represent how exhilarated the other fans were for hours before entering the concert hall? It might be difficult for me to define accurately what "we" (Korean female K-pop fans) were feeling at that time. However, I can chart those moments, moments when we are happy to perform multiple activities around the concert venue. I label these activities the second step of pre-concert musicking, and I delineate the variety of our musicking experiences on the day of the concert before we take a seat in the auditorium.

As both an ethnographer and a member of K-pop fandom, I typically arrive hours early to the venue the day of the concert. I can identify other fans standing out at the bus stops and subway station near the venue because they bring logo-printed or colored items symbolizing K-pop musicians and their fandoms. For instance, women in “orange” thronged around the concert venue Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena, including Olympic Park Station and other bus stops near the venue, on August 23, 2015 and March 27, 2016 – members Shinhwa Changjo (members of Shinhwa’s official fan club) on the days of the group’s concerts (I already explored K-pop groups’ logos and colors in Chapter 1, which are used for the identifications of both the musicians and their official fan clubs).

We (Korean female K-pop fans) conduct diverse activities surrounding the concert venue. First, we purchase K-pop-related items on the day of the concert.⁸⁹ Though many vendors sell K-pop stars’ photos, photo-printed items, and unofficial glow sticks or headbands near the concert venue, we seldom buy from these vendors because their goods are crude, as well as because we, as loyal fans, should purchase “authentic,” official goods, merchandized by the K-pop labels (figure 2.1). Although the price of the official merchandise is much more expensive than the industrial products sold in regular stores, we buy the goods to demonstrate our fannishness.⁹⁰ Due to our consumption of the goods in addition to the purchases of concert tickets and albums, we are sarcastically

⁸⁹ Not all K-pop fans engage in purchasing practices. Some fans in low socio-economic groups (or in the lower middle class) cannot afford to buy K-pop-related items, including music albums and concert tickets. Thus, this form of pre-concert musicking can be a class-related practice within K-pop fandom.

⁹⁰ For instance, a hooded jacket, one of the official goods of Infinite was sold at about 48 dollars at the venue on the day of the concert. This price is 30 to 50 per cent higher than the prices of other mass-produced hoodies sold in Korea.

nicknamed ATMs (automated teller machines) by other people. However, we do not mind. We acknowledge how much money we spend money on our fandom. We humorously self-identify as ATMs within the fandom. Through this type of musicking of consuming and possessing the official merchandise of our favorite K-pop stars, we identify ourselves as fans of the same group. Also, we expand the modes of interaction with the musicians beyond just enjoying their performances acoustically and visually. Various official goods plus light sticks and banners are necessary for our concert musicking (figure 2.2). However, some items, such as bookmarks, folders, clothes, bags, umbrellas, key rings, and mugs, are additionally manufactured as articles for daily use rather than as impractical artwork. Buying and using such practical goods, we can manifest our commitment to music and musicians in our everyday lives.



Figure 2.1. Vendors selling EXO members' photos, face-printed items, glow sticks, and glow headbands at Exit 3 from Olympic Park Station on the day of EXO's concert (March 19, 2016). Photo by the author.



Figure 2.2. Various official goods sold in the plaza of Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena on the day of Shinhwa’s concert (March 27, 2016). Photo by the author.

Second, fans make visible their fannishness and pre-concert musicking at the concert venue, displaying themselves and specific objects (I temporarily stop using “we,” “our,” “us” here for the description of fans’ display activities on the day of the concert because I mainly observed this musicking rather than being involved in those activities). As exemplified earlier in this section, fans reveal their fannishness by wearing clothes or bringing items in the symbolic colors specific to K-pop musicians and their fandoms. This colorization of fans’ belongings is the easiest and the most common way for the fans to display their fannishness on the day of the concert. Another way of manifesting fannishness is to show off how many fans are prompted all together to engage in musicking and how much they fund-raise in musicking. In other words, fans exhibit how strong their *hwaryeok* (power of fandom) is. For this exhibition, fans produce and install various items at the venue on the day of the concert day. While they select, contact, and commission manufacturers to create the installations, the fans design the objects

autonomously within their fandom. For instance, Sechskies fandom floated ad balloons, set life size cutouts of Sechskies members as a photographable space for fans, and installed recycling containers as a one way to take a poll on fans' favorite songs at the venue throughout the concerts (figures 2.3 and 2.4). fans also reveal their donations in the names of their stars by placing standing wreaths, which decorate donatives with flowers, ribbons, and the stars' pictures, at the venue on the day of the concert.⁹¹ These activities of setting and displaying the standing wreaths not only manifest fans' contribution based on their fannishness, but also exemplify pre-concert musicking as part of cultures and subcultures of K-pop fandom.



Figure 2.3. Standing figures of Sechskies members produced and set by Sechskies fandom in the plaza of Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena on the days of the concerts (September 10-11, 2016). Photo by the author.

⁹¹ I will detail this fan practice in Chapter 3.



Figure 2.4. Recycling containers as the polls installed by Sechskies fandom in the plaza of Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena on the days of the concerts (September 10-11, 2016). Photo by the author.

Third, fans taking part in *nanum* (K-pop fans' sharing and exchanging practice) at the venue on the day of concert perform pre-concert musicking.⁹² *Nanum* practitioners are very popular among other fans, because the primary items for *nanum* consist of K-pop stars' small-sized photos, photo-printed stickers, and illustrations, which can be held easily and usually inside wallets or pocket planners. Fans queue up around the concert venue to get those free items. These lines constitute a part of the unique landscape of K-pop concerts. In addition to such *nanum*, I discovered another type of giving/taking practices at concerts. It was the first day of Xia Junsu's ballad and musical concerts, which were held on December 29 through 31, 2016.⁹³ I arrived at the concert venue,

⁹² I will elaborate on *nanum* in Chapter 4.

⁹³ A member of JYJ, XIA Junsu has performed his own musical activities as a solo singer and a musical actor in addition to participation in a group. As part of his own musical career, he has held end-of-the-year concerts since 2012, which have featured his ballad hits and musical numbers to an orchestral accompaniment.

Jamsil Arena, three hours early. As both an ethnographer and a fan, I was doing participant observation of pre-concert musicking along with many other fans. The fans, including me, looked around the venue, and took pictures of the concert banner and other items installed around the concert hall. Several fans visited an outdoor booth to purchase official concert merchandise. Among those fans, a young woman was standing up surrounded by other women. To express her happiness and joy at attending the concert, she was offering free hugs to other fans. I got a free hug from her as well. She never lost her smile, giving free hugs. Her free hug practice impressed me. Looking at a photo of her smiling again, I include her as a part of *nanum* practitioner doing pre-concert musicking (I photographed her with her consent).

Fourth, we (Korean female K-pop fans) take many photos around the concert venue. To reflect the festive mood of the day of the concert, we take pictures of various items installed at the venue as well as of ourselves in front of the installations for the concert (figure 2.5). Photography is of course not specific to K-pop fandom but pursued by people all over the world. However, our photography is perceived as important for the whole map of K-pop concerts. Most labels thus provide us with a special space at the concert venues. In this space, a wall printed with musicians' photos is installed. With the wall backdrop, we can take hundreds of selfies. Also, some items which fandoms set up around the concert venue to display their fannishness serve as the walls for us to take pictures in front of. Photography is ubiquitous but as a phase of pre-concert musicking, our shooting constitutes an important consideration of the K-pop concert production.



Figure 2.5. Me, in front of the promotional bus of XIA Junsu's tour in Asia installed at the entrance of Jamsil Arena on the day of the concert (November 8, 2015). Photo courtesy of another fan.

Last, we (Korean female K-pop fans) sing and dance while awaiting our admission to the auditorium. On the day of the concert, large amplifiers are installed around the venue. To excite fans and create a celebratory vibe, concert producers play the musicians' hits that will be included the concert repertoire, through these amplifiers at the venue hours ahead of the concert.⁹⁴ Walking around the venue, we hum the tunes of the songs played there. Some of us sing along to the songs loudly and enthusiastically as if we are inside the concert hall. These sounds of amplified music and our singing outside of the concert hall form a soundscape of pre-concert musicking. For example, on the second day of Sechskies's concerts, the group's female fans, F1, M, and X, sat together near the concert hall and sang along to all the songs played through amplifiers before the

⁹⁴ Not all the concert producers turn on music outdoors through amplifiers before the concerts. However, fans voluntarily play music through their portable speakers at the concert venue as a part of pre-concert musicking.

concert. They even performed the rap parts in the songs precisely. It was amazing that F1, a newbie in the fandom, had memorized all the lyrics and melodies. How much had she listened to and crooned Sechskies's songs to memorize them all? I was not able to even estimate how many times. Singing along to the songs, X shook her upper body to the music at the same time. Her movement represented the group's dancing to the songs. As a longtime fan of the group, she remembered all Sechskies's songs and choreography for the music. At the plaza across the space we were gathering around, two fangirls were dancing in front of other fans and passersby (figure 2.6). Compared to cover dancers within Shinhwa fandom (I will discuss these fans and their dance covers in Chapter 4), the fangirls' dancing looked amateur. However, they were earnestly and enthusiastically imitating the choreography for Sechskies's songs. Several bystanders flocked to see the girls dancing and gave them a very big hand after the dance performance.



Figure 2.6. Fangirls presented their performance imitating the choreography for Sechskies's music at the plaza in the Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena on the day of the concert (September 11, 2016). Photo by the author.

Up to now, I have delineated the variety of pre-concert musicking on the day of the concert. After waiting to enter the concert hall for so long, the time finally comes to finalize our pre-concert musicking and then to move on to the next stage of our musicking inside the auditorium. In the following section, I examine concert musicking by analyzing the fan chanting and singing during the musicians' live performances, which is also known as *ttechang*.

“Ttechang,” Musicking to Construct New Audienceship During Concerts

Before scrutinizing *ttechang* as concert musicking, it is necessary to look at K-pop's musical structure. As defined in Chapter 1, K-pop can be musically stylized as “danceable” rhythms and “catchy” melodies (Shin 2009a: 507). More specifically, the melodic sections of K-pop songs, particularly when performed by idol groups, are framed in two ways: as memorable and repeated melodies sung in unison or in alternation by all members of the group, which function as the main theme of the song and a refrain; and as expressive and sophisticated melodies performed by the main or lead singers of the group with excellent vocality. Also, foot-tapping rhythms are presented through phrases of rapping and short, repetitive chanting of song titles or parts of lyrics in Korean or English. K-pop songs by solo idol singers are structured in the same way, although they sing without division of vocal roles and employ a featured rapper for a rhythmic section of the song.

That style of K-pop songs is exemplified by the K-pop boy band Infinite's song “Bad,” which is included as the second track on the group's fifth mini album, released in

2015.⁹⁵ This song begins with a short chant of “Betting on You,” which is performed by Sung Kyu, the leader and main vocalist of Infinite. Following this chanting, he sings the first melodic unit of the first four-bar phrase in the first verse, which consists of repetitive melodies. Dong Woo, one of the rapper in the group, takes up the subsequent melodic fragment, which is composed of repeated motives. He hands the next melodic fragment to Sung Yeol, a vocalist in the group. The first four-bar phrase ends with that very short melodic fragment, sung by Sung Yeol as a half cadence. The second four-bar phrase comes with the second melodic unit sung by Hoya, another rapper of the group. Sung Jong and L, vocalists in the group, follow Hoya, singing melodic fragments of recurrent motives that are similar to Dong Woo’s part. Slightly overlapping with the melody taken by L, the pre-chorus features a high-pitched melodic unit, which comprises repeated motives including a larger interval. Woo Hyun, another main vocalist of the group, performs this pre-chorus. Between the pre-chorus and chorus, there is a short transition, which consists of Sung Kyu’s chanting and L’s singing. This chanting in the transition is the same as the beginning of the song “Betting on You.” The melodic fragment in this transition also serves as the conclusion with which the song finishes at the end. The chorus of the song, which involves all of the members of Infinite, is a repetition of a short and easy melody, to which the repetitive phrase, “Bad Bad Bad Bet A Bad Bad Girl,” is set. This melodic unit recurs three times, punctuated by two completely new melodies. Following this refrain, a phrase of rapping is briefly presented by Dong Woo. This rap

⁹⁵ See the official music video of “Bad” at <https://youtu.be/i1oTSAhdzNQ>. This video shows how each member of Infinite divides their chanting, singing, and rapping among the members throughout the song.

phrase functions as a transition to the second verse. After the short rap phrase, the second verse of “Bad” begins. While the first-four-bar phrase of this verse presents completely new melodies, the second-four-bar phrase melodically restates the first verse with different lyrics. Also, the group members sing different parts in the second section than in the first section. Following the presentation of the chorus for the second time, a bridge appears. This bridge is shared by Sung Yeol, Sung Jong, Sung Kyu, and Woo Hyun respectively and separately. After the coda, the chorus is presented for the third time. After this re-presentation, the first section of the chorus, featuring the short and repetitive melody of “Bad Bad Bad Bet A Bad Bad Girl,” recurs twice, and the song ends with the concluding melody, which was used earlier in the transition. When the chorus is repeated in the last part of the song, the main vocalists of the group add high notes to the chorus melody, showing their vocal abilities. Throughout the song, each phrase is punctuated by the sound of “Hey,” except for the phrase featuring a high-pitched and larger-intervallic tune.

This song demonstrates how the structure of K-pop music is characterized by repetition. This repetition functions as a “hook,” through which listeners can remember and sing along to the music more easily. This musical hook leads fans to perform *ttechang*. The Korean neologism *ttechang* is defined as audience members’ collective singing along to songs during live performances in response to musicians (*tte* means group or crowd, and *chang* means singing). *Ttechang* results from the influence of a musical hook on listeners, but it also implies an expression of commitment on the part of the fans to their favorite music and musicians (their “fannishness”) through their

participation in singing. However, I do not restrict the *ttechang* of K-pop fans' to singing along to songs during musicians' live performances. I also include fans' chanting of slogans specific to K-pop songs or words from the song lyrics, added between melodic phrases or over the instrumental sections.

The concept of *ttechang*, which encompasses fan chanting and singing, can be traced back to fans' chanting of slogans for Korean idol group's music in the mid-1990s. As explored in Chapter 1, the '90s popular music labels, when organizing official fan clubs of idols, distributed membership cards and colored raincoats to paid fan club members. The raincoats were used to identify fans as having the official fan club membership, as well as to differentiate one idols' fan club members from other's. The raincoats were also utilized as cheer tools, along with colored balloons during idol groups' performances, including during live television shows, concerts, and music festivals. To cheer on idols, the fans clad in the colored raincoats participated in the groups' live performances, sang along to songs, intoned easy slogans – such as “I love you” – or all of the group members' names, and waved balloons in the same colors as the raincoats rhythmically.⁹⁶ That was the scene of *ttechang* in the 1990s.

Although the '90s idols' labels produced and circulated the cheer tools, such as colored raincoats and balloons, the slogans were autonomously and spontaneously created by the fan club members (Park 2003). Fans' teaching and learning of the slogans

⁹⁶ In *Reply 1997*, Korean television drama, which was aired in 2012, *ttechang* by the 1990s H.O.T. (an idol boy group) fans was represented. See the scene at <https://youtu.be/GbLibZmyC48>.

was performed within the fandom. B1, a longtime fan of Sechskies recounts the distribution of slogans for the group's songs in the late 1990s:

B1: I don't see the label made and taught the slogans for Sechskies's songs, but remember that fans circulated the slogans through autonomous communication with one another. At that time, in addition to the official PO box [set up by Sechskies's label], we used a voice mailbox to communicate with one another. Through that voice mailbox or PC communication, we shared information and news [about the group]. Sharing a variety of information, we spontaneously taught, learned, and distributed the slogans.
(Email interview, December 5, 2016)

Additionally, fans taught and learned the slogans when they attended live performances on the spot (Ibid.). Before the performances started, fans, promoting themselves as active and committed audience members, practiced singing along to the expected repertoire and chanting the slogans. Through this practice, fans spontaneously taught and learned how to chant the slogans. Their teaching and learning of the slogans also occurred even during musicians' performances. Once somebody initiated chanting of the slogans in response to the performances, other fans followed the slogans immediately and then grasped how to chant the slogans.

EXO fans voluntarily create and distribute catch phrases (slogans) for *ttechang* during musicians' live performances within the fandom, like the 1990s idol fans. Moreover, EXO fandom selects songs to perform *ttechang* to at concerts in addition to selecting slogans through fans' voting. However, not all K-pop fandoms engage in the process of formulating and choosing slogans for *ttechang*, even though they actively participate in practicing and performing *ttechang*. In other words, many K-pop labels intervene in creating and circulating slogans for *ttechang*, unlike what occurred with the

labels of the '90s idol groups. More specifically, when K-pop musicians release their new albums, their labels make official slogans for the title track of the albums and announce the slogans to fans via the musicians' official websites or the official online fan clubs. For example, Shinhwa Company, the Shinhwa label posted the official slogans for "Touch" to the company's official Facebook page in early January 2017 soon after the group released their thirteenth album. Attaching the illustration of the song lyrics and slogans, the label specified what, how, and where the fandom should chant and shout while Shinhwa members perform "Touch." The fans became well-acquainted with the provided guidelines and performed their *ttechang* according to these guidelines during Shinhwa's live performance of the song. The label-made slogans for Infinite's "Bad" were also announced by Woollim Entertainment (the Infinite label) through the official fan cafe (the official online fan club). Thus, the instructions for *ttechang* were available only to Inspirit, Infinite's official fan club. However, non-members of the official fan club, like myself, still want to attend Infinite's concerts and participate in chanting slogans to perform *ttechang* during the concerts. For these external audience members, the official fan club members are willing to share the instructions for the official slogans with the public through SNS. For example, some fans who filmed Infinite's live performances secretly might post video clips to their social media profiles. This online and communal sharing of the official slogans enables new fans or audience members, who are not enrolled in the official fan club, to self-learn *ttechang* as part of their pre-concert musicking.

On February 21, 2016, the last day of Infinite's concerts, I was able to see the fans' *ttechang* for "Bad" firsthand. This song was performed after the group members' chat in the last part of the concert. As the members said "Bad" would be the last song of their repertoire, fans sighed with sadness but started screaming shortly after the instrumental intro to the song was played. I delineate their *ttechang* for "Bad," which I listened to at that time, in present tense sentences as an example of K-pop fans' concert musicking.

When Sung Kyu chants "Betting on You" twice in the beginning of the song, the fans shout out "Betting on You" along with his chanting. However, soon after the fans chant the first "Betting on You," they also call out each group member's real full names, "Kim Sung Kyu, Chang Dong Woo, Nam Woo Hyun, Lee Howon."⁹⁷ Following the second "Betting on You," the fans chant the rest of the group members' full names and the group name "Lee Sung Yeol, Kim Myungsoo, Lee Sung Jong, Infinite."⁹⁸ Shortly after Sung Yeol and Hoya's singing parts, the fans shout out "Hey" along with the sound of "Hey" in the song. Fans echo Sung Kyu's chanting, "Betting on You," in a transition to the first chorus. During the chorus, the fans sing along only to the last two words from the lyrics of the chorus, "Bad Girl." While Dong Woo raps after the chorus, the fans chant along with his words "So Bad" in the last line of the rap. After a coda showcasing Woo Hyun's vocal virtuosity, fans yell out "In/Fi/Ni/Te," articulated in a staccato style.

⁹⁷ Lee Howon is Hoya's real name. Lee is his surname and Howon is his given name.

⁹⁸ Kim Myungsoo is L's real name. Kim is his family name and Myungsoo is his first name.

I did not actively join in the *ttechang* for Infinite's songs during the concert because I had to observe details, including musicking by both the group and the fans, inside the concert hall, and I had not memorized all the songs and slogans for the songs. However, ruminating on my *ttechang* practices at other concerts by my favorite singers, Jong Shin Yoon and Xia Junsu, I can say that through the participation in *ttechang*, fans not only demonstrate their identity as a fan but also feel a sense of belonging to the greater fandom. Furthermore, fans can achieve accurate timing and pitch, chanting slogans and singing along to songs.

Generally, *ttechang* is performed inside the concert hall as mentioned above. However, in some cases, fans perform their *ttechang* outside of the concert hall. For example, EXO held their concerts at the Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena on March 18 through 20 in 2016. As mentioned earlier, I did not survive *piketing* for these concerts (I failed to reserve a ticket to these concerts). Nevertheless, I visited the concert venue to observe EXO fans' pre-concert musicking. Many young female fans were doing various activities around the venue, as described in the previous section. Even after the fans completed entering the auditorium as the concert began, several fans who could not get a concert ticket, like myself, still hung around the venue. They eventually sat in rows on benches and the floor right in front of the entrance to the concert hall for the long wait to purchase tickets on-site. They then screamed, waved their light sticks, chanted slogans, and sang along to EXO's songs, which were flowing out from the hall (figure 2.7). Thus, the fans performed *ttechang* outdoors, as if they were sitting down inside the concert hall.

Through this *ttechang* outside of the concert hall, the fans expanded the time and space of “the concert.”



Figure 2.7. EXO fans performing *ttechang* outside of the concert hall on the day of the concert (March 19, 2016). Photo by the author.

Up to this time, I have conceptualized *ttechang* as fan chanting and singing during musicians’ live performances; summarized the history of *ttechang*; explored the creation, circulation, and education of *ttechang*; and analyzed examples of *ttechang* at concerts. As suggested earlier, *ttechang* is ascribed to K-pop’s general musical structure, which features melodic and rhythmic hooks resulting from repetition. Moreover, they are repetitive, with each phrase and section of the song differentiated throughout music. These structural aspects of K-pop music allow the listeners to recognize where they can intervene musically as *ttechang* performers. However, K-pop also fans perform *ttechang* for songs of various styles or genres, not just for the hook music.

From October 9 to 11, 2015, Dongryul Kim, a singer-songwriter specializing in ballads held multiple concerts at the Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena. Kim made his

debut as the winner of the annual collegiate singing competition in 1993, and his specialty (ballads) was one of the most famous popular music genres in Korea in the 1990s (Lee 2002). The current musical style of K-pop, characterized by hooks based on danceable rhythms and catchy melodies, has occupied the main scene of Korean popular music since the 2000s. However, the ballad genre is still popular among both musicians and listeners, as discussed in Chapter 1. As young K-pop idols sometimes include ballad songs in their albums, ballads are not considered an outdated or minority genre among K-pop fandoms. Fans, rather, consume ballads without regard for the recent musical trend. Accordingly, famous Korean ballad singers like Dongryul Kim hold regular concerts to meet audiences' demand for this genre. Kim's concerts in particular are always sold out. I thus had to fight for a ticket at *picketing* in August 2015, and succeeded in booking the ticket for the concert on October 11, 2015. Since I had been touched by his orchestration and acoustics listening to his live album, I had looked forward to the concert during which I would be able to appreciate musical sound of high quality. As expected, the concert was sonically perfect so that all audience members in the concert hall were quietly concentrating only on listening to Kim's music. Although they cheered, they did not sound like screamers. These fans also performed *ttechang*, in response to his ballad music. This *ttechang* practice was impressive because compared to general K-pop songs, Kim's ballads were too lyrical to easily allow fans to seize the opportunity to chant particular slogans for his music. Moreover, since he composed songs to maximize his vocal ability, it could be difficult for audiences, who might not have received professional vocal training, to sing along for the duration of his ballads at concerts. At

one point, however, Kim suddenly paused in singing the chorus of his old hit “Drunken Truth” and led the audience members to fill in part of the chorus by performing *ttechang*. The audience sang the song together perfectly both in tune and in rhythm as well as with perfect memorization of the song lyrics. Kim’s encouragement of and fans’ participation in *ttechang* occurred at a moment’s notice. Thus, the musician and audience members performed a kind of mutual improvisation for the concert through *ttechang*.

Attending Si Kyung Sung’s concerts on December 30 and 31, 2015, I realized the same pattern of *ttechang* as that which had occurred at Dongryul Kim’s concert. Reaching out his hand with a microphone to the auditorium, he encouraged audience members to perform *ttechang* for his song. Like Kim, Sung stopped his singing briefly during fans’ *ttechang*. He induced the fans to engage in *ttechang* several times throughout the concerts. Of his songs featuring fans’ participation in *ttechang*, “On the Street” was notable. This ballad song is characterized by intense lyricism, which is expressed through Sung’s vocal virtuosity. He lyrically and skillfully handles large leaps in the song, singing back and forth between his natural voice and falsetto. While singing this song, he reached out his microphone to the fans and engaged them in *ttechang* for the chorus of the song, which consists of repeated motives. The motives make disjunct ascending melodic motion and climax with a larger interval. In accordance with that melodic motion, Sung, leading audience members to perform *ttechang* shortly, paused and resumed his singing. Thus, by using fans’ *ttechang*, he created a call-and-response style, or an antiphonal form, within the chorus of the song.

K-pop fans not only chant slogans specific to songs and sing along to the setlist during musicians' live performances, but they also may expand their *ttechang* practice to make their own singing session independent of the performances. This session, also known as a *ttechang* event within fandoms, is planned at the stage of pre-concert musicking, and then carried out for a curtain call at concerts.⁹⁹ Fans determine the details of their *ttechang* events through discussion and voting. Also, they actively take part in producing the items, such as banners, flyers, or glow sticks, necessary for the events. For instance, V put her fan art in a flyer for a *ttechang* event at IU's concerts.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the fans are willing to pitch in money for the cost of producing the items. Additionally, they volunteer to place the banners, flyers, or glow sticks in the auditorium and distribute the items to other fans on the days of the concerts. Doing fieldwork on concerts by Dongryul Kim and Sechskies, I saw A2 and N volunteering for the *ttechang* event at the venue, and I was then able to recruit them as participants in my research.

Using an example of the *ttechang* event at IU's concert, I will describe how fans build up their own repertoire, and how they play roles beyond that of just listener, as both music performers and concert producers. I participated in the concert at the Olympic Hall in Seoul Olympic Park on November 22, 2015. Entering the concert hall, I found an envelope was placed on each seat. In the envelope, there were IU's picture-stickers, photo cards, and a flyer. The flyer included information about what song fans should sing

⁹⁹ Some fandoms call this singing session differently from a *ttechang* event: the picket event by Dongryul Kim fandom; the mini-banner event and the glow stick event by J(Y)J fandom; the slogan event by Infinite, BTS, and Sechskies fandoms.

¹⁰⁰ I will examine V's fan art creation in Chapter 3.

during a curtain call, how to perform *ttechang* for it, and the song lyrics. The song for the *ttechang* event was entitled “Heart.” Since this song, as a folk-styled ballad, features high-pitched melodies, syncopations, and IU’s whispering voice, I thought that it might be somewhat difficult for her fans to sing the entire song. As instructed in the flyer, fans started singing “Heart” with whistle signals instead of shouting “encore!” when IU left the stage after completing her repertoire. The audience members successfully completed singing the song a cappella during a curtain call. Soon after their *ttechang*, IU showed up again to perform an encore. Involving myself in that fan singing, I learned that the song for *ttechang* functioned as a prelude to the musician’s encore at the concert. Thus, the fans not only create their own repertoire but also enrich the concert by adding their *ttechang* song to the musicians’ repertoire. Further, the fans, singing instead of yelling for an encore, label themselves as *ttechang* performers rather than as screamers.

I have explored the variety of cases of *ttechang* as K-pop fans’ concert musicking up to now. The fans have diversified their roles during musicians’ live performances, ranging from listeners to singers, producers, and promoters. I suggest that this type of musicking enables the fans to negotiate their positions between listenership and musicianship at concerts. Thus, through their *ttechang* practice, the fans demonstrate themselves “as a form of skilled audiences” (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998: 121). I believe that the concert musicking in K-pop fandom, merging fans’ listenership and musicianship, constructs a new audienceship. Also, I argue that fans’ active engagement in *ttechang* performances during concerts characterizes K-pop as a participatory culture.

Post-Concert Musicking: Bootlegging, Radioing/Listening, and Reviewing

After concerts, fans cannot calm down after the exhilaration of enjoying all their activities before and during the concerts. Inspired by this feeling, the fans flock to the exit of the concert hall to see off their favorite musicians leaving the venue (figure 2.8).¹⁰¹

Whenever the musicians appear at the door, the fans cheer and even scream as if they are still inside the concert hall. Some brave fans try to send gifts to the musicians passing the fans. Others take photos of the musicians heading for their vans.



Figure 2.8. Big Bang fans waiting for the group members at the exit of the concert hall after the concert. © Q, used with permission.

The music lingers for a long time in fans' ears and minds after concerts. As lingo among K-pop fans, this state of strong resonances is termed "*conppong*," which combines

¹⁰¹ However, this behavior might not be tolerated within fandom as discussed in Chapter 1, because it could be similar to *sasaeng* (stalker fans) behaviors. For example, J(Y)J fandom does not allow the fans to wait for the group members at the exit after the concert, because the fandom defines the group members' privacy as all the moments they are off the stage.

concerts and *ppong* (Korean slang for methamphetamine). Injected with *conppong*, fans conduct a series of activities as post-concert musicking. Although fans are officially and legally prohibited from live recording, some dare to record the concert for later use during their post-concert musicking. Most of those who record live performances retain the audio or video recordings to listen to and watch privately. However, many fans share their videos with the public by editing and posting them to their social media profiles. Moreover, some fans circulate the bootleg record files to other fans through non-official online fan communities, such as *DC Inside* galleries (DC galls).

Fans in DC galls also share their playlists after concerts via online radio stations. The fans create playlists of the songs included in the setlist, so other fans, as if they had been in the auditorium, can listen to the songs collectively, simultaneously, and interactively. For example, a fan in *DC Inside* Dongryul Kim gallery posted an announcement of her radio show a week after Kim's concert on October 11, 2015 (I heard of this fan's gender from A2). Finding out about her posting, I decided to listen to this show, but to do so, I had to download an online radio application. Using a password announced by the disc jockey fan, other fans were able to access her Internet radio station. Through the radio, she shared her playlist encompassing the setlist and other songs (her actual voice was never heard throughout the show). The music used for the radio was ripped from Kim's CDs, which the DJ fan owned. However, she also played sound files of Kim's live performances or his talking on other radio shows, which she had recorded personally or collected from Audio On Demand. As several fans requested songs through threads in her post that announced the radio show, the DJ fan added those

songs to her playlist. Thus, her own musical taste was negotiated through collective, simultaneous, and interactive listening. Over one hundred fans listened to her radio show, which lasted over six hours. Listening to the radio via my iPhone, I nodded off to sleep and then woke up around 3 AM. The DJ fan was about to end her radio show, but more than one hundred fans were still connected, listening.

While fans' listening practices to prepare for their attendance at concerts as part of pre-concert musicking are carried out individually, the listening practices motivated by *conppong* in the stage of post-concert musicking are performed collectively. This feature of K-pop fans' listening practices not only confirms a contemporary "sound-consuming culture," as claimed by Michael Bull, but also contradicts this culture (2005: 347).

Focusing on iPod users' control of their everyday experiences of time and space through listening to personalized playlists, Bull suggests that a current "sound-consuming culture," mediated through new technologies, is characterized by listeners' individualization of "aural taste" and "space and time" (2005: 347, 348, and 351). As explored throughout this dissertation, many K-pop fans utilize their mobile devices to listen to music. These listening practices involve devotion of private time for musicking even in shared spaces. However, through post-concert musicking, fans also listen to music collectively, simultaneously, and interactively, music that is mediated online, even though they still use their personal devices. Thus, K-pop fans re-shape their aural taste, space, and time from personal and private to shared and public through their listening practices using individual digital gadgets.

By participating in such activities as bootlegging, radioing, and listening, fans review concerts. Through this review hour, fans get intoxicated with *conppong* more and more deeply. They cannot wait to go to concerts again in the near future and to prepare for their participation in future concerts. Fans' post-concert musicking then cycles back to pre-musicking.

Throughout these four sections, I have investigated the multiplicity of K-pop fans' activities as pre-concert musicking, concert musicking, and post-concert musicking. In the next section, I focus on concert musicking within fandoms to sketch how women construct K-pop soundscapes through their voices.

K-Pop Soundscapes Created by Women's Chatting, Roaring, Chanting, Singing, and Sighing Voices

To illustrate female fans' construction of K-pop soundscapes, I depict the sounds the women make through their musicking on the day of the concert. Also, I focus on showing scenes from the concerts held in the Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena.

Soon after arriving at the concert venue and parking my car near the concert hall, I hear the voices of young women or girls. I find them in the plaza in front of the concert venue. They talk excitedly about their favorite stars, fellow fans, daily lives, and miscellaneous topics endlessly. When there is an announcement for the concert at the venue, the young women and girls pause their chatting. Some of them croon to music played through amplifiers while walking around the concert venue.¹⁰² Others chortle

¹⁰² K-pop labels and concert agencies usually install amplifiers outside of the concert hall and play music before the concert. Also, some fans, such as *nanum* practitioners, play K-

about a funny conversation with their friends or about the ridiculous concert-related installations at the venue. They continue to laugh, taking pictures with the installations. Women in their thirties and forties (or even those over fifty) also seem excited about their attendance at the concert but speak in whispers. The place is filled with the festive sounds of music and boisterous women.

One time I hear high-pitched female screams nearer the concert venue. When I approach the sounds, I see angry teenage fangirls surrounding a bald, middle-aged man and complaining to him in loud and shrill voices (figure 2.9). A girl is yelling, “You did sell [tickets at exorbitant prices]!” The man is one of the scalpers prowling around the concert venue. There is a police substation across from the concert venue. Someone must have reported this situation to the police. A policeman is approaching the fangirls and the scalper. Another girl calls the police sharply, “Officer, look here!” Following her, other girls shriek in unison, “Here he is, here is a scalper!” “Officer!” Their hailing to the police sounds like a call-and-response and polyphony.

pop songs through their portable Bluetooth speakers around the concert venue in order to buoy up other fans awaiting their entrance to the concert (I will define and explore *nanum* in Chapter 4).



Figure 2.9. Fangirls surrounding a scalper and a police officer near the venue on the day of EXO's concert (March 19, 2016). Photo by the author.

As the concert begins and fans enter the auditorium, a hush settles over the now-empty area outside. Although the women's chattering and roaring are now gone, a drumbeat and a bass line are pounding out from the concert hall. Also, singing and screaming sounds are flowing from the hall. Several girls who are sitting or standing right in front of the entrance to the concert hall begin performing *ttechang* outside of the hall, attuning their voices to the music heard coming from the concert hall.

As we enter, the concert hall reverberates with the sounds of musicians' singing, instruments playing, and fans' cheering/chanting/singing. In the auditorium, the female voices are much more audible than the male voices, even if the number of men makes up almost half of the audience. Why do the women's voices sound louder? Because they chant, sing, and yell in a register above the men's? Or because are they more active in engaging in *ttechang* than men? I do not know the answer at this point, but highlight that the women's screaming, intoning, and singing voices fill and sonically characterize the

auditorium at all events. Additionally, while making sounds of acclaiming, chanting, and singing, the women simultaneously wave their light sticks (or glow sticks) rhythmically.¹⁰³ While the colors of both fans' light sticks and the lights installed on the stage form a spectacular scenery, the female voices, as part of the sonic components inside the concert hall, blend with the scenery. Thus, the women's whooping and *ttechang* (fan chanting and singing) create a soundscape in the concert hall in addition to the musicians' renditions of their songs.

When the musicians leave the stage and the stage lighting goes out during a curtain call, the auditorium echoes with women's sighing and chanting voices. The female fans sigh, saddened by the end of the concert, and chant slogans specific to the musicians or "Encore," waving their light sticks in time until the musicians come back to the stage (figure 2.10). If the fandom plans to conduct a *ttechang* event during a curtain call, the concert hall would resonate only with women's singing voices a cappella for minutes. Seeing the musicians' return to the stage, the fans yell out a cheer and then loudly perform *ttechang* for encores. After the concert completely ends, many fangirls

¹⁰³ In the majority of cases, fans voluntarily wave their light sticks in response to songs at concerts. However, in EXO's concerts in July 2016, and Sechskies's concerts in September 2016, the groups' labels manipulated the selection of colors and timing of lights from fans' light sticks. Thus, fans at those concerts were not allowed to decide how to use their own sticks during their *ttechang* or musicians' performances. When buying their sticks, the fans had to register their seat numbers in a database application at the sales counter. The director of the concert controlled the emission of colors and light from the fans' sticks to match them with the stage setting, the design of which varied depending on song moods. The concert director changed the colors of all the sticks in a batch and by remote control. Thus, audience members with their light sticks at the EXO and Sechskies concerts served as virtual tools for the perfect staging of the groups' performances.

crowd into the exit of the concert hall to observe K-pop musicians appearing from the exit. The girls squeal upon finding the musicians.



Figure 2.10. Shinhwa fans waving their light sticks and chanting “Shinhwa-san” (a slogan for the group) during a curtain call at the concert. While their orange sticks make the panorama of the auditorium look like the city nightscape, their chanting voices build a soundscape in the concert hall. Photo by the author.

Female K-pop fans’ voices reverberate both inside and outside of the concert hall. Women and girls create K-pop soundscapes by making use of their voices, by chatting, cheering, chanting, singing, sighing, and screaming, before, during, and after concerts.

Conclusion

Lisa Lewis portrays fans as “the most visible and identifiable of audiences” (1992: 1). Throughout this chapter, I described and discussed how female K-pop fans play the role of “the most visible and identifiable of audiences” through their multiple forms of musicking before/during/after concerts. I classified and labeled the musicking as three parts in a sequence: pre-concert musicking, concert musicking, and post-concert

musicking. In the first section, I explored the first phase of pre-concert musicking. Through this phase, fans make ticket reservations, discuss and listen to the tentative setlist, and croon songs as singing practice in preparation for their *ttechang* at the concert. In the second section, I examined the diversity of fans' pre-concert musicking activities on the day of the concert. To express their enthusiasm for, and excitement at, the concert, fans purchase various goods, including light sticks to wave to the music; reveal their fannishness by setting up multiple items, such as balloons, life size cutouts, and standing wreaths, at the concert venue; perform *nanum* (sharing and exchanging practices among fans); take photos; sing along to songs played through amplifiers installed outside of the concert hall; and dance to music while imitating the musicians' choreography.

The third section focused on *ttechang* as fans' concert musicking. In this section, I conceptualized *ttechang* as fan chanting and singing during musicians' live performances. Preceding the investigation of *ttechang*, I analyzed the musical structure of K-pop songs with an example of the K-pop boy band Infinite's "Bad," since this structural style enables audience members to participate in *ttechang*. Also, I outlined the history of *ttechang*, and explored the creation, circulation, and teaching and learning of *ttechang*. I then scrutinized fans' *ttechang* for Infinite's "Bad," and claimed that through the participation in *ttechang*, fans not only demonstrate their identification as part of fandom but also feel a sense of belonging to fandom. I noted that fans preform *ttechang* for songs of various styles or genres in addition to K-pop songs featuring hooks. Exemplifying this *ttechang* practice with fan singing at concerts by Dongryul Kim and Si Kyung Sung, I suggested that through *ttechang*, the musicians and audience members can

perform mutual improvisation and create a call-and-response form. I explored how K-pop fans produce their own singing session independent of musicians' performances (*ttechang* event) for a curtain call at concerts. I then pointed out that through this event, fans identify themselves as *ttechang* performers rather than as screamers. I also articulated that fans diversify their roles, ranging from listeners to singers, producers, and promoters. Further, I argued that concert musicking in K-pop fandom enables fans to merge their listenership and musicianship and to construct a new audienceship. Additionally, I claimed that fans' involvement in *ttechang* characterizes K-pop as participatory culture.

In the fourth section, I looked at fans' post-concert musicking. They review concerts by bootlegging recordings of the concerts, as well as by radioing and listening to songs played at the concerts. These activities are performed collectively, simultaneously, and interactively, rather than individually. In the fifth section, I delineated female fans' chatting, cheering, chanting, singing, sighing, and screaming voices, which fill in and characterize the concert venue. I claimed that such a variety of women's voices creates K-pop soundscapes.

As Thomas Turino suggests, "musical sound can be a special kind of communication and experience that draw upon and draw out different parts of the self" (2008: 1). Likewise, throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated that K-pop, as a specific musical sound, enables its fans to communicate with one another and to experience multiple roles, which are in opposition to their general (biased) representations as passive consumers, listeners, or audiences. As participants in K-pop

musicianship, female fans not only become part of the concert but also act as each other's "stars."

In the next chapter, I illuminate a wide range of cultures or subcultures expressed in Korean female K-pop fandom.

Intermission I: Disputes over *Ttechang* Inside and Outside of Fandom

There have been controversies over *ttechang* both within and outside of fandom. I look briefly at these disputes before proceeding to the next chapter.

Female fans of g.o.d., one of the first-generation idol boy bands, had a stormy debate on fan chanting in the early 2000s (Park 2003). Fans opposing fan chanting during the group's live performances argued that fan chanting, sounding like a noise from the auditorium, disturbed musicians' renditions as well as audience members' appreciation of the music (Ibid.). Also, these fans criticized fan chanting as an audio form of competition with other fandoms, demonstrating a sense of fan collectivism in the negative sense (Ibid.) On the other hand, other fans advocating fan chanting claimed that g.o.d. members liked it and expected to hear fans chanting slogans in response to the group's performances. Additionally, these fans asserted that by chanting the slogans, cheering for the group together with other fans, the fans were able to bond with one another and then felt their esprit de corps in fandom.

After the British rock band Coldplay held their first concert tour in Korea on April 15 and 16, 2017, Korean media outlets released some reviews criticizing Korean audience members' *ttechang* during the concert in addition to other reviews raving about the band's stellar performance. According to those critical reviews, many fans were unable to enjoy the concert due to other fans singing along to the band's repertoire even though the band's lead singer Chris Martin asked audience members to calm down for a quiet and soft song. However, several concert attendees left comments responding to the critical reviews, saying that they were not hampered by *ttechang* but pleased to

participate in the concert through fan singing. These attendees also maintained that if *ttechang* bothered some fans during the concert, the fans should simply listen to the band's CDs or MP3 files at home instead of attending the concert.

As specified in the previous chapter, I personally value fan chanting and fan singing during musicians' live performances because this fan practice creates a participatory culture for K-pop. Nonetheless, I have had an unpleasant experience with *ttechang* at a concert. When I attended the BTS concert on May 8, 2016, teenage fangirls surrounded my seat in the auditorium. These girls shrieked with excitement, chanted slogans cheering the group, and sang along to all the songs from the beginning to the end of the concert. I was not able to hear either the music or the group members talking between the songs. I don't even remember what I saw at the concert because the fangirls around me, standing up throughout the concert, blocked my views. I was not able to focus on BTS's performances due to the fangirls' singing, chanting, and screaming voices, which hemmed me in.

JYJ's female fans, reconfiguring their fandom after the group's withdrawal from TVQX, decided against singing along to JYJ's songs at concerts because these fans wanted the group members to focus on their music during live performances. Hearing of this regulation from U, I attended Junsu's solo concert for the first time on November 7, 2015 and expected that all his fans would not practice *ttechang* during his performances. Yet, when Junsu performed up-tempo dance songs, the fans chanted short words in the end of some phrases of the songs like echoes. Thus, the fans did not sing along to Junsu's singing parts of the songs or his slow tempo music, which require listeners' attention to

appreciate melody lines or his vocality, but chanted to perform fandom in the gaps between vocal phrases. On November 9, 2015, the second day of his solo concert, I also participated in this selective chanting along with other female fans, and shouted, “One shot!” in response to “Drink alcohol” (Junsu’s phrase). After this participation in fan chanting, I realized for the first time that I would be able to identify myself with Junsu fandom.

Through my own experiences, I understand both sides, opponents and supporters of *ttechang*, engaged in disputes over fan chanting and singing during K-pop live performances (and even non-K-pop concerts). However, I still take the side of the *ttechang* supporters. Without the sound of fans chanting slogans and singing along to songs, K-pop concerts would be dull and all too quiet.

Chapter 3. Fans as Producers, Consumers, and Philanthropists: The Diversification of Sub/Cultures Of/For/By Korean Female K-Pop Fans (I)

In this chapter and the one that follows, I chart fan cultures or subcultures which Korean female K-pop fans create and enjoy. Before delineating cultures and subcultures (henceforth termed sub/cultures) of, for, and by Korean women in K-pop fandom, it is necessary to revisit the concept of subculture to frame sub/cultures which are “both found and created” in Korean female K-pop fandom (Hills 2002: 81).

Since popular music studies emerged from concerns over how to study youth empirically (Frith and Goodwin 2000), the relationship between popular music and young people has been framed as youth “subcultures.” Among scholars involved in these discussions, British scholars first offered subcultural theories. Dick Hebdige argues that British young groups in the working class in the postwar UK shaped distinctive subcultures through music and specific styles of fashion and dress to demonstrate the groups’ social experiences, cultural activities, and personal identities including gender, ethnicity, age, and class (1979). Angela McRobbie points out that British girls have performed their own cultural activities to differentiate their culture from male-dominated subcultures (1991). Focusing on club culture as a hub of subcultures shaped by British youth in the working class, Sara Thornton identifies club cultures as “taste cultures” (1995). To describe authenticity, coolness, and distinction within those subcultures, Thornton suggests the term “subcultural capital,” arguing that it creates “an alternative hierarchy in which the axes of age, gender, sexuality and race are employed” (1995: 105). Examining British youth subcultures, Hebdige, McRobbie, and Thornton all presuppose

and elicit a conflict or a tension between different classes (and genders) in a society, which is generated from inequalities of political, social, and economic power.

These subcultural theories are not directly applicable to the sub/cultures of Korean female K-pop fandom. The established theories have tended to interpret subcultures as a form of resistance, with the premise that race, class, or gender are the bases for identity differences. This interpretation and premise cannot explain cultures or subcultures in Korean female K-pop fandom even though Korean girls and women create and enjoy their own fan sub/cultures to differentiate themselves from others. That is not only because Korea is a racially and ethnically homogenous society, but also because cultural tastes and activities in Korea have little to do with class formation and differentiation due to the development and dissemination of media (Yang 2009; Kang and Park 2013; Jeong, Lee, Kim, and Shin 2014).¹⁰⁴ How then can sub/cultures of, for, and by Korean female K-pop fans be framed? For this, I refer to a definition of “fan culture.”

Henry Jenkins defines fan culture as follows:

Fan culture finds that Utopian dimension within popular culture a site for constructing an alternative culture. Its society is responsive to the needs that draw its members to commercial entertainment, most especially the desire for affiliation, friendship, community (Jenkins 1992: 288).

We were drawn toward the idea of “fan culture” as operating in the shadows of, in response to, as well as an alternative to commercial culture. Fan culture was defined through the appropriation and transformation of

¹⁰⁴ However, according to research, the lower middle class in Korea preferred Korean popular music to other musical genres, such as Western classical music, jazz, or musical theaters (Choi and Lee 2012). This research also shows that specific Korean popular music genres, including rap, hip-hop, and dance music, on which K-pop’s musical style is based, are preferred by young people in their teens and twenties from a middle class (Ibid.).

materials borrowed from mass culture; it was the application of folk culture practices to mass culture content (Jenkins 2006a: 246).

As suggested above, fan culture created by Korean girls and women indicates a connection to commercial or mass culture in Korea. Yet, Korean female K-pop fans have shaped their cultures or subcultures in more diversified ways than Jenkin's suggestion of fan culture and subcultural theorizing by British scholars.¹⁰⁵

Nonetheless, I attempt to elucidate and interpret each case of the fan sub/cultures I experienced and observed during my field research in different ways from established

¹⁰⁵ It is impossible to generalize K-pop fan cultures because they are not only diversified but also ever-changing. For example, as a preliminary study for my dissertation project, I had researched global K-pop fans' online activities from 2012 through 2015. I noted that they had role-played as K-pop stars by fabricating their second (or third) IDs in Facebook. To act as K-pop stars, the fans had used photos drawn from the stars' social media profiles, and written posts in the combination language of English and romanized Korean. Also, these role-players had interacted with one another, forming their own communities. This subcultural fan practice, however, did not last for a long time, but I had to cease this research before I found out why they stopped. Korean female K-pop fans' subcultural activities were also short-lived. When I interviewed F2 and R in January and February 2016, I came to know K-pop idol group fans barter with each other, which was termed "star box" within fandom. To exchange fan-made goods, such as stickers, photo cards, and illustrations, the fans rented coin lockers at subway stations in Seoul. For instance, EXO fans rented one at Samseong Station; Shinee fans at Gangnam Station; BTS fans at Jamsil Station; and Infinite fans at Express Bus Terminal Station. They called those coin lockers the star box. Once a fan left her own item in the star box, the other fan visited there, got it from the box, and put another item she possessed in the box. These fans did not meet up with each other. Thus, without direct contact with one another, the fans bartered their goods. Sometimes they left snacks or drinks in the box instead of goods to show friendliness towards other fans using the star box. Also, putting a visitors' book in the locker, the fans exchanged greetings and communicated with one another. All information about the star boxes were announced and circulated only via Twitter. Fans who visited and used the star boxes mentioned the star box accounts in their tweets, including photos of items they exchanged through the box. However, the star boxes were discontinued in a matter of months. At this point, there are no longer any star boxes in subway stations in Seoul. Fan barter, which was done through coin lockers at subway station, thus became an ephemeral activity in K-pop fandom.

popular culture concepts of subculture or fan culture. I explain Korean female K-pop fans' cultures and subcultures, relating them to Korean popular culture at large or the mainstream culture of K-pop. I then argue that the multiplicity of sub/cultures of/for/by female fans not only characterizes K-pop fandom, but also demonstrates Korean women's agency. Additionally, I suggest how fan sub/cultures map fandom onto K-pop as an inclusive cultural phenomenon. In this chapter, I specifically focus on cultures or subcultures created by fans specializing in shooting photographs and videos of K-pop stars, producing and selling fan merchandise, creating fan art works, and practicing philanthropy.

Music through Viewfinders: Fans' Taking, Editing, and Sharing Photos/Videos of K-Pop Musicians

To document their favorite musicians' renditions or commemorate their attendance at concerts, audience members take photos or videos during live performances at popular music concerts unless the musicians or concert agencies do not permit the audiences to do so. As people have gotten access to cameras in their daily lives due to the development of mobile devices, the audience members' shooting at the concerts has become easier. Some audience members retain the photos and videos as their private collection to remember their attendance at the concert. Others share the photos and videos online through various social media websites. Likewise, many K-pop fans photograph and video their favorite stars playing music at the concert, using their phone cameras. Several fans immediately post the pictures and videos to their social media profiles to

display their participation in the concert or share the pictures and videos with other fans who are not at the concert.

In the K-pop scene, those fans who focus on taking photos or videos of the musicians at the concert are termed “*jjikdeok*.”¹⁰⁶ This term is a new compound word within fandom, which mixes “*jjikda*,” meaning shoot, and “*deok*,” meaning fans as an abbreviation for the fandom lingo *deokhu* (big or huge fans). The term *jjikdeok* is not limited to K-pop fans shooting at concerts, but encompasses those who are actively engaged in photographing and videoing K-pop stars outside of their concerts as well. To take photos and videos, *jjikdeok* thus go wherever the stars appear for both their musical and non-musical activities, including music festivals, television and radio music shows, autograph events, and the musicians’ arrival and departure at an airport. For instance, I participated in a Korean popular music festival held in Gapyeong in September 2015. As there was not any regulation prohibiting the audience from shooting at this outdoor festival, most audience members enjoyed taking photos and videos with their phone cameras or digital cameras during live performances. It was notable that some audience

¹⁰⁶ In her book *Fandomigeona Ppasunigeona: H.O.T.ihu Idolfandomui ABC* [Fandom or Ppasuni: The ABCs of Idol Fandom Since H.O.T.], Min-hui Lee classifies fans who focus on photography as “*daepo yeosin*,” which means a goddess (*yeosin* in Korean) of photography using a high-tech camera that looks like artillery (*daepo* in Korean) (I detail the usage of the term *daepo* in the context of K-pop fandom later in the chapter), and those who specialize in filming videos of K-pop stars as “*jjikdeok*” (2013). However, I do not separate such two types of fans because the fans, seeing their favorite stars in the flesh, shoot both photographs and videos. Moreover, I was never informed of the term *daepo yeosin* by my research participants during my fieldwork. Instead, they commonly used the words *jjikdeok* or *daepo* to describe fans concentrating on either photographing or videoing. Therefore, I term such fans as *jjikdeok* at large according to my participant observation.

members, attaching their cameras to tripods, shot deliberately throughout their favorite musicians' renditions. The fans took pictures and videos like professional photographers or cinematographers. I realized that they were a type of *jjikdeok*.

I was invited to an award ceremony for Asian celebrities in Seoul in March 2016. Since several K-pop stars appeared at the ceremony as winners and presenters, many fans congregated to see the stars at the ceremony, and I saw that some were holding large digital professional-level cameras, as well as small step stools. These fans were certainly *jjikdeok*. Interestingly, they took photos and videos with their heavy cameras, standing on the stools, instead of using a tripod (figure 3.1). Most *jjikdeok* use high-tech cameras, such as DSLR (Digital Single Lens Reflex), to take high-quality images, and utilize stools to secure a clear view for shooting (figure 3.2). The camera typically used by *jjikdeok* is nicknamed *daepo*, which means a cannon, because a zoom lens-installed camera resembles a cannon. *Jjikdeok* using the cameras that look like cannons are also called *daepo*. Most *daepo-jjikdeok* stand on stools or attach their *daepo*-cameras to tripods for visibility and manipulation of the *daepo*-camera. Some *daepo-jjikdeok* inconvenience other fans. For example, the *daepo-jjikdeok*, shooting with their DSLR, block other audience members' view or put the cameras on other fans' shoulders. When she attended a Sechskies mini concert at a ski resort in January 2017, F1 and her friend experienced discomfort due to *daepo-jjikdeok* obstructing their sight and putting the *daepo*-camera on the friend's shoulder. In this way, *jjikdeok*'s behavior may engender controversy within fandom while the products of their shooting – high-quality photos and videos – are preferred by many other fans.



Figure 3.1. *Jjikdeok* taking photos with DSLR. Photo by the author.



Figure 3.2. *Jjikdeok* standing on a stool among female fans awaiting a K-pop star's appearance at a parking lot after his musical. Photo by the author.

Although an aspect of *daepo-jjikdeok*'s activities is controversial, they play an important role in providing new content for fandom. For instance, a *jjikdeok* who was a fan of EXID, a K-pop girl group, filmed the group's live performance of their song "Up & Down" at a local festival, and posted the video to an Internet bulletin board as well as to YouTube in 2014. Before discussing how this video serves as new content for fandom,

I briefly talk about a term to define the video. As a type of fan video, the video of a live performance is termed “fancam” in the K-pop scene, meaning it is filmed by a fan with a camcorder, a digital camera (*daepo*), or a phone camera. While some fancams record footage of the concert, others show exclusive footage of live performances at various musical events other than the concert. Motivated by fans’ desire to know and possess all the performances excluded from the official music videos or television shows, audience members not only take videos at both the concert and other musical events, but also share their fancams with other fans by posting them to social media websites (In 2014).

The fancam of EXID’s performance of “Up & Down” at a local festival focused on Hany, a member of the group, and her dance movements rather than showing the whole scene of the group’s performance.¹⁰⁷ The fan followed Hany and zoomed in on her, filming in portrait mode. This form of fancam that spotlights one member of K-pop groups in portrait screen orientation is also termed “*sero*-cam,” a compound word of “*sero*,” which means vertical, and “cam,” an abbreviation for a camcorder or a camera. In the *sero*-cam of Hany at the live performance, her pretty face, butt dance, and twerking gripped viewers’ eyes. Also, infectious melodies of the song “Up & Down” played through the listeners’ charmed ears. This *sero*-cam (fancam) went viral in the fall of 2014, and then created a viral sensation in K-pop that year. As a matter of fact, EXID had been a little-known girl group before the fancam was filmed, circulated, and “liked.” The group’s label, as a small business, had been incompetent at promoting the group compared to the major K-pop labels that lead and control all the processes of the

¹⁰⁷ See this fancam at <https://youtu.be/cmKuGxb23z0>.

production and promotion of music and musicians. EXID had not been able to appear on television or radio broadcasting to showcase their music before the fancam went viral and won popularity among K-pop fans. However, the little-known group, plucked from obscurity, became popular through fancam; the ranking of the group's non-hit "Up & Down" skyrocketed on Korean popular music charts; and then the group members frequently appeared on television on both music and non-music programs.¹⁰⁸

The case of the EXID fancam demonstrates that under the top-down system in K-pop production and promotion, *jjikdeok* not only provide new content for fandom by shooting photographs and videos, but also construct a new K-pop scene by posting, distributing, and sharing content online. Thus, the fans carry out the bottom-up promotion of music and musicians as opposed to the label-dominated top-down method. Many K-pop musicians and their labels acknowledge *jjikdeok*'s role as bottom-up promoters as well as producers of high-quality video images of the musicians' live performances in fancams (Ibid.). Accordingly, some minor labels let the fans shoot during the performance and even purchase fancams to utilize them for the promotion of their unknown musicians (Ibid.). Additionally, fancams serve as a *ttechang* (fan chanting and singing in response to musicians' live performances) tutor. Before attending concerts, K-pop fans learn how to chant and sing along to repertoires during the musicians' renditions. For this learning practice, fans, listening to music repeatedly, acquaint themselves with a chanting guideline provided by a label prior to the concert, or follow

¹⁰⁸ EXID made their debut in 2012 even though all the group's original members were replaced by new members (current members).

other fans' rehearsal for chanting and singing on the day of the concert. Some fans, however, self-learn how to chant in response to K-pop songs through fancams uploaded to social media websites, such as YouTube. Since these fancams recorded musicians' live performances as well as audience members' chanting for the songs, fans can learn how to chant by themselves through viewing the fancam.

Most *jjikdeok* are experts at shooting K-pop stars and their musical performances, as well as at editing the photos or videos. Using Photoshop or other software or applications, they enhance the products of their shooting and put their names on the photos and videos to credit them. These edited products are shared through *jjikdeok*'s social media profiles, such as Twitter and Instagram.¹⁰⁹ The videos are mainly uploaded to and distributed through *jjikdeok*'s YouTube channels. In fact, this online posting practice is not specific to *jjikdeok*. Whoever shot musicians and their renditions could post the pictures or videos to social media websites. However, these postings typically look less sophisticated than *jjikdeok*'s postings because of less skillful editing. Thus, the unpolished photos or vides shared by common fans are not as popular as *jjikdeok*'s postings among K-pop fans seeking visual pleasure as well as aural satisfaction from their favorite musicians in performing fandom. Since K-pop music is produced and promoted to attract audiences both aurally and visually through stage performance and music videos, as explored in Chapter 1, most fans are indeed eager to download and view

¹⁰⁹ *Jjikdeok*'s social media profiles are slightly different from *deokgye*, the social media accounts created only for fandom that I explored in Chapter 1, because while *deokgye* covers photos or videos shot by fans as well as published by media, *jjikdeok*'s social media profiles only feature their own produced and edited content.

the musicians' images, including videos, through social media, as well as listen to the musical sound of K-pop songs. For instance, while I conducted interviews with them, F1, M, R, and C2 showed me how many photos of their favorite musicians were saved in their mobile phones, explaining their performance of fandom. They collected those pictures from famous *jjikdeok*'s social media profiles or unofficial online fan communities such as *DC Inside* galleries for K-pop stars. Although these fans told me how much they liked listening to K-pop music, their photo collection led me to slightly doubt whether they became fans because of the music or if they were really drawn to visual images of the musicians.

Their great dexterity in shooting and editing make *jjikdeok* popular among other fans. Famous *jjikdeok* have over ten thousand followers on SNS websites. The followers treat *jjikdeok* as stars. Liking photos or videos posted by *jjikdeok*, the follower fans express their acclaim for *jjikdeok* as they do for their favorite stars. Thus, as another type of fandom is constructed among K-pop fans, the popular *jjikdeok* achieve stardom.

Jjikdeok upload images and videos to social media websites, which automatically reduce the large files to a more manageable size, and in addition make it easy to promote them using hashtags or keywords through which the photos and videos are searchable and accessible to the site users. However, the original high quality of photos and videos taken and edited by *jjikdeok* is lowered when the content is posted to the social media websites. Accordingly, to share their photos and videos, some *jjikdeok* make their own websites to which they upload their images and videos. In the K-pop scene, these *jjikdeok*'s fan sites

or fan pages are termed “homes,” and the *jjikdeok* owning and managing these homes are nicknamed “*homma*,” an abbreviation for homepage webmasters.

In the next section, I examine these subcultural activities and the implications of these fan activities.

“Home” and “*Homma*,” Black Market and Cultural Producers in K-Pop Fandom

“Home,” a website featuring content about a star, which a fan autonomously creates and manages, is not an entirely new concept in current K-pop fandom. Its earlier form dates back to the 1990s. As described in Chapter 1, the 90’s popular music fans who used PC communication networks built their own communities online for fandom irrespective of the musicians’ official fan clubs established by their agencies. I understand these fan communities as an earlier type of home, because the communities were used for storing data about popular musicians just as homes are now. Before discussing *hommas*’ subcultural activities at their homes in the recent K-pop context, I outline a short history of websites created and managed by Korean popular music fans.

As a PC communication network user in the late 1990s through the mid-2000s, I remember how the online fan communities were constructed and utilized. Like recent portal sites or social media websites, PC communication network providers in Korea allowed users to build their own webpages as well as to access the message boards, online chat, and email services. As the message boards were categorized by subjects, users could choose the boards to write on based on their specific interests. In this way, a fan, using PC communication networks, could express her/his fannishness and perform

fandom by writing about her/his favorite Korean popular music and musicians on the message board. In reaction to this writing, other fans could write threads, send emails to the writer, or chat with each other through the network. Empathizing with one another, the fans requested the network provider to set up webpages specializing in their favorite pop stars within the network. Once these webpages were built, they functioned as fan communities in which the fans not only shared information about the stars with others but also stored various forms of data about the stars, such as articles, photos, or music files. Although the webpages were established by the network providers, the fans effectively managed the pages and membership. Fans who requested the establishment of the webpages and maintained the webpages were called sysops (system operators). The activities performed by the 90's sysops of popular music fans' webpages were almost the same as what current *hommas* do in that they utilized the webpages to reserve and circulate data about their favorite stars, and promoted the stars through the data in the webpages.

As worldwide web services advanced rapidly and the Internet became more easily available to common people in the late 1990s, the fans launched personal websites for fandom beyond the webpages built through PC communication networks. Thus, fan sites began to appear and develop in the late 1990s and early 2000s.¹¹⁰ Looking back on her performance of fandom in her autoethnographic research on fandom and stardom

¹¹⁰ As described in Chapter 1, Korean idol groups' labels established their official websites to provide information about the groups as well as online communities for fans at the same period of time.

focusing on g.o.d., Eun-kyeong Park elaborates on the functions and implications of g.o.d. fan sites in the early 2000s:

I doubt whether fans could be so deeply involved in g.o.d. without the Internet and (g.o.d.) fan sites... [Like other fans] I am informed about g.o.d. through one of (g.o.d.) fan sites rather than through newspapers, broadcasts, and the group's official website. The fan sites provide various types of information [about the group] en bloc... As of now, February 7, 2003, there [are] 228 fan sites listed on *Yahoo*, and 312 fan sites listed on *Daum* (Korean search and portal site)... Sidus, the g.o.d.'s label, created the group's official website, investing large amounts of capital as well as professional skills in establishing the website. However, fans prefer fan sites to the group's official website because it is updated too late, includes only a small amount of information, with just a few fans writing and reading posts [compared to the fan sites]... [Fans'] everyday sharing of information [about g.o.d. with other fans through fan sites], checking/posting the group's schedules [to fan sites], scanning/uploading photos of the group [to fan sites], recording television shows featuring the group, converting the recordings to files, and uploading the files [to fan sites] are [voluntarily] performed regardless of the fans' financial gain... [To maintain fan sites] the fans as web designers, visual designers, and video editors do their jobs for free... The fans as webmasters or administrators also manage fan sites for free, pitching in for operation expenses for the fan sites... These fan activities shape fan sites... Visiting fan sites to which diverse data about g.o.d., such as photos, concert reviews, and recordings of television and radio shows are uploaded by other fans, I rapidly became an enthusiastic fan of the group. Also, reading other fans' posts full of their fondness for the group, I was infected by their fannishness... Fan sites intensify the popularity of stars, by concentrating fans' emotions and data collected by the fans, as well as by enabling the fans to communicate with one another... Fan sites also inspire fans to recharge their fannishness through information or fans' posting about their favorite stars, even while the stars are temporarily dormant... Fan sites function as a space in which g.o.d. fans from all over the country and even all over the world can meet with one another easily and readily.

(Originally written in Korean and translated by the author) (2003: 130, 132-133, 135-136)

Also, Park points out that g.o.d. fans burnished the group members' images through their writings about the group at fan sites (2003: 136).

Fan sites in the early 2000s, as Park mentions, did not have a membership system, unlike webpages in a PC communication network service. However, in the mid-2000s, fan sites started requiring fans to sign up for access to data on the sites. Also, fan sites focused on individual members of idol groups were launched. The fan sites for the individual group members mostly ignored each other, even though the fan sites' focus or content sometimes overlapped. Nonetheless, these fan sites sometimes cooperated with one another to plan fan events through which fans gave costly presents to the stars or donated to charity under the names of the stars (M. Lee 2013). The more fans gathered from the fan sites to participate in the events, the more money was collected for the events (Ibid.). Fan sites thus came to accommodate fans' expenditures on fandom as well as becoming stewards for content on the stars and hubs for fannishness.

Since the early 2010s, the lingo "home" has been more commonly used than the term "fan site" among K-pop fans. Although there are many similarities between homes and fan sites, why do current K-pop fans prefer to use the word home? I suggest the reason relates to three differences between homes and fan sites. First, current homes specialize in sharing visual materials such as photos and videos of stars, while past fan sites in the 1990s and 2000s functioned as the versatile providers/archives of information, news, and data about the stars, as well as hosting fans' discussion boards and unofficial fan clubs. Second, current homes do not just collect money from fans for fandom activities. They also produce fan merchandise and sell them to the fans to fund-raise, so transactions operate in both directions. However, through past fan sites, fans only wired money to the site managers' bank accounts for fandom activities, which was a one-way

process. Lastly, current *hommas*' roles and status are different from webmasters of past fan sites, even though both the *hommas* and webmasters build and manage websites to share data with other fans. While past webmasters mainly served as administrators who maintained the fan sites through uploading information and data collected by themselves or other fans, current *hommas* not only create their own visual content by photographing, filming, and photoshopping to share it at homes, but also produce and sell various goods utilizing the content. Moreover, *hommas* take pictures of stars at almost every event in which the stars participate, and even at events held abroad. Thus, to play their role as K-pop star photographers, the *hommas* not only demonstrate their mobility, but must be informed about all events where the stars are present. The *hommas*' being "in the know" about the events indicates an association between the *hommas* and the stars' agencies. Indeed, many K-pop agencies provide some famous *hommas* with the stars' updated schedules and locations before, during, and after events, which are not common knowledge for most fans (Ibid.). Since fans acknowledge *hommas*' mobility, access to privileged information, and connection to stars' agencies, as well as their outstanding skill in shooting and editing stars' images, popular *hommas* are followed by numerous other fans and achieve celebrity and influencer status online in K-pop fandom.¹¹¹

I now turn to female K-pop fans' economic sub/culture created through homes, focusing on production and consumption activities by *hommas* and other fans.

¹¹¹ As the majority of K-pop boy bands' fans are female, most *hommas* in K-pop boy band fandoms are girls and women. Regardless, there are some male *hommas* more active than female *hommas* in K-pop girl group fandoms. However, the numbers of female *hommas* are more than male *hommas* at large.

As explored in Chapter 1, K-pop has developed through the top-down management of musicians and their fandom by the musicians' labels. This top-down management has been maximized as the labels, seeking profit, have produced and sold music- and musician-related items in addition to music. These items are generally called K-pop official goods. Official goods are mainly printed with either musicians' photos, "officially" taken and published by the musicians' labels, or with logos unique to the musicians, which are designed by the labels. K-pop labels produce and sell a wide range of these official goods, from light sticks (or glow sticks), which are used at concerts in response to music (I described the usage of light sticks at K-pop concerts in Chapter 2, and will talk more about K-pop fans' utilization of their light sticks at protests in Chapter 5), to clothes, jewelry, office and daily supplies, and food.¹¹² These goods are sold both online and offline. For offline sales, while many labels sell their official merchandise at concerts or other events, such as exhibitions of K-pop stars' photographs (I elaborated on fans' purchases of official goods at concerts in Chapter 2), a couple of big labels run their own stores within their headquarters buildings. For example, SM Entertainment manages the SUM, the SUM Market, and the SUM Café in their headquarters, SM Town and SM Communication Center.¹¹³ In the SUM, fans can purchase various official goods and

¹¹² SM Entertainment offers a variety of food named after SM's K-pop musicians and printed with their names and logos in collaboration with food companies. This food product can be purchased at stores in both SM Town and SM Communication Center in Seoul, Korea.

¹¹³ SM Entertainment's headquarters consists of four centers: SM Community Center, SM Studio Center, SM Celebrity Center, and SM Town. SM Studio Center and SM Celebrity centers are located in Cheongdam-dong, and SM Community Center and SM Town are located in Samseong-dong. Both Cheongdam-dong and Samseong-dong are neighborhoods of the Gangnam district (Gangnam-gu) in Seoul, Korea.

souvenirs that make use of images of K-pop stars attached to SM Entertainment. The SUM Market is a store where food and household items are sold. Produced in collaboration with manufacturers and retailers, these food products and items utilize the stars' names, logos, and images to transform into specialty products (figure 3.3). The SUM Café sells drinks and snacks, which are named after the stars (figure 3.4). Thus, visiting the SUM Market and the SUM Café, fans consume “edible” variants of official merchandise.



Figure 3.3. Sparkling water printed with EXO's logo (produced in collaboration with e-mart, a Korean retailer), which is sold at the SUM Market. Photo by the author.



Figure 3.4. Cold brews named after TVXQ and a cupcake named after Seulgi, a member of Red Velvet. Photo by the author.

As a way of performing fandom,¹¹⁴ fans not only spend money buying official goods both online and offline but also socialize with other fans at cafés in K-pop labels’ headquarters, enjoying drinks and snacks drawn from their favorite stars’ names and images. However, not all K-pop fans are satisfied with the label-dominated official merchandise. For instance, K, a fan of Shinhwa, revealed that she had not been able to carry an umbrella, an official good produced by the group’s label, Shinhwa Company, due to its showy orange color and design (I talked about logos and colors symbolizing as well as identifying K-pop groups and their fan clubs in Chapter 1), even though she had been willing to buy the umbrella to confirm and express her fannishness. Y complained about an official pictorial calendar using EXO members’ photos, which is made and sold by SM Entertainment. She said that the calendars, priced over \$30, were disappointing

¹¹⁴ Duffett, suggesting fandom as “an umbrella term” for various elements, points out that “consumption” is included in the elements (2013: 20).

because of the crudity of the photomontage effect through which EXO members' photos were superimposed on background pictures. Claiming that EXO's official calendars were never worth \$30, Y criticized the group's label for exploiting EXO fandom. Those fans who feel discontent about the label-oriented official merchandise turn their eyes to "*homma*"-created goods that are better-designed and printed with more natural pictures of K-pop stars taken and edited by skillful *hommas*. The fans then purchase these unofficial goods at "homes" to perform fandom through their possession of K-pop music- and musician-related items.

The sales items at homes are mainly photobooks, calendars, diaries, photo cards, and sticker photos that are based on pictures of K-pop stars, which *hommas* took and edited themselves. As mentioned above, these photos look more natural than the photos officially taken and published by the stars' labels. For the official photographs, the stars pose as the subjects in compliance with a professional photographer's direction. However, they do not need to position themselves as photographic models in front of *hommas* and other fans' clicking cameras, even if the stars are aware of the fans' shooting at both their musical and non-musical events. The fans can take spontaneous photos of the stars, who focus on their performances on the stage or casually pass by the fans outside of the concert halls, on the street, and at the airport. Using their *daepo* cameras (high-tech cameras looking like artillery, that is, *daepo* in Korean), *hommas* capture the stars' dynamic gestures at every moment, resulting in pictures depicting the naturalness of the stars' facial expressions and body motion rather than showing them as fixed images. Moreover, since *hommas*, as members of fandom, know very well what features

of the stars are most favored by their fans, the photos shot and edited by the *hommas* cater to fans' tastes in the stars' images.

A consumer preferring *homma*-created merchandise to official goods produced and sold by SM Entertainment, C2 has purchased photo books and calendars at a home specializing in D.O., her favorite member of EXO, although she has also been enrolled in the group's official fan club EXO-L. Describing herself as an enthusiast of D.O.'s handsome face (also known as *eolppa*, K-pop lingo), she explained that EXO's "official goods" photos never satisfied her aesthetic expectation. To content herself as an aesthete as well as to demonstrate her enthusiasm for D.O.'s good looks, C2 has not only collected thousands of photos of D.O. by downloading them to her smartphone and computer, but also has purchased photo books and calendars at a home. When I interviewed her, she brought a photo book, which she had bought from a *homma*, and showed it to me. The photo book included various pictures of D.O.'s performances at concerts and his appearance outside of the musical events. All the photos in the book looked more natural than other photos of D.O. released by SM Entertainment because as I described earlier, D.O. did not pose intentionally like a model when the *homma* took photos (figures 3.5 and 3.6). Also, the *homma*-produced photo book was printed on good paper so that the colors of the original photos were quite vivid. I wondered aloud what the price of the photo book was, and C2 said that it was about \$50 and more expensive than official photo items sold by the label. However, she claimed that the quality of the *homma*-created photo book was worth the expense involved.

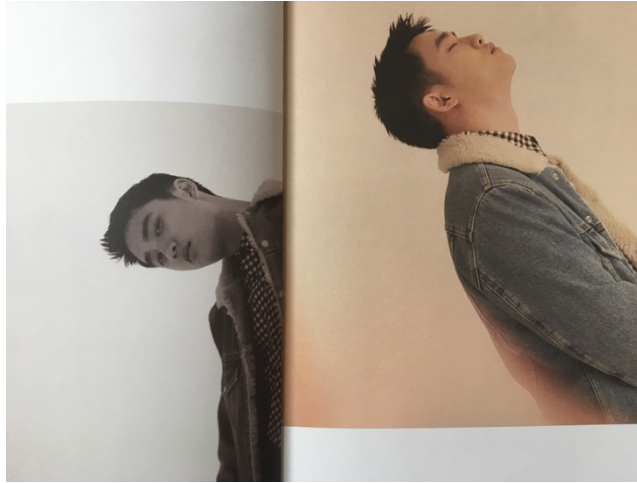


Figure 3.5. Official photos of D.O. included in EXO's album *For Life*. Photo by the author.

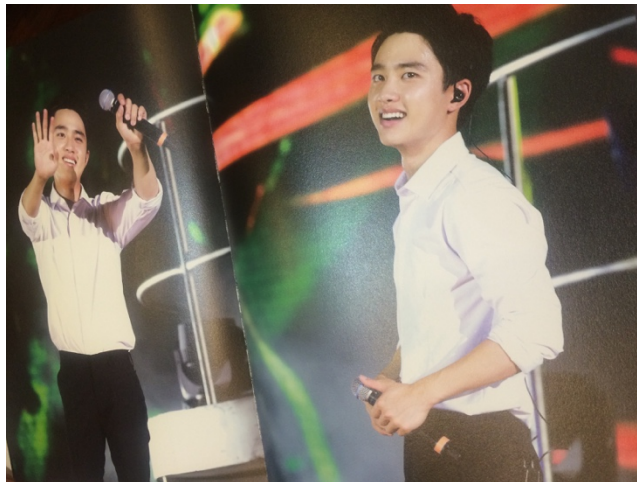


Figure 3.6. Photos of D.O. included in a *homma*-created photo book, which C2 owns. Photo by the author.

In addition to photo-based merchandise, *hommas* create stylized drawings of K-pop stars, which depict the persons as cute characters from cartoons or animation.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ The creation of the animation- or cartoon-styled characters of K-pop stars by *hommas* is along the same line as “*moe*” in Japanese pop subculture. I will elaborate on the term *moe* and its relation to K-pop fandom in the next chapter. Also, *hommas*' creative activities can be linked to the production of fan art. Indeed, several *hommas*, drawing the

These drawings are simply termed “characters” in Korean K-pop fandom. These cute K-pop characters are also commodified as the *hommas*, making use of the characters, create small secondary products to sell, such as stickers, key rings, refrigerator magnets, and stickers for electromagnetic interception (figure 3.7). These items are mostly under \$10 and so much cheaper than photo books or calendars. Acknowledging the relatively inexpensive price, many K-pop fans enjoy shopping at homes to get the small character goods created by *hommas*. However, since *hommas* produce a limited number of goods (around two hundred to five hundred products of each unique item), fans hurry to buy *homma*-created goods and even compete with other fans for the purchase (I will elaborate on this competitive fan practice in the next chapter). In recognition of other fans frequently visiting homes and purchasing *homma*-created goods, some *hommas* hand out free stickers, fans, cards, and banners (used in fan chanting at concerts), which are printed with K-pop star characters, on the day of concerts or other events to promote fandom as well as to pitch their homes.

animation-styled or cartoonish characters of K-pop stars, are recognized as fan art creators among other fans. I will detail fan art creators and their works in the next section.



Figure 3.7. *Homma*-created key ring based on XIA Junsu’s character, which I purchased for about \$7 inclusive of shipping at *Oh My Jun* (<http://ohmyjun.com>), one of the most popular homes specializing in XIA Junsu, a member of JYJ. This *homma* included stickers printed with XIA Junsu’s characters and a photo of him photographed and photoshopped by herself in a package along with the key ring as shown. Photo by the author.

Several participants in my research, including myself, have bought various *homma*-created goods to perform K-pop fandom. Accordingly, I easily learned about fans’ consumption practices via homes during my fieldwork. Also, through our purchase and use of the unofficial goods, I understood which items were produced and how the items were produced and sold. However, it was extremely difficult to get access to *hommas*, the actual producers of the goods, because they rarely revealed themselves except for when shooting photographs, and seldom met other fans in person. If the consumers wondered about products on sale, payment, or shipping of *homma*-created goods, the *hommas* only communicated with them online – for instance, I used Direct Message on Twitter to ask about shipping when placing an order with a *homma* for a XIA Junsu character key ring. I was fortunate that a producer of digital multimedia content I

had interviewed introduced me to a former *homma*, and I was then able to conduct an email interview with her.

I2 used to be a *homma* but no longer operates her home (she should be anonymized as alphabet “I” but I give her “I2” instead of I to avoid confusion between her and me). Her home specialized in a member of a K-pop boy band (she did not want me to specify in this dissertation the group and member she focused on). She divides *hommas* into two types: *sasaeng-hommas* shooting photos of the stars’ private lives and *hommas* concentrating on the stars’ official schedules. She identified herself as the latter, mainly attending television live music shows, to take photos of the star. I2 discussed why she had started attending the music shows, as well as other aspects of her activities as a *homma*:

I2: I began to participate in the music shows with a friend of mine because I wished to see my favorite K-pop star live. Attending the shows, I came across several *hommas* there and then got to be chums with them. We went to the shows together. Sometimes I helped my *homma* friends shoot photos of their favorite members at the shows. Thus, I served as a “photography-shuttle” several times. Doing it, I wanted to photograph my favorite member’s handsome face so that I started my home and became a *homma*. Oh, let me define photography-shuttle (K-pop lingo). It means [cooperation between *hommas* in shooting in substitution for each other]. Running in couples at the music shows, one [*homma*] covers for the other [*homma*] in a different photographic spot. Or while one takes pictures, the other films video. Or [when one is not available], the other attends concerts or events instead [to photograph the stars there]. If one once did “photography-shuttle” for another, then the next time round that person would photograph the first person’s favorite stars.
(Email interview, January 21, 2017)

While a couple of those music shows are aired on weekend afternoons when fans are available for their participation in the shows, many shows are broadcast weekday afternoons or evenings when it is difficult for student fans to attend the shows due to their

school and study schedules. As a twenty-seven-year-old woman, I2 could comfortably schedule her attendance at television live music shows to photograph and film K-pop stars. For shooting at the shows, she rented a DSLR and other shooting equipment from camera rental companies. According to I2, some experienced *hommas* buy cameras, lenses, and other gear to shoot with themselves. These *hommas* raise funds to purchase shooting equipment through the production and sale of fan merchandise, such as photo books, stickers, calendars, and diaries, which make use of photos taken and edited by the *hommas*. However, the *hommas* usually spend the money earned from the sale of the fan goods on purchasing and giving presents to the stars. In K-pop fandom, this practice of fans' gift-giving to the stars is also termed "*jogong*," which originally meant tribute in Korean (I elaborate on *jogong* in a later section). Since they are aware that their consumption of *homma*-made goods supports fan tributes, other fans are more willing to purchase the goods at homes. Thus, to perform fandom through *jogong*, *hommas* and other fans participate in economic practices of producing/selling/purchasing/consuming fan merchandise. Furthermore, many K-pop stars, given clothes or accessories as *jogong* by *hommas*, put on the *jogong* items for their daywear at airports, which is commonly spotlighted through media outlets, to confirm their acceptance of *jogong* and to indirectly express their appreciation of the fan tributes. Recognizing their *jogong* from photos of the stars' wearing the *jogong* items in news media, the fans are rewarded and encouraged to continue performing fandom through their economic activities at homes.

It is notable that fans produce, sell, purchase, and consume their own goods through homes to resolve their dissatisfaction with official K-pop merchandise produced

and sold by K-pop labels. As I illustrated earlier, drawing upon the cases of K (a member of Shinhwa fandom) and C2 (a member of EXO fandom), many fans are discontented with the official merchandise due to its shoddiness, even though they manifest their fannishness through their consumption of the official goods. Some of these fans, becoming *hommas*, produce and sell their own items that are of a superior design to the official goods. Other fans, pleased by these more polished *homma*-made goods, buy the fan merchandise at homes and own it as part of fandom. The *homma*-created goods thus replace the label-produced official goods and function as unofficial merchandise. These economic practices relating to fan merchandise are carried out alongside the mainstream K-pop industry, which is characterized by the label-dominated, top-down economy.

Looking at the purpose and roles of homes, *hommas*, and *homma*-made goods in relation to the production and consumption of official K-pop merchandise, I suggest that the fans build a “black market,” an alternative market outside of officially certified producers or sellers in the industry. In this fan market, *homma* fans not only make an economic profit in return for the performance of fandom through creating and selling fan merchandise, but also reinvest their earnings in fandom by performing *jogong* (fan tributes). Through their economic practices of purchasing and consuming *homma*-created goods, other fans dynamize and maintain the black market within fandom. The consumer fans’ expenditures on fan merchandise through the fan market is not merely to satisfy their desire to possess K-pop-related items, but also to demonstrate their investment in fandom. Thus, in the black market along the margins of the label-oriented and profit-driven market in the K-pop industry, fans expand their roles in fandom beyond pop music

consumers or collectors to become creators, producers, sellers, supporters, and investors. Fan practices based on these multiple roles in the black market form an economically subcultural fandom. Further, this economic subculture within fandom contrasts with the major scene of the K-pop industry in which fans' roles are merely limited as consumers.

However, not all *hommas* engage in the production and sale of fan merchandise within the black market. I2 is one such *homma* who does not produce or sell her own goods.

I2: I did not create or sell fan goods through my home. Instead, I watched the process of my fellow *hommas*' production and sale of their goods, or helped them to do that...I took at least hundreds and up to thousands of photos of the stars at a single event I attended for shooting. Among these pictures, I chose ones used for [my fellow *hommas*'] goods. Separating the photos [given to my fellow *hommas*] from all I photographed, I selected nice ones and edited them. Since photos taken at an event happening in the evening showed excessive image noise, I removed noise in the photos, and then enhanced color. Also, I slightly photoshopped faces [of the K-pop group I follow] in accordance with each member's appearance [facial or bodily] features.

(Email interview, January 21, 2017)

She looked back on her activities as a *homma*:

I2: When other fans following my home left comments or mentions saying that they were really enjoying photos at my home, I was proud of myself, and feeling that I would take better pictures...While *hommas* producing and selling fan goods earned money from their homes, I rather spent money on buying tickets to K-pop events where I shot photographs, since I didn't sell fan merchandise. Moreover, I was so exhausted because I followed many events for shooting. However, other fans [who didn't know about how hard I worked to take photos at events] urged me to release and post the photos more quickly. These fans upset me. Or when I didn't get good photos even though I worked very hard, I felt distressed. Nevertheless, when I heard that my home seemed very attached [and devoted] to the star [I followed], I was happy.

(Email interview, January 21, 2017)

Although she was not a merchandiser *homma*, I2's shooting practice and attitude for her own home imply that she creates items not as commercial commodities but as a form of cultural value. Through these items, fans can re/discover how they feel about or see their favorite stars, as well as how fans demonstrate their fannishness. Building on the understanding of K-pop as an inclusive cultural phenomenon (Shin 2005a), I propose *hommas* as inclusive cultural producers embracing photographers, editors, webmasters, sellers, supporters, and investors.

Up to this point, I have dwelled at length on homes and *hommas* in K-pop fandom. These lengthy explanations are necessary because this fandom scene of home and *hommas* is associated with other fan sub/cultures. In the next section, I will examine fan art promoted and circulated online, as well as fan art creators and their professionalism.

“*Geumsonisida*:” Fan Art, Aestheticism, and Professionalism in K-Pop Fandom

As social network services have become important channels of the construction and performance of fandom, fans upload and search online for a variety of information or content regarding the stars, specifically by using hashtags. I look up photos or videos of my favorite K-pop musicians' live performances through a hashtag archive containing the musicians' names or their concerts on Instagram, when I did not attend the concerts. Finding and following the photos and videos collected under the hashtags, I catch up on the scenes and vibes of the renditions I missed, as if I was participating in the concerts. In addition to these photos and videos, the hashtags also lead me to see other forms of

content related to the stars, such as drawings, paintings or illustrations created and shared by other fans. Thus, fan art works are distributed and promoted under hashtags through SNS. In Korean K-pop fandom, one can find that popular fan art works of high quality accompany an idiomatic expression as a hashtag along with the stars' names or the term fan art – “*geumson*” (for example, “#IU #geumson #fanart”). This word, *geumson*, is a Korean combination of the words *geum* meaning gold, and *son* meaning hands. This expression was coined by an unknown fan to describe and praise fan art creators' artistry, likening their artistic skill to gold. Other fans and even the stars appreciate fan art works with comments including the term *geumson* – “*geumsonisida*.”¹¹⁶ Like other idioms from K-pop fandom such as “*kkotgil* (flowery way),” *geumson* has become a colloquialism commonly used by the public in Korea to describe deft fingers.

I now explore three cases of *geumsons* and their works in K-pop fandom. The first is E2, a fan of K-pop boy band Shinhwa who is in her twenties. Having majored in Western painting for her bachelor and master's degrees at a top College of Fine Arts in Seoul, Korea, she is working as a professional artist. I heard of her fame in fan art from K, another member of Shinhwa fandom. K said that E2 is the most popular and famous fan art creator among Shinhwa fans. Before meeting E2, I searched for her Facebook page that K had told me about. Through the page, E2 has shared photos of her sketches and paintings that portray members of Shinhwa (figure 3.8). She also announced exhibitions of her works that feature the group members. However, she did not label

¹¹⁶ In the exclamatory phrase “*geumsonisida*,” “*isida*” is an honorific expression of the verb to be in Korean.

these works as fan art in her Facebook page, even as her works are recognized and circulated as fan art among other Shinhwa fans. According to her artist notes posted to the page, for example, she titled the collection of Shinhwa paintings displayed at her college's graduation exhibition, "Human Doll." In those notes, she never identified herself as a member of fandom or mentioned Shinhwa, although all the paintings depicted the group members. However, in other Facebook posts, she sometimes adds captions with the group's name, the group members' names, her congratulations on the group's album releases, and her encouragement to other fans. Thus, through her works, E2 expresses her identity as both an artist and a fan.



Figure 3.8. Shinhwa member Jun Jin's portrait entitled *Fake Love* and created by E2 in 2014. © E2, used with permission.

Intrigued by her works portraying but not explicitly naming Shinhwa, I wondered why and how she started these paintings. She first recounted how she became a fan:

E2: I came to like Shinhwa in 2011. The reason I became a fan was related to my work. Four years ago, I had a hard time, so I stayed indoors for six months because I had trouble in meeting other people. Only sitting

in front of TV at home, I happened to watch *Shinhwa Show*.¹¹⁷ While I did not talk with [feel interested in] anybody, I had fun watching the show. I continued to watch it and started getting interested in Shinhwa. I then became a fan of the group.

(In-person interview, December 19, 2015)

As a member of fandom, she listened to the group's music and attended the group's concerts after becoming a fan. She then drew fandom into her painting work.

E2: [After becoming a fan] I started my painting motivated by Shinhwa in 2013. The main theme of my works has been human relationships. [As I said] I became a fan when I confined myself at home because I was hurt in a relationship. I had a lot on my mind about whether relationships can last. I thought that it would be impossible to be in a relationship forever. Meanwhile, I happened to watch *Shinhwa Show* [and got to know the group]. Shinhwa has been a long-lived [K-pop idol] group. I became convinced that the relationship [among the group members] would survive... [Thanks to the group's history] I believed that there could be an everlasting relationship, and then I began creating paintings featuring Shinhwa members [in a long friendship].

(In-person interview, December 19, 2015)

Shinhwa, as E2 acknowledges, is the longest-lived boy band in the K-pop scene. The group has lasted in their musical career since 1998, while other 90's idol groups, which had debuted and worked along with Shinhwa, disbanded (or recently reunited years after their disbandment). It is notable that E2's fan art continues to reflect the central theme in her earlier works – human relationships – as well as demonstrates her fannishness. Also, she has mended her broken heart through creating Shinhwa paintings.

E2: Thinking of an everlasting relationship, I was figuring out how to heal scars gotten through human relationships. For this, I describe quarrels between people in a hilarious way like a pillow fight during which all [Shinhwa members] are laughing in my painting. While smiling at each

¹¹⁷ *Shinhwa Show* or *Shinhwa Broadcast* is a television program aired on JTBC (a nationwide general cablecast company) from March 2012 to January 2014. As the show title suggested, Shinhwa members were featured in the show in a variety of activities, such as ballet, sports, cooking, and making speeches.

other, people in relationships compete and offend each other's mind in actual life. Their smiles thus are not real. I wanted to depict this relationship humorously [through Shinhwa paintings]... I frequently listen to Korean popular songs in addition to Shinhwa music. You know these songs are mostly about relationships – loving, longing, and hating. These emotions described in popular song lyrics inspire and motivate me to produce [Shinhwa] paintings. I try to visualize the emotions in different colors [through Shinhwa paintings].

(In-person interview, December 19, 2015)

As a professional artist, E2 held group expositions with her colleagues at art galleries in the end of July 2015. For these shows, she exhibited Shinhwa paintings. Although she did not usually communicate with other fans offline, she met up with other members of Shinhwa fandom at the exhibitions. She then realized that other fans, acknowledging her works as fan art, admired her. At the galleries, the fans addressed her and praised her paintings. However, no one in fandom has yet purchased her Shinhwa paintings. She spoke her mind on the production of fan art as commercial goods:

E2: I have not made money with Shinhwa paintings, so I must do other work [to earn money]. I teach students [at an art institute]. Sometimes, I am commissioned to paint murals. Oh, I was commissioned to draw the opening credit sequence for a TV drama several days ago.

(In-person interview, December 19, 2015)

Even though she had not profited from fan art, E2 continues to create Shinhwa paintings, on which she spends ten hours a day for three and half weeks, because she knows that other fans find pleasure in appreciating her paintings as a way of performing fandom. She also has presented her works to the group members via the group's manager, even though the members have not publicly or personally confirmed their acceptance of her fan art works. However, she found out that the group members received and even prized her paintings as gifts.

E2: To send my paintings to Shinhwa members, I reached out to and met with the group's manager. As he approved my request, I passed on the paintings to him when the group appeared in a television music show. However, I felt uneasy because I couldn't know if the paintings would be really delivered to the members... Well, when Dongwan (a member of Shinhwa) starred in a reality show and his house appeared on the show, I happened to see my painting displayed as an item on his bookshelf in the living room. Watching that scene, I yelled out in joy... I was happy and appreciating him taking care of my paintings at his home because I thought that the stars, receiving gifts from their fans, would leave them packed or lying around.
(In-person interview, December 19, 2015)

Her feeling of being rewarded by the star as well as by other fans, I suggest, stimulates her to continue making fan art although the Shinhwa paintings do not profit E2.

While E2 does not gain money with fan art, W makes a profit by commercializing her fan art works. For example, I bought a mug making use of W's drawing of Jong Shin Yoon through an online fan community in March 2014 (figure 3.9). Since 2014, W has shared her cartoonish drawings of Yoon through a gallery for Yoon in *DC Inside*. Responding to other fans' preference for her drawings to be printed on goods, such as mugs and scratch paper, she has also sold these printed goods through the DC gallery. In May 2015, I contacted W, a member of Jong Shin Yoon fandom, to ask her permission to use images of her fan art works in my dissertation prospectus presentation. She permitted me to do so and also agreed to be a participant in my research. My first interview with her was conducted on the first day of Yoon's "lyricist" concerts held on August 29 and 30 2015. Meeting at the venue, we spoke with each other about our mutual fandom before entering the concert hall. As luck would have it, we sat next to each other in the auditorium. I was able to converse with her about the concert and observe her reactions to Yoon's performance.



Figure 3.9. Mug printed with W's drawing of Jong Shin Yoon's "Just Piano" concert, which was sold through Yoon's gallery in *DC Inside* (an online fan community). Photo by the author.

W has not restricted her creation of Jong Shin Yoon drawings to two-dimensional works to be posted online, but has printed these drawings on three-dimensional goods including calendars, mugs, and scratch paper. She then has produced and sold these goods to other fans through an online fan community. Also promoting her works on her Instagram account, she has registered in an online market as an individual seller of fan art works. Thus, W's fan art, which fans can put to practical use, incorporates practicality as well as artistic value. As both a consumer and a follower of her "practical" fan art works, I was curious about her occupation as well as her motivation to produce fan art. When I interviewed W, she was in her twenties and working as a freelancer designer, working for her former advisor at their font design company (she turned thirty in 2017). Like E2, W started producing fan art in connection with her educational background and specialty in design.

W: [Majoring in visual design at a college], I had to create a 10-year timeline as a required assignment in a course I took. Any topic was OK for the timeline – TV drama trends for 10 years, for example. I had to visualize such a 10-year timeline for the graduation exhibition. As I enjoyed listening to Korean popular music, I thought I would make a timeline of top music on the Korean pop charts for 10 years. However, the teacher told me that the chart rankings might be arbitrary and may not differ much from the most popular tracks in a Karaoke songbook. So since I was listening to Jong Shin Yoon’s music most back then, I decided to create a 10-year timeline of his songs. Also, [his music would be appropriate for the assignment because] he has continued his musical activities for 10 years. I collected all the lyrics of Yoon’s songs in his 1st album (released in 1990) through 11th album (released in 2008), and searched for these songs’ numbers in Karaoke songbooks...¹¹⁸ The timeline I created with the songs was in the shape of an elongated rectangle. I put the songs’ numbers in Karaoke songbooks along with the song titles, and then wrote the songs’ highlights, that is, verses in the timeline... Working on it, I discovered a lot of Yoon’s songs I had not known before... As I kept doing this [the timeline] during the semester, my colleagues called me a Jong Shin Yoon *deokhu* (I defined the term *deokhu* in Chapter 1)... After my graduation show, I wanted to give the timeline to Yoon, thanking him for his music [that inspired me to create my graduation work]. Fortunately, a friend of mine was working as a cover designer of Yoon’s *Monthly Project* (also mentioned in Chapter 1)... Actually, I already knew she was working with Yoon, but I had never talked to her about him and his music since I had not been a big fan before. Seeing my graduation work [regarding Yoon], she asked me what was happening to me, and suggested I present the timeline to him with her when he held an autograph event at the IFC Mall [in Seoul on January 5, 2014]. [She accompanied me to the event and] I gave the timeline to him at the event. Since it was sized 5.2 ft. in width, I rolled it up, put it in a container, and then presented it to him... After the graduation work, I continued to listen to his *Monthly Project*. I really love the lyrics of his songs... After attending his “Just Piano” concerts (held on February 28 and March 1, 2014 in collaboration with Korean jazz pianists Gwang-min Kim or Kwang-Min Kim and Yun-seong Cho or Yoonseung Cho), I decided to create Jong Shin Yoon drawings [as fan art] in earnest. (In-person interview, August 29, 2015)

I asked her why she creates this fan art:

¹¹⁸ There are two versions of Karaoke songbooks available in Korea.

W: ... Because other K-pop singers have huge fandoms [Yoon has a small-sized fandom compared to young K-pop singers].

Me: I agree. Fan art works are commonly created in other fandoms.

W: It's said that a Shinee fangirl photographing the group (*jjikdeok*) got accepted to a college with her portfolio of the group's photos she took [with her *daepo* camera] because her skill in photography was excellent... However, general people see Jong Shin Yoon as a ridiculous figure or image [so that fan art for him has not been made in fandom], even though his album covers for *Monthly Project* have been drawn in a project directed by Kanghun Lee (a professional illustrator). Creating fan art, I sometimes drew images inspired by *Monthly Project* songs. It was not for money but for my pleasure... Anyway, monthly songs released through the project influence me for good and inspire me [to create fan art every month]... I thought the production of goods for Yoon would be nice but [he and his label] did not produce any items... I began making various goods I wanted because I majored in design.
(In-person interview, August 29, 2015)

W has produced fan merchandise using her drawings since Yoon's label has not manufactured any official goods for fans. At the end of December 2015, following the production of a 2016 calendar printed with her drawings inspired by *Monthly Project*, W held a private exhibition of fan art at a café in Seoul. She displayed the full-sized copies of the drawings included in the calendar (figure 3.10). Additionally, she sold both the calendar and copies of her drawings to other fans at the exhibition, while the calendar was also sold online. Several fans, including myself, visited her exposition and purchased the calendar on the spot.



Figure 3.10. W's drawings inspired by Jong Shin Yoon's music at a private exhibition of fan art. Photo by the author.

As her practice of *jogong* (fans' gift-giving to the stars, described in the next section), W mailed the calendar and a copy of her drawing to Jong Shin Yoon. Before opening the exhibition and sending the calendar and drawing to him, she attended his year-end concert in early December 2015, and presented a temporary binding of the calendar to him after the concert. Thanks to her friend working at Yoon's label, W was able to go backstage and present a temporary binding of the calendar to him after the concert. She posted a photo taken with him to her Instagram account where she also shared her fan art works. Since many other fans followed her to see Jong Shin Yoon drawings she created and shared, they looked at her photo with Yoon and became aware that W had become acquainted with Yoon, and her status as a fan art creator had given her greater access to the star than other fans had. Furthermore, like other fans, Yoon followed her on Instagram. He liked her photos of fan art, wrote comments on the photos, and re-posted them to his account with a hashtag including W's name.

Due to this relationship between W and Yoon, which was forged through fan art, other fans, envious of her, acknowledged and labeled her as *seongdeok* (I already defined *seongdeok* in the context of K-pop fandom in Chapter 1). W's fan practice as a *seongdeok* went beyond the star's recognition of her fan art works via SNS. In March 2015, her drawing of "Birdman," a song for the February 2015 *Monthly Project*, was presented among a selection of listeners' reactions to the project music through its mobile application.¹¹⁹ Additionally, W was highlighted as a promising artist in the *Monthly Project* application in February 2016 so that her fan art works were presented through the application, and an exhibition of her works were presented at Café LOB (owned by Yoon) for a month.¹²⁰ Thus, W's activities as a fan art creator expands the concept of

¹¹⁹ Jong Shin Yoon has released his songs for *Monthly Project* through an application for mobile devices since September 2012 (the project started in March 2010). This application, as a form of a magazine, consists of various sections of content, such as artists' works and book/film reviews, in addition to liner notes for monthly songs as well as a YouTube link to music. The application also included listeners' reactions to monthly songs from August 2014 through December 2015, by selecting and presenting the fans' song covers, photos, paintings, drawings, or illustrations in the section titled "Monthly Together."

¹²⁰ For digital album covers of the 2013 *Monthly Project*, Yoon recruited twelve artists via Kanghun Lee, the art director of the *Monthly Project* application. These artists portrayed him in various styles. These portraits were used as the album covers of the project. He not only introduced the artists' pieces through the application, but also exhibited the pieces for a month at Café LOB, which he owns and his family manages. In 2014, he did not work with artists for the album covers of *Monthly Project*, but introduced new artists every month through the section titled "Café LOB Gallery" in the application, and displayed their works at Café LOB. For the album covers of the 2015 *Monthly Project*, Yoon hired six artists and one photographer as staff. These staff members and their talks with Yoon were featured monthly as a section in the application along with their works. In addition, other young and new artists were introduced in the "Café LOB Gallery" section from January 2015 to May 2017 (this section was skipped in June 2016). These artists' pieces were displayed both online and offline through the *Monthly Project* application as well as at Café LOB.

seongdeok from a fan successfully making a close personal relationship with the star, to a fan who demonstrates an achievement in one's profession through the performance of fandom.

Whereas E2 and W became fans of the stars while practicing their professions, V found and developed her talent as an artist during the performance of fandom. A soon-to-be-freshman as a design major at a college, she recounted how she became a fan of IU, started creating fan art, and then decided to major in art:

V: I have liked IU since I was twelve years old [in 2009] (V was nineteen years old upon my interview with her, and she turned twenty in 2017)... I saw her for the first time when she sang "Lost Child" [on a television music show, making her debut performance]¹²¹... For me, it was amazing that IU's vocality sounded mature while she was a sixteen-year-old. I downloaded and listened to her other songs. I continued to like her for her song "Boo" (a song included in IU's first full album entitled *Growing Up*) [in April 2009]. When she released "Marshmallow" [in November 2009], I happened to feel she's so adorable... I continued to like her and purchased her album as she released "Good Day" (a song included in IU's third mini-album entitled *Real*) [in December 2010]. I began *deokjil* (performance of fandom) in earnest from then. I did *ipdeok*, that is, became a fan of IU for "Marshmallow" after I had liked her from her debut. I then became a perfect *deokhu* (big fan) for "Every End of the Day" (a song included in IU's single *Spring of a Twenty Year Old*) [in May 2012]... Since then, I have searched for all [the information about her], downloaded all [her songs], and bought several copies of her albums... I joined IU's online fan club back then... I got formal art education from my last year of high school [in 2015]... I started creating fan art [for IU] in my last year of middle school [in 2012]... Before then from a child, I had made drawings as a hobby... When IU released "Every End of the Day" in my last year of middle school, I felt she was awfully pretty... I drew her [like an animation character] but I didn't like this drawing. I got upset with the drawing that didn't represent [IU's] cuteness. So, I changed my style of drawing to realistic pictures... I continued to practice IU drawings. After joining the fan club, I posted [my fan art works] there... As other fans

¹²¹ IU released this song included in her first mini album titled *Lost and Found* in September 2008. Although she debuted with that album release in 2008, her stage debut on TV was made in January 2009.

praised my IU drawings, I was very happy [to hear their compliments]... After that, I kept practicing IU drawings in my last year of middle school... From my first year of high school, I thought that I would major in art [at a college]. Strictly speaking, I started art in my first year of high school [in 2013] but I went to an art institute [to prep a college entrance exam] in my last year of high school [in 2015]... In a way, I decided to major in art by virtue of my working on IU fan art. (In-person interview, February 15, 2016)

In response to other fans' interest in and compliments on her fan art works, V has allowed the fans to re-share or re-post her drawings (figure 3.11). She also gave other fans permission to make use of her IU drawings for a *ttechang* (fan singing) event at IU's concert (I explored the concept of *ttechang* in Chapter 2). To be specific, IU held concerts in Seoul on November 21 and 22, 2015. On the second day of the concerts, IU's fans performed a special session during the concert where fans, waiting for a curtain call, together sang IU's song a cappella rather than shouting "encore!" when IU left the stage with the completion of her repertoire. Flyers instructing how to carry out this session were made and distributed to fans before the concert. V's IU drawing was printed on those flyers (figure 3.12). Another fan art work was printed on stickers which were also given to fans as free items within a package of the flyers (figure 3.12). V was glad that she was given a credit for her fan art works utilized in the stickers and the flyers instructing the fan singing event at the concert. Due to the credit on the flyers, she was a "named" fan in fandom.



Figure 3.11. Photo of V’s IU drawing posted on V’s Instagram gallery. © V, used with permission.



Figure 3.12. V’s fan art included in a flyer providing instructions on fan singing during a curtain call at IU’s “Chat-Shire” concert held in Seoul on November 22, 2015. Another V IU drawing (IU in the bear costume) was printed as a form of sticker and included in a package with the flyer. Photo by the author.

However, V’s status as a named fan was more apparently demonstrated through a fan art exhibition. V and another famous *geumson* in IU fandom held their joint exhibition of fan art works entitled *Fall in IU* at a café in Seoul on August 6 through 15,

2016.¹²² Three months before the exhibition, these two *geumsons* announced that they would produce mini-sized paper doll stands using their pictures of IU and sell these stands as fan art-goods to raise funds for charity. The money collected from the sale of those fan art-goods, according to the announcement, would be donated in the name of IU (I will detail this type of donation activity in K-pop fandom in the next section). V and the other fan art creator received advance orders for the stands and distributed them at the exhibition. I also preordered the stands and attended the exhibition to appreciate fan art works created by the two *geumsons* and to pick up the stands (figure 3.13). At the exhibition, I noticed that fans treated V and the other fan art creator as celebrities. Most fans got autographs from the two *geumsons*. Some fans were themselves making drawings of the fan art creators outside of the exhibition. Given this popularity of the fan art creators among IU fans, *geumsons* not only achieve fame for their artistry but, as fan-celebrities, construct stardom within fandom.

¹²² There are two highly popular *geumsons* in IU fandom. One is V and the other is a woman in her twenties who majors in Oriental painting at a college. These two *geumsons* are in contact with each other. According to V, the other fan art creator, as an art major older than her, gave V advice about how to choose a college.



Figure 3.13. Billboard for V and another fan art creator's exhibition at the venue and mini-sized doll stands of IU making use of their fan art works, which were sold as fan art-goods for fundraising. Photo by the author.

Although V commercialized her drawings to produce fan art-goods at the exhibition for fundraising for charity, she otherwise rarely sold IU drawings to other fans.

Me: There seem to be two types of fan art creators: one creates fan art only to present [to the star] or to post it to SNS like Instagram; the other produces fan art to make money.

V: Well, I do both. I *do not sell IU drawings*, but just started [selling other drawings] because I should live in a dormitory [at a college] and I don't wanna ask my parents for boarding fees. So, I've started to be commissioned to draw [other stars]. Currently, I've made ca. \$90 [with my commissioned drawings]. I expect to earn more.

Me: What are you drawing?

V: I've drawn Beast, Seventeen, and Red Velvet [being commissioned by these K-pop groups' fans wanting to own their favorite stars' portraits]...

Me: [When drawing those groups] do you feel different from working on IU drawings?

V: Yes, I do. When drawing IU, I do it with love and care. I specified notes [in my blog] that I never receive any request to draw IU. Reflecting on one's situation, I could give one my IU drawing free but wouldn't get money. I do not want to commercialize IU in my fan art... I launched a blog for the commissioned drawings. I receive orders via emails... Once buyers pay in money to my account, I confirm their payment deposit and start drawing. I then email them attaching image files of the drawings [to check the buyers' satisfaction]. If the buyers like my drawings, I mail

them the original copies of the drawings. If the buyers do not like my works, I refund them or re-work on the drawings.
(In-person interview, February 15, 2016)

While she does not commercialize her IU drawings, V profits from her artistry that has been cultivated through practicing fan art for IU. V's engagement in commissioned drawings of other K-pop stars thus suggests that fan art not only enables its producers to visualize their fannishness but also allows its consumers to incorporate aestheticism and ownership into their fannishness.

In this section, I have explored three fan art creators (also called *geumsons*) and their activities in K-pop fandom. I argue that these *geumsons* demonstrate fandom both as a process and a place of experiential learning to be “auto-didacts” or “self-taught experts” (Duffett 2013b: 26). Furthermore, the *geumsons* improve their professionalism as artists or designers by producing and promoting fan art works.

From Fan Tributes towards Philanthropy

I briefly touched on the term *jogong* (fan tributes) in an earlier section, describing *homma* fans' activities. In this section, I first elaborate on fan tributes because it provides a useful link to philanthropy performed in K-pop fandom. Next, I delineate fans' philanthropic practices.

As a way of performing fandom, it is typical for fans to send fan letters and gifts to stars. When fan clubs or fan communities are formed, fans' gift-giving goes beyond an individual activity to become a collective practice. In K-pop fandom, the collective practice of gift-giving started in the 1990s. As I explored in Chapter 1, label-dominated

idol groups first appeared in the late 1990s. The groups' official fan clubs were also founded by the popular music labels soon after the debut of the idol groups. Anecdotes about the collective gift-giving performed by the 90's fan club members are shared within K-pop fandom. For instance, the fans of H.O.T., the first idol boy band in Korea, chipped in for the group members' birthdays and presented the members with expensive gifts, such as a luxury car, a motorcycle, and a grand piano.

K-pop fans have termed their practice of collective gift-giving to the stars “*jogong*,” which originally meant tribute in Korean.¹²³ Typically, fans plan and perform *jogong* via online fan communities, such as fan sites, upon the stars' birthdays. Using message boards in fan sites, the fans discuss what kind of “tributes” will be given to the stars as birthday presents – these tributes are also known as “birthday *jogong*.” Once the items for the birthday *jogong* are decided upon, the fans collect funds for the *jogong* items by wiring money to the fan site managers' bank accounts. The managers announce the progress of the *jogong* to other fans, attaching pictures of the tributes. In some online fan communities, such as *DC Inside*, where there is no specific webmaster managing the community, a couple of active fans volunteer to buy the *jogong* items and send the tributes to the stars on behalf of the fan community. These volunteer fans are termed “*chongdae*,” which literally means gunstock but metaphorically stands for “on behalf of”

¹²³ The term *jogong* is most widely used in K-pop fandom. However, according to F1, some fandoms (the DC galls for Jiwon Eun and Sechskies, for example) use the term “support” instead of *jogong* because of what they perceive as a negative connotation of a master-servant relationship in the term *jogong* (tribute). Explored in Chapter 1 and 2, many K-pop fans indeed position themselves as cultural agents choosing, criticizing, and even withdrawing their fandoms, rather than as submissive star followers.

in Korean.¹²⁴ For instance, A2 used to take *chongdae* for Korean ballad singer Dongryul Kim in *DC Inside*, an online community for Kim's fans, for his birthday *jogong*. After receiving *jogong* items for their birthdays from their fans, the stars confirm their acceptance of fan tributes and express their gratitude for the fans' fannishness by posting photos of the items to their personal SNS. Some stars leave their thank you note for *jogong* directly on boards in the online fan communities.

Currently, fans fundraise for *jogong* through producing, selling, purchasing, and consuming fan merchandise at homes, as examined in an earlier section. *Hommas*, making use of pictures of the stars taken and edited by themselves, create and sell various items, such as photo books, calendars, diaries, and stickers. Other fans buy these goods at the homes. The *hommas* then use most of the earnings from these sales for *jogong*. According to I2, the *jogong* items purchased at homes include clothes, accessories, shoes, cakes or snacks, and instruments or other musical equipment. To send these fan tributes to the stars, *hommas* contact the stars' labels months before their birthdays. The labels respond to the *hommas* with information regarding the date and location for the delivery of the *jogong* items to be given to the stars. As mentioned in an earlier section, the stars confirm their acceptance of fan tributes through homes, by putting on the *jogong* items for their daywear in public places, such as airports, where media reporters and paparazzi capture the stars and then publish their photos through media outlets, or the stars post

¹²⁴ However, *chongdae* is not exclusively used to describe volunteering fans for *jogong*. Fans volunteering for other fan events, such as donations in the names of the stars, the purchase and installation of objects celebrating K-pop concerts at the concert venues, or the production and distribution of banners for fan chanting and singing, are also termed *chongdae* in K-pop fandom.

photos of the *jogong* items, including their appreciative words, to their social media profiles as the confirmation of their acceptance of fan tributes.

Fan art creators also participate in *jogong* by individually sending their works to the stars. Since the original fan art works hold a higher scarcity value than mass-produced industrial goods, which are typically used for fans' collective gift-giving, the fan art creators need to handle their works with care for *jogong*. Thus, the fan art creators prefer to deliver their works to the stars at concerts or autograph events where fans can see the stars in the flesh. For example, E2, V, and W, fan art creators I interviewed, presented their works to Shinhwa, IU, and Jong Shin Yoon via the stars' managers during autograph events and after concerts. *Jogong* through fans' economic activities at homes demonstrates fannishness materially. Fan art creators' *jogong* then incorporates artistic value into material fannishness.

K-pop fans do not limit their gift giving practice to fan tributes, but extend the practice to perform collective donations. Leading up to concerts, fans voluntarily raise money for supplies to be donated to charity through online fan communities. These supplies, decorated with flowers, ribbons, and K-pop stars' photos, are displayed at the concert venue – beneath standing wreaths placed around the concert hall as well as along a path to the hall (figures 3.14 and 3.15). These standing wreaths show off how many charity supplies have been purchased, implying how much fans fundraised. Also, as the wreaths function as part of the landscape of K-pop concerts, many fans at the concert venue enjoy taking selfies in front of the standing wreaths. At the same time, the fans can realize the power of fandom by looking at the number of standing wreaths as well as the

amount of supplies at the concert venue. After the concerts, the supplies are donated to charities in Korea in the names of K-pop musicians.



Figure 3.14. Standing wreaths placed by fans of BTS's member Jimin in the plaza of Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena on the day of the concert to display their donation of rice to charities in the names of Jimin (May 8, 2016). Photo by the author.



Figure 3.15. Standing wreaths displayed along a pedestrian overpass in Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena on the day of Shinhwa's concert (March 26, 2016). Photo by the author.

Through performing this collective donation, fans do not present actual gifts directly to their favorite stars, but bestow the image of being philanthropists on the stars. Since the donations are revealed beneath showy standing wreaths and are competitively displayed at the concert venue by fan groups, some fans discount this practice as the ostentation of fandom. However, although the donation is intended to make K-pop stars look good and show off the power of fandom, the supplies purchased with fans' money are ultimately contributed to charity. Fans thus actively participate in philanthropy.

Philanthropy in K-pop fandom is not restricted to donations to charities for needy neighbors or animal activist groups. Fans extend their philanthropic practices to donations for eco-friendly activities. To be specific, upon the stars' birthdays or debut dates, many fandoms collect money through fan communities to buy trees and flowers via landscapers. They plant these trees and flowers on the street or public parks, and then participate in the construction of gardens and woods within the town. For example, the World Cup Park in Seoul includes gardens named after K-pop stars. These gardens were created by fans through their purchase and donations of trees and flowers in the names of K-pop musicians including the K-pop girl group f(X), Korean pop-rock band CNBLUE, Yong Hwa Jung (singer and guitarist of CNBLUE), EXO members (Kai and Chanyeol), Na-eun Son of K-pop girl group Apink, Minwoo of K-pop boy band Boyfriend, and K-pop solo singer In-guk Seo (figure 3.16). One can find pedestrian roads characterized by trees named for K-pop stars in the Seoulo 7017 Skypark, an elevated linear park in downtown Seoul which has recently been constructed with a similar aesthetic to the High Line in New York City (figure 3.17). The stars' fans bought and donated these trees to

the city of Seoul to take part in the creation of more green spaces in the Seoulo 7017 Skypark in the name of the stars.¹²⁵ In addition to the World Cup Park and the Seoulo 7017 Skypark, there are several streets and public parks in Seoul that feature K-pop stars' trees that were contributed by the stars' fans. Fans' creation of these public gardens and woods not only incorporates fandom into the urban landscape, but also expands fans' philanthropic activities to include the performance of ecological practices.



Figure 3.16. Gardens named for K-pop stars in the World Cup Park in Seoul, which were created by the stars' fans through their purchase and donation of trees and flowers. Photo by the author.

¹²⁵ When I visited there on August 19, 2017, there were different trees purchased and donated by fans of an EXO member Chan, a 2PM member Junho, a BTS member Jungkook, and Sechskies in the Seoulo 7017 Skypark.



Figure 3.17. Woods named after K-pop boy band 2PM member Junho on the pedestrian road in the Seoulo 7017 Skypark, which Junho’s fans contributed to Seoul City to celebrate his 29th birthday. Photo by the author.

Korean K-pop fans’ philanthropy has gone beyond domestic donations. For instance, inspired by a Korean television documentary about the damaged Amazon jungle, Taiji Seo’s fans fundraised through “*Seotaiji (or Seo Taiji) dotcom*” (seotaiji.com: Seo’s official website, including an official fan community) and donated money to international environmental groups to plant trees in the Amazon rainforest in the name of Seo (Sigong 2012).¹²⁶ His fans initiated this project to create Seo’s forest (Seotaiji forest, literally Seo-named forest) reforesting the Amazon area in 2010 (Ibid.). The fans spearheaded the fundraising and then planted a forest in Guapi Assu (Guapiaçu), Brazil in 2012 via an international agency that undertakes ecological projects (Ibid.). The fans

¹²⁶ According to J, Seo’s fans fundraised by wiring money to an account through a fan community within Seotaiji dotcom for this donation. However, for other philanthropic activities, the fans conduct auctions in their online community. Thus, they sell Seo-related rare items or personal goods, such as cosmetics or clothes, to other fans in an online auction. After receiving the items, the buyer fans credit the purchase price to an account opened only for fans’ donations, instead of giving money to the seller fans.

chose Guapi Assu because it was an area in which there were endangered native animals and plants due to the loss of forest (Ibid.). J, a member of Taiji Seo fandom, recounted her participation in the donation for Seotaiji forest:

J: [To create Seo named-forest] we [fans] contacted a Brazilian environmental group because we didn't want to end up with our project just planting trees [in Guapi Assu]. Since we should protect and maintain the forest after planting, we reached out to a [local] environmental group, [as the owner of the forest] which could continue to manage the forest. Oh, we contacted Brazilian and British groups and signed contracts with both groups for the continuous management of the forest. As Seo's fandom fundraised for the creation of Seo named-forest Brazil, I was willing to send my money to them.
(In-person interview, December 22, 2015)

J's explanation about the contract with a Brazilian environmental group suggests that the fans' donation for the forest is not merely to manifest their fannishness through a one-time event of planting, but to perform ecologically-minded fandom through the protection and maintenance of the forest.

It is notable that XIA Junsu fandom's donations inspired him to participate in philanthropy. His fans fundraised in various ways, such as collecting money and selling/buying fan merchandise at homes (fan sites), and donated the money they raised to ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) Korea in the name of XIA Junsu (Ahn 2011). The charity agency used this donation to repair old houses and construct new homes for the needy living in a small village near Phnom Penh in Cambodia in 2009 (Ibid.). The villagers, knowing who helped them, spontaneously started naming their village after him. After hearing of his fans' donations for the Cambodian village in his name, XIA Junsu also donated to ADRA Korea and then established an elementary school in a village of Vealvong in Pusat Province, Cambodia in 2011 (Kim 2011).

Moreover, he donated to the school for a year to pay additional teachers who were hired to teach more children living in other villages near the school.¹²⁷ As media outlets covered his establishment of the school, his fans have performed continuous donations to the students by sending school supplies and toys directly to the school in Cambodia. The philanthropic practices that XIA Junsu and his fans engage in thus demonstrate that fans can play a significant role influencing the star's extra-musical behavior, as well as that the star and fandom interact with each other through philanthropy.

Throughout this section, I have examined a variety of gift giving practices in fandom, ranging from *jogong* (fan tributes) to fans' collective philanthropic activities. I suggest that Korean female K-pop fandom, by engaging with philanthropy, bridges the popular cultural scene to impact the larger social sphere.

Conclusion

This chapter examined various cultural and subcultural fan practices characterized by photographing, filming, and photoshopping K-pop musicians, the production and consumption of fan merchandise as well as fan art, fan tributes, and fan donations. The first section explores a group of fans, also known as *jjikdeok*, who specialize in shooting photographs and videos of K-pop stars' musical performances as well as non-musical actions. These fans' shooting practice with high-tech cameras (termed *daepo* in K-pop

¹²⁷ The elementary school named after XIA Junsu was the only school within the surrounding areas so that students walked or biked miles to school.

fandom) not only gratify other fans, who want to see their favorite stars in pictures and videos, but also promote the stars' music.

Some *jjikdeok* fans run their own web sites, that is, fan sites to post and share their photos and videos. In the second section, I investigated these fans managing fan sites, also known as *hommas*. I also investigated economic activities conducted through *homma*-managed fan sites, also known as homes, involving the selling and purchasing of fan merchandise. *Hommas* create and sell various goods, such as photobooks, calendars, diaries, photo cards, and sticker photos, making use of photos taken and edited by themselves. Other fans, dissatisfied with official goods of inferior design or quality produced and sold by K-pop labels, prefer to use and possess *homma*-created products rather than to purchase official K-pop merchandise. These transactions of fan merchandise through homes also allow the fans to reinvest their earnings and spending in fan tributes (*jogong*). Comparing fans' economic activities related to fan merchandise through homes with their economic activities involving the label-dominated official goods, I showed that fans have constructed a black market outside of officially certified producers or sellers in the K-pop industry. I then claim that *hommas* serve as inclusive cultural producers embracing photographers, editors, webmasters, sellers, supporters, and investors, moving fans beyond their typical roles in the mainstream of the K-pop industry as consumers of K-pop music- and musician-related products officially promoted and sold by the labels.

In the third section, I provided case studies of three fan art creators (also called *geumsons*) and their activities. These case studies confirm Jenkins' analysis of fandom

suggesting, “fandom offers a training ground for the development of professional skills and an outlet for creative impulse constrained by... workday lives” (2006b: 42). I then argued that *geumsons* not only learn to be “auto-didacts” or “self-taught experts” through fandom, but also improve their professionalism as artists or designers by producing and promoting fan art (Duffett 2013b: 26).

The fourth and last section of this chapter examined Korean female K-pop fans’ various collective gift giving practices, from fan tributes (also known as *jogong*), to collective donations in the name of K-pop stars as philanthropic activities. I suggest that, through fans engaging in philanthropy, K-pop fandom bridges the popular cultural scene and impacts the larger social sphere.

Having examined these economic and creative practices of K-pop fans, and their impact on female fandom, I now turn to other forms of performance and community building/formation popular in K-pop (sub)cultural fan practices. Writing fan fiction, dressing up as K-pop stars, making and buying K-pop star dolls, and participating in *nanum* practices are all (sub)cultural activities in which female K-pop fans engage to cultivate their imagination and creativity, construct/practice a new and different identity, and build/feel a sense of community. The next chapter will continue to explore these different types of sub/cultural practices performed by Korean female K-pop fans.

Chapter 4. Sharing, Playing, Creating, and Performing: The Diversification of Sub/Cultures Of/For/By Korean Female K-Pop Fans (II)

Building on the activities documented in Chapter 3, in this chapter I chart additional sub/cultures created and practiced by Korean female K-pop fans that highlight performance, play, and sharing. First, I will examine *nanum*, a philanthropic economic practice within K-pop fandom that promotes sharing and exchanging K-pop star-related items.

“*Nanum*”: The Culture of Sharing and Exchanging in Female K-Pop Fandom

Let me share a funny episode from a K-pop event, selected from my field notes. On January 24, 2016, K-pop boy band BTS held a meet-and-greet event in the Hwajung gymnasium at Korea University in Seoul. Since I failed to get an advance ticket to this event, I had to line up and wait to purchase an on-site ticket. However, I found a separate long line of numerous girls near the venue (figure 4.1). Curious about this line, I asked a girl what she was waiting for. She answered me that she was waiting to get free items such as photo cards and stickers, which other fans share. Also, from a short conversation with her, I learned that this sharing practice was called “*nanum*.” Although I awaited my turn to buy an on-site ticket to the event for over an hour, I ultimately was turned away. However, I did not leave the venue immediately but observed how BTS fans without tickets behaved around the event. I happened to see some masked fans there. A security service man at the venue told me that those girls wearing masks and performing *nanum* were regarded as stalker fans, also known as *sasaeng* (as discussed in Chapter 1). A

friend of mine who accompanied me to the event was excited by the opportunity because her research was on K-pop stalker fans. As I approached the masked fans to assist with my friend's interview with them, they gave me stickers and cards printed with BTS members' pictures. Moreover, they offered a free hug to me and did not mind me taking a picture of them (figure 4.2). I felt weird because in my understanding, *sasaeng* fans would not have behaved in a friendly manner toward other fans. Having a conversation with the masked practitioners of *nanum*, I realized that they were not *sasaeng*. I contacted one of them via Twitter, since she had provided her Twitter name on the photo cards given to me. Five days after BTS's meet-and-greet event, I met and interviewed her as a participant in my research.



Figure 4.1. Fangirls lining up to get free items at BTS's meet-and-greet event (January 24, 2016). Photo by the author.



Figure 4.2. A practitioner of *nanum* (D1) wearing a mask of Jungkook (BTS member) at BTS's meet-and-greet event (January 24, 2016). Photo by the author.

A twenty-two-year-old sophomore majoring in performance planning at a college (similar to concert promotion in the U.S.), F2 has been a member of different fandoms since her elementary school days: she was a TVXQ fan in elementary school, a Shinhwa fan in middle school, an Infinite fan in high school, a light fan of EXO in 2014. F2 has been a BTS fan since 2015 (recently, she also became a fan of KNK, a K-pop boy band). She was the first person among participants in my research to describe her fan practices as “cultures.” Although other fans might perform *nanum* (literally meaning sharing in Korean) at K-pop events for a different reason, F2 started this sharing practice in relation to the personal production of K-pop-related goods.

F2: I personally produced what I wanted to own [and then used these products as items for *nanum*]. Since I had way too many products [because the mass production of them was cheaper than small batches], I performed *nanum* [to share those goods with other fans]. (In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

Also, F2's performance of *nanum* is associated with her wearing a mask printed with K-pop stars (I will elaborate on this practice of wearing the mask during *nanum* in the next section).

F2: I should attract other fans' attention by roaming [around the concert or K-pop event venue] in a mask [of K-pop stars]. While some fans like me, others might feel uncomfortable with me [wearing the mask]. I've heard them bumping me into and crying out, "Oh, shocks!" Thus, I could scare other fans unintentionally... I thought that I would do something to avoid being shameless when I wear a mask. So, I perform *nanum* [as an excuse for being in the mask printed with K-pop stars].
(In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

Whether or not practitioners of *nanum* wear K-pop stars' masks, this sharing practice at the concert (or other events such as meet-and-greets) venue usually takes place in K-pop fandom. For instance, as described earlier, one can see many long lines of fans at the concert venue on the concert day. Most of these lines, except for a line waiting to purchase on-site ticket near the box office, are formed by fans who await *nanum*. The primary items for *nanum* are K-pop stars' small-sized photos (also called photo cards), photo-printed stickers, and illustrations, all of which fans create of their own accord. I asked F2 how these *nanum* items were produced, and how *nanum* practitioners funded the cost of the production of these items.

F2: We [she and fellow fans performing *nanum* with her as a team] chip in [to produce items for *nanum*]. Also, while we currently produce *nanum* items, we used to share candies with other fans at first, so it didn't cost much... Now, it's not a big deal for me to spend around \$18 a day, so it's OK [to use my money to make *nanum* items]. [When I was in high school] I [and fellow practitioners of *nanum*] pooled the expenses [to produce the *nanum* items]. I sold fan goods pretty much and carried out proxy purchases.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ When she was an Infinite fan in high school, F2 made and sold fan merchandise making use of official photos of the group. Thanks to their good quality, her fan goods

Me: What does that mean, proxy purchase?

F2: You saw long lines of fans who wanted to buy official goods [produced and sold by BTS's label], right? These goods were not sold out at this meet-and-greet event [by BTS on January 24, 2016], but normally, they run out of stock very quickly [at the other events]... So, many fans ask others, who can come to the venue earlier, to sub for purchasing the goods in advance [before being sold out] with payment [for subbing for the purchase]. I earned money from these proxy purchases [for other fans] and used the money [to produce *nanum* items].

Me: [To print on your *nanum* items] do you use and edit official photos [taken and circulated by the group's label]?

F2: Yes, I do.

(In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

How then can fans be informed about *nanum*? It is announced through SNS such as Twitter. Once practitioners of *nanum*, including F2, post the time and location for *nanum* online, other fans check out this post, gather around the practitioners of *nanum*, and then stand in a line to obtain free *nanum* items. Sharing the free items produced by themselves, the *nanum* practitioners promote their social media accounts by stamping the site addresses on the *nanum* items. As explored in the preceding chapter, to promote their homes (fan sites), some *hommas* also share free items printed with photos taken and edited by themselves or illustrations created by themselves. While this promotion by *homma* fans is designed to lead other fans to purchase and consume *homma*-made goods at homes, the practitioners of *nanum* promote their social media to win popularity from and communicate with other fans online, according to F2.

were popular and in high demand among other fans. Using the money earned from the sale of fan merchandise, she produced *nanum* items and shared them with other fans. However, the group's label contacted F2 and banned her from producing and selling unofficial fan goods for copyright violation.

Communication and friendship with one another are the main motivations for K-pop fans to participate in *nanum*. Explaining why fans engage in *nanum*, F2 describes these fans as “wandering,” and suggests “wanderings” as a performance of fandom:

F2: Although they do not attend concerts, many fans go to the venue on the concert day because a lot of *nanum* practices happen there...¹²⁹ First of all, *nanum* items are printed with K-pop stars’ faces. To get these items for free, fans go to the concert venue [even if they don’t watch musicians’ performances because they failed to get their concert tickets]... There are many fans *wandering* [around the concert venue] to obtain *nanum* items [instead of participating in the concert]. However, many people don’t understand these fans. My mom didn’t understand either [why I go there instead of watching the concert]. After getting there [to receive *nanum*], fans make many new friends [with other fans] while they line up together [to get *nanum* items]... I feel it’s fun to do *wanderings* [instead of entering the concert hall and outside of it] as a way [for fans] to perform fandom. (In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

Fans do not become intimate with one another, however, only through queuing and wandering together for *nanum*. Mutual sharing between practitioners and recipients of *nanum* allow them to better connect with each other. To be specific, several fans, upon receiving free items, will give gifts in turn, such as chocolates, candies, dolls, or other pictures of their favorite K-pop stars, to *nanum* practitioners. Thus, an exchange activity occurs during *nanum* among fans at the concert venue. F2 relates her experience and thoughts of this exchange practice:

F2: It’s said that fans engage in fandom because of their liking for other fans. As I was the first one in EXO fandom [to perform *nanum* wearing masks of EXO members], many other fans liked me in a mask [for *nanum*]...

Me: Do you thank those fans?

¹²⁹ F2 also went to the concert and event venues only to perform *nanum*, even though she did not attend EXO’s concert and BTS’s meet-and-greet event. Indeed, F and her fellow *nanum* practitioner D1 said that they had more fun outside of the concert hall than inside the auditorium.

F2: Yes, I do. I really appreciate them for remembering me and giving something in turn to me... When going out for *nanum*, I carry a heavy bag full of *nanum* items, but my bag still weighs a lot even after completing *nanum* because it's filled with gifts from other fans [in response to my *nanum*].

(In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

Listening to F2, I grasp that through *nanum*, fans not only give K-pop-related goods to each other but also exchange their attachment to one another. F2 phrases this feeling shared among fans as “a sense of belonging.”

F2:... While fans go to concerts to watch their favorite musicians' live performance, they might heal themselves through other people sharing the same interests... Yes, [along with other fans] they could reinforce *a sense of belonging* [in addition to healing themselves]. If fans just stay home [to perform fandom], their fandom would be limited to their liking for K-pop singers. However, if the fans go out for events and engage in fan activities, they would feel different. They really would have an esprit de corps...

(In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

She indicates her *nanum* practice allows her to know fans' feelings and herself share this esprit de corps. D1, F2's fellow *nanum* practitioner, also explains that through *nanum* she can “empathize with other fans” (I will address D1's age and occupation in the next section).

F2: I wouldn't have known fans' feelings [if I had not come up to other fans while performing *nanum*].

(In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

D1: When engaging in [K-pop fan] events [such as *nanum*], I better empathize with other fans.

(Small group interview, February 13, 2016)

F2 further articulates “wanderings as culture” engaged with *nanum*:

F2:... When performing *nanum*, I play music [using a portable speaker]. Hearing songs I'm playing, other fans feel better... Knowing these fans, I'm very happy for them. I suggest wanderings as being in harmony

among fans. To be honest, once the fans get into the concert hall, they might not harmonize with one another. Because they do not interact with one another but with musicians, the fans just concentrate on the interaction with the stars. Seen from my point of view as a concert promoter, a pop concert does not enable fans to communicate with one another, but functions as a site where musicians interact with listeners. Fans can share their feelings with one another online or by meeting up and hanging out [outside of the concert hall]. There are a couple of ways for fans to easily connect to one another in front of the concert hall...By interacting with one another through both music and *nanum* while wandering around the concert venue, many fans become chummy with one another. Thus, *wanderings as culture* provide fans with the best setting in which fans can communicate with one another at the concert.
(In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

After interviewing F2, whenever doing participant observation of concerts, I came to pay attention to the scene that fans create by sharing and exchanging fan-made K-pop-related items as well as a rapport with one another. I then realized that these *nanum* practices diversify K-pop fandom culture. As described earlier in this section, it is also notable that performers wearing K-pop stars' masks, including F2, feature in the culture of *nanum*. In the next section, I will delve into these *nanum* practitioners' actions in the masks printed with the stars' faces at the concert venue.

Masquerading as K-Pop Stars: *Nanum* Practitioners' Role-Play and Identity

At that point, I already knew about foreign K-pop fans' pretending to be stars online. In 2011, I encountered some Indonesian girls on Facebook who were huge K-pop fans. After accepting their friend requests, I became interested in their online activities in relation to K-pop. I found out that they not only discussed K-pop with one another but also expressed their emotions by quoting K-pop songs' lyrics. Moreover, many Indonesian fangirls created additional Facebook IDs and new online identities by

changing their names, gender, nationality, birth/current places, affiliations, and occupations. With these counterfeit identities, the fangirls pretended to be Koreans. Moreover, performing fandom on Facebook, some Indonesian fangirls fabricated their extra IDs as K-pop stars with the stars' names and photos on the IDs, as well as roleplayed as faux K-pop musicians. Since this online role-playing in Indonesian female K-pop fandom was a fleeting activity – it did not last long – I was unable to conduct full-scale participant observation of the role-players or interview them. However, I took advantage of an opportunity to do fieldwork on female fans' roleplaying as K-pop stars in my interviews with F2 and D1. I am aware that there might be different reasons for those role-players in Korean and Indonesian fandoms to pretend to be K-pop stars.

Nanum practitioners F2 and D1, as a team, have worn masks of both BTS and EXO, while sharing free items with other fans – F2 and D1 have performed *nanum* in both BTS and EXO fandoms. F2 usually wears masks printed with Suga or V's faces (BTS members) and Baekhyun's face (EXO member). D1, an eighteen-year-old girl in her last year of high school, puts on masks of Jungkook (BTS member) and Chanyeol (EXO member) – the *nanum* practitioner in Jungkook's mask in figure 3.17 was D1. Thus, they do not randomly pick up masks to wear, but take on only one or two members of the group as their masks.

As a member of different fandoms since elementary school, F2 has been aware of some issues in the K-pop industry. This awareness encouraged her to reconsider her participation in fandom. She then organized a team performing *nanum* wearing masks of K-pop stars.

F2: Training, promoting and producing K-pop idols is what the Korean popular music industry is best at. However, fan marketing strategies suck. While putting efforts into the production of music by inviting and recruiting talented persons from other countries [in order to sell their products more], K-pop labels do not care about fans as consumers, so there seems to be no progress in fan culture... Since I've had lots of disadvantages [as a member of fandom], I've studied [fan marketing strategies], hoping to change ideas about fan marketing. Along the way, I made a *nanum* team wearing masks [of K-pop musicians]. (In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

Before forming her team, F2 just had been a practitioner of *nanum* in Infinite fandom. To raise money to produce free *nanum* items, she had created and sold fan goods making use of images or official photos of Infinite. F2, meanwhile, stepped into mask-wearing together with D1 in 2012 by chance.

F2: Actually, I started wearing masks as a *nanum* practitioner [when I was an Infinite fan]. There had already been other fans in masks while practicing their *nanum* within Infinite fandom. (In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

D1: During my second year of middle school (in 2012), I liked Infinite [when I performed *nanum* with F2, wearing masks of the group members]. I met her in person for the first time on the day of Infinite's concert. Before then, I had gotten to know her online. At that time, I was getting into fan goods, such as stickers [printed with photos of the group's members]. To get more goods [from other fans selling their goods], I frequently visited a fan cafe (online fan community), and happened to see F2's post saying that she recruited fans who could help her to paint her drawings. Oh, F2 drew images of the group members as fan art. Because I, as a curious fangirl, wanted to experience various things in fandom back then, I volunteered as a helper for her. F2 and I communicated with each other about our drawing-coloring works only online. We finally met up in person at the concert. We lined up together to carry out proxy purchases [of official goods for other fans] (I already described "proxy purchases" in the previous section). We hit it off right from the beginning since F2 is a very social person... F2 also did *nanum* on the concert day. I came across other *nanum* practitioners in masks of Infinite members for the first time... They're amazing... I also took a picture with them. When one of them had to enter the concert hall, she took off her mask of Hoya (an Infinite member) and F2 put it on... F2 and I hung out with the masked

nanum practitioners after the concert. We palled around with one another. F2 and I joined the fans in masks [and started to wear masks] in the end. (In-person interview, August 6, 2016)

However, F2 and D1 observed a rivalry between two groups of masked *nanum* practitioners in fandom. To avoid being dragged into this fight, they quit and left Infinite fandom a year later. Becoming fans of EXO in 2013, F2 and D1 established a team to perform *nanum* wearing masks of EXO members. As a matter of fact, they were the first to wear masks among other *nanum* practitioners in that fandom. Accordingly, F2 and D1's team became popular in EXO fandom. Likewise, they initiated BTS fandom into a *nanum* practice by wearing BTS masks, and then gained popularity with other fans. As initiators of the *nanum* practice, along with masquerading as the group members in EXO and BTS fandoms, F2 and D1 took great pride in their *nanum* practices wearing masks. F2 is confident that the EXO and BTS masks she makes and wears are of the best quality among ones used by other teams of masked *nanum* practitioners. To produce their masks, D1 googles and selects high-resolution images of the stars' faces. These images are printed on the masks. Other teams, according to F2, acknowledge the excellence of the masks F2's team puts on. Indeed, when I saw the masked *nanum* practitioners in F2's team at BTS's meet-and-greet event and EXO's concert, I was impressed by how real and natural the masks looked— they even looked unmasked (figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3. F2 in the mask of Baekhyun during her *nanum* at EXO's concert (March 19, 2016). Photo by the author.

In addition to sharing and exchanging practices with other fans, masked *nanum* practitioners take photos with these fans (figure 4.4). Thus, the masked *nanum* practitioners provide a souvenir service for other fans to make memories at the concert through both free *nanum* items and photography. Looking at the scene of fans gathering around the masked *nanum* practitioners for free items and photographs at the concert venue, I realized the popularity of the masked *nanum* practitioners, which F2 describes as “culture.”

F2: [Since I wore masks during *nanum*], I have won fans of my team... Also, it's like a wonderful *culture* that other fans would like me just for putting on a mask.
(In-person interview, January 29, 2016).



Figure 4.4. Foreign female fans taking a selfie with F2, D1, and another girl in masks at EXO's concert (March 19, 2016). Photo by the author.

In this culture of stardom-fandom by fans, it is noteworthy that, treated by other fans as the stars, the *nanum* practitioners in masks roleplay as the star printed on the mask. For instance, I discovered that when F2, D1, and their fellow fan in masks walked by, other fans called these masked women “*oppa*” (I already explored this word used by female fans in Korean popular cultural context in Chapter 1), and shouted for joy as if seeing actual K-pop stars. Recognizing other fans’ reactions to her, F2 explains their behaviors as “vicarious satisfaction”:

F2: Looking at me in a mask of Baekhyun, other fans call me Baekhyun. They say to me, “Hey, Baekhyun,” not “Hi, Mr. Baekhyun,” but rather as if they are his friend or already know him. The fans, treating me as Baekhyun, do not use the honorific. I think the fans might get *vicarious satisfaction* from me in the mask by behaving toward me as if they met up with Baekhyun in person. That’s why they like me. Also, since the fans consider me in the mask as actually Baekhyun, they want to give me something, like a gift.
(In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

However, the fans’ projection of their affection for the star onto F2 is not without risks.

F2: When Baekhyun and Taeyeon (a member of Girls' Generation) were reported to be dating, I wasn't able to have on the mask of Baekhyun during *nanum*. [Disappointed at his dating], his fans cussed me out. (In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

I wondered how F2 perceives herself in a mask. She associates her masking with identity formation:

F2:... I feel like I am constructing an additional self or a different identity [through putting on masks]. (In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

She further elaborates on how she acts, wearing a mask of a K-pop star:

Me: When you are in a mask [of a member of EXO or BTS] to do *nanum* and take pictures with other fans, do you act as the star printed on your mask?

F2: Yes, I partly do, when taking photos [with other fans]. [Analyzing photos of EXO and BTS], I found out that each member [of EXO and BTS] poses in his own unique way for a photograph... We (F2, D1, and their fellow fan) apply their poses to ours when taking pictures with other fans.¹³⁰ (In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

Wearing masks of the stars during her *nanum*, she not only perceives herself to be constructing a new and different identity, but also roleplays as the stars. Yet F2 differentiates between herself performing fandom and herself masquerading as the stars:

F2:... Also, looking at some fangirls in masks and their behaviors, there is a problem with them. The girls act as though they are the real stars printed on the masks.

Me: I know what you mean. I saw some masked girls swaggering around other fans at BTS's meet-and-greet event.

F2: You knew what they're like! Well, I know very well that I can't be really the idol printed on my mask just because I put on a mask of him... I always put my head down and say sorry to other fans lining up whenever I wedge my way next to them. However, some masked girls never excuse

¹³⁰ I asked the same question to D1, F2's fellow *nanum* practitioner. D1 answered that she was trying to wear clothes similar to those worn by Chanyeol (an EXO member printed on D1's mask).

themselves [when bumping into other fans]... These girls get blamed for acting that way. When I was called *oppa* or the name of the star printed on my mask, I turned around and said hello to other fans calling me. I should thank the fans because they remember me, like me, and want me even though I am not the real member [of EXO or BTS] printed on my mask. (In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

Interviewing F2, I was thrilled to learn as an insider that fandom leads us to consider and understand our identities as well as our relationships with one another beyond demonstrating our fannishness, whatever fan practices we perform. However, outsiders to fandom glance at our *nanum* – sharing and exchanging practices – especially the wearing of masks, merely with amusement. While she welcomes being spotlighted by the outsiders, F2 is bothered that they regard her as “part of the zealots.” I felt bitter and even helpless, listening to her.

Me: At BTS’s meet-and-greet event, I asked other masked fangirls if BTS members watched or knew the girls in masks of the group. They answered, “No, BTS wouldn’t know.”

F2: Well, we (F2, D1, and their fellow fangirl) got on air several times, wearing masks of EXO members. So, EXO might be aware of us because Entertainment Weekly (a television show on KBS 2 covering and reporting news about celebrities) and a Chinese TV show interviewed us [in masks of EXO during our *nanum*].

Me: Did a reporter from *Entertainment Weekly* interview you?

F2: Yes. Reporters from several shows came up to us for interviews. I spoke to a reporter from a show on Mnet (Korean cable television network specializing in popular music). Also, when SM Entertainment was filming for the DVD of EXO’s meet-and-greet event, they interviewed us. They filmed us in masks at the EXO-Love concert held at the Gocheok Sky Dome [on October 10, 2015]... Filming us putting on masks of EXO members during our *nanum*, they asked me who’s my favorite member, and wanted me to say to the group, “You’ll be good.” By the way, I felt that they were filming us to describe masked *nanum* practitioners as *part of the zealots*. Well, [female] fans of K-pop idol groups are still portrayed badly and negatively in Korean society. (In-person interview, January 29, 2016)

From the previous section through this section, I have examined K-pop fans' *nanum* practices and masked *nanum* practitioners' roleplaying as the stars. I conclude this examination by citing the description of fans that Kerry Ferris and Scott Harris make:

No matter how they gather their information, fans differ from ordinary consumers of fame because they form especially strong emotional attachments to the objects of their interests, and they can use those attachments as the stepping-stone both to relationships with other fans and to relationships with the famous themselves (2011: 13).

The production and consumption of fan merchandise by *hommas* (fan site managers specializing in photography and photoshopping) and *geumsons* (fan art creators) make possible transactions where fans can manifest their fannishness, interweaving their aestheticism, professionalism, and ownership. However, *nanum* encourages fans to extend their roles as producers or consumers to take part in sharing and exchanging free items with each other as well as building and practicing their attachment to one another.

In the next section, I will explore young females' play with K-pop star dolls, a practice that enables the fans to participate in various subcultural activities.

“We’re Mamangs of Oppa-Babies”: Young Females’ (Sub)Culture with K-Pop Star Dolls

To investigate young females' playing with K-pop star dolls, I will first describe how I came to find out about this practice. I will then elaborate on the female fans' (sub)culture of producing, purchasing, and playing with the dolls.

It took four and half hours to conduct the first interview with F2. She spoke to me about various ways to perform fandom, including *nanum* and wearing masks of K-pop stars during her *nanum*. As a reader of fanfic or fan fiction (I will use the term fanfic

hereafter since this is the word most commonly used in K-pop fandom; also, I will detail Korean female K-pop fans' creation and consumption of fanfic in the next section), F2 was also interested in the consumption of fanfic and fanfic-related products, such as books, comics, and pictures.

Most writers post their fanfic works online. However, some fans publish their writing as printed books. Other fans, inspired by fanfic, create pictures of fanfic characters (K-pop stars) and produce postcards or stickers printed with their picture. Also, some other fans good at both writing and drawing publish their fanfic as comics. Sometimes these books, pictures, and comics are exhibited. This exhibition of the fanfic-related products is open only to fanfic readers or consumers who purchased tickets in advance. Talking about her interest in fanfic and fanfic-related goods, F2 suggested that we go together to an exhibition of products making use of BTS fanfic, which would be held in Seoul on February 13, 2016. She also said that her fellow fangirl in her *nanum* team, D1, would join us at this exhibition. If so, I would be able to talk to D1 and recruit her as a participant in my research. There was no reason why I would not accept her suggestion. I was excited to conduct participant observation of the exhibition and fanfic readers' consumption practices there.

At the exhibition F2 and I participated in, products specifically dealing with fanfic about BTS members Jungkook and V as a homosexual couple were displayed as well as sold. Thus, this exhibition was named "the Exhibition of Kook/V" (I will explain why a

slash is used between two members' (nick)names in the next section).¹³¹ Although F2 bought tickets to the exhibition for herself, me, and D1 in advance, we had to wait to take numbers in front of the venue. Since the exhibition site was too small to accommodate hundreds of ticket holders, the exhibition manager admitted a couple of people at a time into the site in numerical order. Awaiting our turn, F2, D1, and I spent an hour at Starbucks near the exhibition venue discussing our fandoms, so I conducted a small group interview with F2 and D1. While having a conversation with them, I happened to see girls seated next to our table holding rag dolls in their hands. Also, these dolls looked like cute boys. I wondered what these girls were doing with the boy dolls. F2 and D1 told me that the dolls were made to represent BTS members, designed and produced by fans as fan merchandise. They then revealed that many young female fans, including themselves, enjoyed playing with these dolls as part of fandom.

F2 and D1 showed me photos of their dolls in their smart phones. F2 had dolls made to represent BTS, and D1 owned doll versions of EXO members. However, these dolls did not look exactly like the members. The dolls' faces rather seemed like cute characters from animation or cartoons (figure 4.5). Also, like newborn babies, the dolls' heads were large in proportion to the rest of their bodies (figure 4.5). These features of K-pop star dolls reflect a (sub)cultural phenomenon also known as "*moe*." A Japanese neologism, *moe*, originating from Japanese verb "*moeru*" (萌 (も) える) meaning "to

¹³¹ Kook is a nickname of Jungkook. In Korean fanfic that takes a pair of male stars as main characters in a homoerotic relationship, the stars are nicknamed from one letter of their first names. These nicknames are used to address the main characters as a couple (like "Brangelina," for example) in fanfic text. I will elaborate on paring and naming in K-pop fanfic in the next section.

sprout,” refers to feeling intensely drawn to or enthusiastic about subcultural characters in pop culture as well as to specific signs for attributes that these characters have (Kim 2017a; Kim 2017b). *Moe* used to be lingo first employed by *otaku* to describe their intense fondness for characters in *anime* (animation), *manga* (comics), and video games (I already explored the term *otaku* in Chapter 1). In the 2000s, Japanese young people started applying the term *moe* to express sweet or loving emotions evoked by “cute” characters in popular culture (Yun 2005). Noticing this extended usage of *moe* among the youth and targeting these young consumers, the Japanese pop culture industry focused on creating characters depicted with cuter and sweeter images than past characters in pop culture products such as *manga* and video games (Ibid.). *Moe* then became a marketing strategy based on characters’ cuteness or sweetness.



Figure 4.5. Rag doll made as Suho (EXO member). © D1, used with permission.

In the context of Korean popular culture, the term *moe* has been used to describe fans’ enthusiasm for cute and younger-looking (or younger) celebrities, as well as fans’

affection towards cute and babyish characters or character-based products (such as dolls) made to look like the stars. Likewise, the K-pop industry has made use of *moe* to promote K-pop musicians. For example, SM Entertainment has produced *moe*-styled representations of the label's musicians, including members of EXO and Shinee (figure 4.6). Moreover, to perform fandom, many Korean female fans voluntarily have engaged in the creation of *moe*-style characters of their favorite stars as well as the production of various forms of fan merchandise applying these characters, such as pictures, picture-printed stickers, postcards, magnets, or keyrings, and rag dolls.¹³²



Figure 4.6. Shinee members' *moe*-style characters, created for the promotion of the group's song "Married to the Music." Photo by the author.

Let me return to my conversation with F2 and D1 about playing with K-pop star dolls, while we waited to enter the Exhibition of Kook/V. I was wondering how to get

¹³² As explored in the preceding chapter, several *hommas* have created *moe*-style characters of K-pop stars and applied these characters to produce various goods to sell at their homes. Also, some fan art creators have created *moe*-inspired drawings or paintings of the stars.

these dolls. As they knew that I am a fan of JYJ, F2 and D1 immediately searched via Twitter for producers and sellers of dolls made to show JYJ members. F2 found an account producing and selling a *moe*-styled rag doll of Jae Joong (a member of JYJ). This doll was wearing a military uniform, representing Jae Joong in the army. Additionally, the producer posted photos of the doll in a military sleeping bag and military underwear to her Twitter account. Captivated by adorable looks of the Jae Joong doll in those photos, I squealed with love for the doll. I was dying to buy it for around \$20. However, to get the doll, I would have to go through a complicated and competitive process; on a first-come-first-served basis, the producer, receiving order forms for only a brief time, would sell only two hundred dolls to fans who successfully submitted their order forms in time. F2 and D1 likened this competition for the purchase of the dolls to “Olympics,” and described the submission of order forms in fandom as “formlympic,” a new compound word of “form” and “Olympic.” That night, I eventually failed to win a medal at the formlympic to obtain the Jae Joong doll.

On the same day, I met with R to conduct the second interview with her after my participant observation of the Exhibition of Kook/V. I spoke to R about young female fans’ playing with male K-pop star dolls. After listening to me, R disclosed that she also had a *moe*-style doll made to represent Sung Yeol, her favorite member of Infinite. Sometimes, she brought the doll with her when she hung out with her fellow fans. However, R no longer played with the doll since she felt ashamed to carry the Sung Yeol doll, which looked cheesy and even uglier than his real face due to its poor quality.

Accordingly, R lost interest in the doll. Moreover, she did not become accustomed to the typical ways other female fans play with K-pop star dolls.

What then are typical ways for the fans to play with the dolls in K-pop fandom? As I observed at the Exhibition of Kook/V, fans usually take their dolls to the sites of K-pop-related events, including concerts. For instance, I saw several girls and young women carrying their dolls of Infinite, EXO, and Shinhwa members at the groups' concerts in Seoul in February and March 2016. These fans held their dolls to their bosom and toyed with the dolls, while waiting to enter the concert hall. In addition to these K-pop events, some fans bring their dolls when socializing with their fellow fans outside of the event sites, as R used to do. For example, when I went to the SUM café in SM Town for fieldwork, there were a few fangirls hanging out with and chatting with their friends. These girls also put EXO member dolls on the tables. Furthermore, the doll owners "accompany" their dolls as accessories or pets, enjoying leisure activities in their daily lives (going to the movie theater or karaoke, for example). According to D1, when going on a family trip for a summer vacation, she took an EXO doll with her. Also, while enjoying a mountain view through a telescope at an observatory, she held the doll in her hand and let him look at the view as a mother would for her son. I wondered how D1's family reacted to the doll accompanying her on the trip as well as her treatment of it as her baby. D1 said that her family did not mind her acting that way although they had seen her as weird at first.

Like most people playing with dolls, Korean female fans enjoy changing K-pop star dolls' clothes. This practice is the most commonly performed action of the doll

owners. It is notable that in response to the demand for the dolls' clothes, some fans also design, produce, and sell these clothes themselves. For instance, a shop selling clothes and accessories manufactured for *moe*-style K-pop star dolls has been in business in Seoul since the summer of 2016.¹³³ I visited this shop with D1 on September 4, 2016 since she loves clothing her dolls as well as collecting the dolls' clothes (she keeps these clothes in their own drawer within her wardrobe). The shop was crowded with young female fans. As EXO's songs were played there, the display stand of the shop was filled with dolls made to represent EXO members wearing the clothes for sale (even though the dolls were not for sale). There were a great variety of clothes on sale, from shirts, jackets, pants, and skirts to traditional Korean costume and replicas of casual outfits worn by EXO members in reality (figure 4.7). In addition to these clothes, the shop sold many accessories for the dolls, ranging from hats, glasses, jewelry, and bags to standing mikes, bathtubs, playroom mats, and strollers. The shop, allowing visitors to take pictures there, also set zones for photography so that fans could spend hours looking around the shop as well as shooting pictures there after completing their purchases of clothes and accessories. While practicing purchase, appreciation, and photography, some fans sang along to EXO's songs played inside the shop. Thus, the shop not only gratifies fans who play with K-pop star dolls through selling clothes and accessories to these fans, but also provides the doll owners with a site for them to perform multiple activities.

¹³³ The shop owner also opened a branch in Busan Metropolitan City (the second largest populous city in Korea) in February 2017, because she has done a thriving business in the sale of clothes and accessories for the dolls in Seoul.



Figure 4.7. Dolls' shirts copying those really worn by EXO members, produced and sold for fans playing with K-pop star dolls. Photo by the author.

As an extended form of changing dolls' clothes, many doll owners apply makeup to their K-pop star dolls, even though most of these dolls are male. Specifically, the fans put blusher on the dolls' chin. D1 likes this makeup practice with her EXO dolls.

D1: I enjoy applying blusher on my dolls. It's really fun to do that. I use my own blusher for this makeup practice. With blusher on, the dolls look even cuter.

(Small group interview, February 13, 2016)

Also, when the dolls get dirty, the doll owners “bathe” their dolls – they do not use the term “wash” to describe this situation. Moreover, the doll owners call their dolls ‘babies’ or the first names of the stars represented by the dolls. Thus, fans, playing with K-pop star dolls in various ways, establish an intimate relationship with the personas the dolls represent.

The lingo “*mamang*,” which is used to describe the doll owners in K-pop fandom, indicates such roles of the fans playing with K-pop star dolls as well as the relationship between the dolls and owners. Although its origin is unknown, *mamang*, sounding

vaguely French or foreign, stands for “mother.” The usage of *mamang* for motherly owners of *moe*-style dolls was initiated in EXO fandom, according to C2. Fans carry, clothe, and bathe the star dolls, as mothers do for their children. Thus, the doll owners mother their dolls, calling them babies. Through this mothering practice with *moe*-styled rag dolls representing K-pop stars, fans extend the fan-star relationship to establish a quasi-kinship.¹³⁴ In this relationship, the fans not only tend but also control the stars represented by *moe*-style baby dolls. Moreover, the fans manipulate the stars’ age and gender identities by calling the dolls “my baby,” as well as by clothing the male dolls in female dress and by applying blusher on the dolls’ chin. For instance, the clothing and accessory shop I visited sells a variety of female dress and accessories, displaying male dolls in these feminine items both online and offline (figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8. EXO dolls wearing traditional Korean women’s dress. Photo by the author.

¹³⁴ Of course, as explored in Chapter 1, female fans have formed a pseudo-kinship in the K-pop scene, using the term *oppa* (literally meaning “a girl’s elder brother”) to call male musicians.

Looking at the practice of mothering by *mamangs* (doll owners), I recall a suggestion about fandom made by Jensen:

One model of the pathological fan is that of the obsessed loner, who (under the influence of the media) has entered into an intense fantasy relationship with a celebrity figure (Jensen 1991: 11).

Mamangs make their mothering known in fandom through posting photos of the dolls to social media such as Twitter and Instagram. Also, several *mamangs* give a glimpse of their playing with the dolls to other fans or general people irrelevant of fandom at K-pop-related events or outside of the event sites. Thus, the *mamangs* share their activities with others both online and offline, within and outside of fandom. These practices contradict Jensen's characterization of fans as "obsessed loners." Additionally, even if some *mamangs* mother K-pop star dolls to plunge into "an intense fantasy relationship with a celebrity figure," the practice of mothering is rather connected to the *moe* phenomenon in which people act upon their feeling love for objects embodying cuteness and sweetness, such as baby dolls. Refuting the description of fandom quoted above, I suggest that *mamangs* and their mothering through playing with K-pop star dolls are not considered pathological by fans in Korea, but are understood as part of subcultures in Korean female K-pop fandom.

Before concluding the investigation of (sub)cultural activities regarding young females' playing with K-pop star dolls, I have to discuss F2's involvement in the production and sale of the dolls. As mentioned in the earlier section, F2 majors in concert promotion at a college. She chose this major because of her interests in popular music culture as a member of different fandoms since her elementary school days. Also, in

accordance with her major and interests, she has held part-time jobs as a designer for a hip-hop label and an assistant for pop music concerts. However, she had unhappy experiences while working as an assistant for concerts. F2 has never received the minimum hourly wage because a concert agency deducted finder's fees even though all the assistants for the concert were guaranteed the minimum hourly wage on paper. When planning concerts, K-pop labels do not hire assistants directly but have their labor needs brokered by concert agencies. Moreover, she was sexually discriminated against by other concert staff – they treated her as an astute “*ppasuni*” seeking an opportunity to see pop stars in person at the concert, rather than as a part-time worker not only assisting but also learning the process of concert production and promotion. Although she decided to major in concert promotion owing to her love for popular music, F2 got frustrated at her unpleasant experiences at the concert sites as an assistant and became skeptical about her future as a concert producer or promoter. As a result, she was taking a leave of absence from the school when I conducted my third interview with her in January 2017.

F2 started producing and selling *moe*-styled rag dolls of BTS and Shinee members in the spring of 2016. She makes designs for the dolls, including their clothes and accessories, and forwards these designs to a small sewing factory to make sample dolls.¹³⁵ Once she gets these samples done, she posts photos of the sample dolls to her Twitter account and takes orders for the dolls from other fans. After receiving all the orders and payment for the orders, she requests the factory to manufacture the dolls, and

¹³⁵ In the first interview, F2 said that she just began studying painting to improve her drawing skills.

delivers these finished products to purchasers. Successfully carrying out this production and sale of the dolls in collaboration with the factory several times, F2 has established herself as a self-employed designer and seller, acknowledged by the factory manager as his business partner. I wondered how much F2 has gained in net profit from the sale of the dolls.

F2: I have created and sold ten sets of BTS dolls so far. While other doll makers usually focus on producing and selling representations of only one member of K-pop idol groups, I have made and sold dolls of all members [of BTS or Shinee] as one set at the same time. My products are smaller than other sellers' ones... [Through ten transactions of BTS dolls so far], I have had a net gain of around \$4,500.
(In-person interview, January 6, 2017)

F2 realized a profit of about \$6,200 at first, but she used a part of this profit to send gifts to BTS members and their producer Si-hyuk Bang (the founder of the group's label).

F2: For gifts presented to the group, I decorated BTS dolls by putting floral garlands on the dolls, clothing the dolls, and tying bags on the dolls. I delivered these decorated dolls to the group members. The dolls I made won popularity among other fans because I also created and sent a doll representing Si-hyuk Bang to him along with BTS dolls and photos of all these dolls of BTS and Bang went viral. Anyway, I presented the dolls and refreshments to BTS members as they frequently enjoy having late-night snacks.
(In-person interview, January 6, 2017)

Thus, F2 earned both money and fame from the production and sale of BTS dolls. As mentioned earlier, she also produces and sells dolls representing Shinee members. She makes more money from these Shinee dolls than from BTS dolls. Furthermore, the Shinee dolls are sold to Japanese fans.

Me: Between BTS and Shinee fandoms, which one brought more profits to you?

F2: Shinee fandom. Most BTS fans are students. However, there are many Shinee fans working. These Shinee fans are willing to spend money buying dolls [made to show the group members]. Shinee has a huge fandom in Japan. The group's devoted fans in Japan also want to purchase and possess Shinee dolls I created. I have received many orders from these Japanese fans.

Me: To buy the dolls, did the Japanese fans translate your sales posts on Twitter?

F2: No, they didn't. There is a Japanese agency that orders, buys, and delivers K-pop-related goods made and sold in Korea for Japanese people. This agency reached out to me. Running their web site, the agency receives orders and payment online from Japanese fans, and then forwards them to me.

(In-person interview, January 6, 2017)

Listening to F2's production and sales activities regarding K-pop star dolls, I learn that Korean female K-pop fans' playing with dolls is not limited to a (sub)cultural practice but provides its practitioners with an opportunity to participate in an economic activity. F2 concedes this outcome of playing with K-pop dolls:

F2: While doing *fanjil* (performance of fandom) through playing with dolls, I found myself self-employed. I then got to participate in an economic activity.

(In-person interview, January 6, 2017)

Her engagement in economic practices through the production and sale of dolls also suggests that K-pop fandom enables young females to create jobs despite the current recession in Korea, where youth unemployment in August 2017 reached its highest level since 1999. This recession has been more disadvantageous to young women.

Additionally, just as F2 is in partnership with a small sewing factory, most doll sellers request small and medium-sized manufacturers in Korea to produce the dolls. These firms, engaging in the production of K-pop star dolls, play an important role in

maintaining a (sub)culture within K-pop fandom. Also, as Japanese fans purchase Shinee dolls created by F2, the small domestic manufacturers secure new foreign customers.

This economic scene involving young Korean women and domestic factories engages with the K-pop industry in terms of utilizing *moe*-style characters of K-pop stars. However, while major pop music labels and large companies dominate the mainstream industry through the mass-production of K-pop-related goods targeting its many and unspecified fans, the economic scene resulting from female fans' playing with K-pop star dolls is characterized by a small number of consumers and producers as well as small businesses. Although they engage with the K-pop industry, these practitioners of doll-related economic activities are not controlled by the institutional industrialists from big-name labels or companies. Moreover, the economic scene, based on a smaller economy, is not extensively promoted via mass media but exclusively circulated on social media within fandom. Thus, the economic practices in relation to the production and consumption of K-pop star dolls in female fandom shape a black market outside of the mainstream K-pop industry.

I conclude this section by referencing Duffett's description of fandom:

[F]andom is often pursued as a hobby, but it has elements of passionate identification that take it beyond a mere pastime and make it part of the identity of the individual (2013b: 24).

Although they might have started playing with K-pop star dolls "as a hobby" for their "pastime," young Korean females re-identify themselves as mothering practitioners (*mamangs*) rather than just fans through fandom. I quote Ken Gelder on subcultures to make a final statement about a variety of fan practices related to playing with the dolls:

Subcultures are so often distinguished not just from mass cultural forms...but also from the 'executive' aspects of modern capitalism broadly speaking. On the other hand, subcultural studies can also emphasize a subculture's immersion in commercial activity, money-making and business practices (1997: 8).

Building on Gelder's suggestion, I argue that the subcultural production and consumption of K-pop star dolls is differentiated from the mainstream K-pop industry. However, the practices of playing with, purchasing, and selling the dolls, engaged with mass and pop cultural practices in the K-pop context, cannot solely be defined as subcultural, but must be understood as broadly *cultural* as well.

In the next section, I will examine subcultural phenomena in connection with fanfic.

From Fanfic to "Coupling" and "RPS (Real Person Slash)": Female Fans' Subcultural (Re)Production of Gender and Sexuality across Imagination and Delusion

Fanfic is fictional writing created by the fans inspired by the objects of their interest. Its content can be divided into different categories... **Genfic** is simply 'general interest fiction' which refrains from sexual or romantic plotlines... **RPF** means 'real person' fiction. It fictionalizes the lives of celebrities. **Slash**, which is about same-sex trust, intimacy and eroticism... **slash fiction** is a prominent fanfic genre that usually puts the two main male characters from the series into a homoerotic relationship (Duffett 2013b: 170, 172).

In this overview of fanfic, Duffett defines diverse fanfic genres such as genfic, RPF, and slash. Although these genres are still prevalingly produced and consumed in television and film fandom, popular music fans also engage in writing and reading fictions online that "reinvent" pop musicians as new characters (Duffett 2013b: 171). Likewise, K-pop fanfic is created and circulated online by both Korean and non-Korean

fans. In this section, I explore Korean female K-pop fans' creation and consumption of fanfic along with subcultural fan practices related to fanfic. However, I will not analyze the narratives of fanfic text, as other studies on fanfic have done: instead, I focus on my research participants' engagement in the production and consumption of fanfic or fanfic-related subcultural forms, and I sketch out the traits and trends of K-pop fanfic.

Before describing current K-pop fanfic, let me outline its brief historical background. In the Western popular cultural context, the contemporary sense of fanfic as a demonstration of fandom developed from fan writing in the *Star Trek* fandom in the 1960s (Jenkins 1992, 2006a, 2006b). More specifically, these fans wrote fictions based on their appreciation of the original text, imagining what was not included in the original plotline for *Star Trek* (Ibid.).¹³⁶ Fan writing then “achieved a semi-institutional status” in Western popular culture from the 1960s to 1990s (Jenkins 2006b: 42; Duffett 2013b: 13). Since the internet era dawned in the middle and late 1990s, fanfic has flourished mainly online (Duffett 2013b: 13).

A similar phenomenon emerged in Japanese *manga* (comics) in the 1960s and 1970s – the amount of self-published (also known as *dōjinshi* (同人誌) in Japanese) *manga*, created by amateur writers including fans, grew (Levi 2010).¹³⁷ Many of these

¹³⁶ Some female fans created fictions reinventing Kirk and Spock, male characters in *Star Trek* as a same-sex couple (Jenkins 1992). To address Kirk and Spock en bloc in the text and “to signify a same-sex relationship” between them, the fans marked the couple with a slash, “Kirk/Spock” or “K/S” (Ibid.: 192; Levi 2010: 3). The term slash as a fanfic genre originated from that usage of the mark.

¹³⁷ The term *dōjinshi* is a combination of *dōjin* (同人) literally meaning “same person” and *shi* (誌) meaning “to write” or “periodical publication” as a suffix. Also, in addition to comics (*mangas*), novels are also included in self-published forms in Japan.

self-published *mangas* are characterized as “boys’ love” stories that describe a romantic or sexual relationship between young male characters, “written mostly by and for women” (Levi 2010: 1). From the late 1970s, boys’ love or BL (hereafter BL) *mangas*, which were produced and published by fans, developed and increased. These fan-created BL *manga* are also known as *yaoi*.¹³⁸ As idol stars appeared in earnest and gained huge popularity in the Japanese popular music scene in the 1980s, these idol musicians’ fans engaged in writing fictions reinventing the stars as main characters. Idol boy bands’ fans, inspired by BL or *yaoi*, created fanfic focusing on a romantic or erotic relationship between the male members of the bands.

In Korea, fanfic arose in the mid-1990s along with the establishment of the fandom of the first idol group H.O.T. in the popular music scene. However, Korean female readers had already become familiar with *yaoi*-inspired Japanese idol fanfic as well as *yaoi* or BL *mangas* and novels before Korean fanfic appeared. Although Japanese popular cultural products were restricted from being imported to Korea until October 20, 1998, some Koreans had been consuming Japanese animation, comics, movies, music, and video games by purchasing pirate copies of these products smuggled into Korea.¹³⁹ Among the Japanese pop cultural products were subcultural forms characterized by “women-oriented male homo-eroticism” (Park 2005; Han 2008). Through this illegal

¹³⁸ As a self-sarcastic acronym for *yama-nashi* (no climax), *ochi-nashi* (no point), and *imi-nashi* (no meaning), the term *yaoi* was coined by a group of fans whose self-publication (*dōjinshi*) was titled *Rappori Yaoi Tokushū Gou* (*Rappori: Special Yaoi Issue*) (Levi 2010: 2).

¹³⁹ Due to Korea’s experience during Japanese colonial era between 1910 and 1945, the Korean government did not establish diplomatic ties with Japan until 1965 and did not allow Japanese popular culture to land in Korea until 1998.

circulation of Japanese popular culture in Korea, Japanese idol groups won Korean fans. These fans not only listened to the idols' music but also got to know *yaoi*-inspired fanfic about the idol groups. Japanese male homoerotic works then gained favor with some Korean women. Under these circumstances in the 1990s, fanfic about Korean idol boy bands (such as H.O.T., Sechskies, Shinhwa, and g.o.d.) began to germinate in female fandom. Influenced by Japanese *yaoi*-inspired fanfic, Korean fanfic writers, who were mainly teenage girls, described romantic or erotic relationships between male members of Korean idol groups.¹⁴⁰

The early Korean idol fanfic was also influenced by Harlequin Romance novels that were popular among teenage girls in Korea (Kim 2016). Thus, in addition to male homo-romantic or homoerotic fanfic, the '90s fanfic writers created love stories between male idol stars and female characters (H. Kim and M. Kim 2004). However, this style of heterosexual fanfic did not last long. It lost popularity with female readers because they felt antipathy toward the female characters in relationships with the male stars in fanfics, even though these relationships were entirely fictional (Kim 2016). Also, female fanfic writers, idealizing the female characters, invented perfect, unreal women to match with the male stars so that the writers felt a sense of distance from their own text, even while projecting their own (sexual) desire for the stars onto the female characters in fiction (H. Kim and M. Kim 2004). Such antagonism toward and distance from fictional female characters caused a decline in fanfic focusing on hetero-romanticism or hetero-eroticism.

¹⁴⁰ In TVXQ fandom in the mid-2000s, there were female fanfic writers in their twenties and thirties (Han 2008).

Korean idol fanfic was then characterized by the representation of (women-oriented) same-sex relationships.¹⁴¹

In the 1990s, women-oriented male homosexual fanfics about Korean idol boy bands were initially circulated online among fan community members. Fanfic writers posted their works to online fan communities and other fans read fanfic through these communities. In the 2000s, K-pop fanfic writers opened their personal websites exclusively to post fanfic (M. Lee 2013). Fan sites specializing in fanfic were also launched in the 2000s. Not only fanfic writers but also fanfic readers visited and joined these fan sites. In this way, fanfic became a subculture shared among a limited number of female fans in Korean popular music fandom.¹⁴² Subsequently, this subcultural fanfic was utilized as a marketing strategy in the K-pop industry (Han 2008). For instance, SM Entertainment held fanfic contests for TVXQ and Super Junior fandoms in 2006 (Kang 2006). Moreover, fanfic-inspired fan art works (suggesting chemistry or erotic moods between K-pop male stars) have been displayed in the SM Community Center. Also,

¹⁴¹ While most Korean fanfics represent a romantic or erotic relationship between male stars, a small number of fanfics portray love stories between K-pop girl group members (M. Lee 2013).

¹⁴² Moreover, fanfic about Korean idol boy bands generated an additional subcultural practice among female teenage fanfic readers in the early 2000s. Deeply immersing themselves into fanfic narratives, some fangirls, as a couple, roleplayed as the male stars in fanfic. Thus, as the male stars were reinvented as being in a homosexual relationship, the fangirls identified themselves as lesbians and created a romantic (or erotic) relationship with another female fanfic reader. At that time, Korean LGBT communities debated whether to acknowledge these self-identified lesbian girls influenced by fanfic as “authentic” homosexuals or not. A television documentary aired in October 2002 critically pointed out that *yaoi* and *yaoi*-inspired fanfic “infected” female teenage readers with homosexuality (Han 2008). This fanfic-related subcultural phenomenon of fangirls’ self-identification with homosexuals, however, cannot be seen in fandom anymore.

several K-pop boy band members, as “fan service” (for fanfic writers/readers), have performed hugs and kisses with another member as in a fanfic relationship at concerts or on television shows.

The 2012-released Korean television drama *Reply 1997* represented teenage girls’ fan practices. The girl characters in this drama, fans of H.O.T. and Sechskies, the most popular Korean idol boy bands in 1997, went to watch music shows featured by these groups, collected magazines covering the group members, waited at the members’ houses to see them, and wrote and read fanfic about the groups. The heroine of the drama, a H.O.T. fanfic writer, won popularity among the group’s fans and got accepted to a college with the writing talent cultivated through the creation of fanfic even though her academic performance in high school would have normally been too poor to enter college. In the drama, she then became a television writer. After meeting up with one fanfic writer, I found out that this success story of a fanfic writer was not purely fictional.

A thirty-three-year-old woman, X, told me that she has enjoyed reading BL (boys’ love) novels since she was a teenager. She also has written BL novels herself. After watching a hidden camera television show revealing the fraternal friendship between Jiwon Eun and Sung Hoon Kang, members of Sechskies, X then created fanfic about Sechskies. After thinking about creating a BL novel reinventing Eun and Kang as a couple, X started writing Sechskies fanfics at fourteen years old. She posted these fanfics serially to a discussion board provided by a PC communication network service. In fact, X had creative writing talent and had received a literary award as a teenage girl. Thanks to her excellence in writing style and narrative structure, her fanfics gained enormous

popularity among Sechskies fans. She was eventually acknowledged as one of the Big Six fanfic writers in fandom. After Sechskies disbanded in 2000, X stopped writing fanfic about the group. However, like the heroine of *Reply 1997*, X utilized her talent for writing to enter university and major in playwriting and creative writing (playwriting for her undergraduate degree and creative writing for her master's degree). Although Sechskies reunited in May 2016, X has not resumed creating Sechskies fanfic, but she does read other fans' writings online. She currently works as a professional writer specializing in BL novels.

X recalls 1990s fanfic including her writing:

X: I think 90s fanfic is better than the current fanfic in terms of narrative structure. The former is less erotic but better-structured... I started writing short fanfics. The first Sechskies fanfic I wrote had many characters in the text but there were just six members of Sechskies. To obtain the required numbers of the characters in my first fanfic, I also adopted H.O.T. members as fanfic characters. I wrote very hard. Even when I ran away from home, I wrote fanfic and posted it to a discussion board via a personal computer set in a community center. I mainly made short stories in middle school and focused on creating long fanfics in high school. (In-person interview, August 4, 2016)

While interviewing X, I recognized how gargantuan her appetite for fanfic writing was at that time in the 90s. X even remembered many key sentences from her own and others' fanfics. She claimed that these sentences showed writers' philosophies of love rather than their desire to evoke a homoerotic mood.

I wondered how X, as a fanfic writer, has treated or viewed the stars in her fanfic or in performing fandom more broadly, because I did not perceive any hint of a link between her fanfic and her sexuality, a link which many Korean fanfic researchers have

claimed (Kim and Kim 2004; Han 2008).¹⁴³ X emphasized her creativity in fanfic writing more than she consciously expressed her fannishness throughout the interview. However, her explanations of fanfic writing and reading as well as Sechskies music allowed me to sense her fannish attitude towards the stars.

X: [Writing fanfic] basically, [fanfic] writers put a male star playing a role as the “*gong*” character (an acronym for Korean word *gonggyeok*, literally meaning offense but indicating a masculine role in fanfic) on the left, and the other one acting as the “*su*” character (an acronym for *subi*, literally meaning defense but implying a feminine role in fanfic) on the right. Most fanfic writers and readers prefer their favorite members of idol groups taking the “*su*” loved [by *gong*] in fanfic. These feminine-homo (*su*)-phile fans empathize with the stars assuming *su* and get vicarious satisfaction from the stars. On the other hand, masculine-homo (*gong*)-phile fans view their favorite stars doing *gong* characters in fanfic from a maternal heart... I liked Sechskies music and dance very much. I get a sort of folk feeling from the group’s songs. When I listened to “New School Tune,” exorcism came to mind. Also, the vocal style of Sung Hoon Kang, a lead singer of Sechskies sounds like *teuroteu* (or trot, a Korean pop music genre styled by a pentatonic scale, duple rhythm, and a lifting voice)... I analyzed fans myself. I have a friend who is a fanfic reader. We are so different from each other in terms of performing fandom. She tolerates almost everything the stars do [as a mother does for her child]. However, the stars are mere entertainment for me. If they do not please me anymore, I will quit fandom. While the stars are like toys for me, she treats them as her kids. There is a big gap between our performances of fandom. What [K-pop] idol stars can give to me is only their cute faces and quasi-romance [for the creation and consumption of fanfic]. If the idols are not cute nor evoke a quasi-romantic mood, they would no longer be needed [for fandom]... Well, I am imagining and wishing for “Ton/Duk” (coupling between Tony of H.O.T and Jae Duk of Sechskies), but never way too much.¹⁴⁴ Among fanfic writers/readers preferring Jae Duk as a *su* character, there are not many obsessed fans of Ton/Duk or other *couplings*. There are thousands of obsessed fans of Jeon/Hoon (Jiwon Eun/Sung Hoon Kang) or

¹⁴³ Hoonsoon Kim and Min-Jeong Kim suggested that fanfic provides female readers with a space of liberation in which women can express their sexuality (2004). Yurim Han argued that Korean slash fanfic manifests resistance to the repression of female sexual desire (2008).

¹⁴⁴ Although Tony was a member of H.O.T and Jae Duk is a member of Sechskies, they are frequently paired in fanfics because these two men, living together, are close friends.

Jeon/Jyong (Jiwon Eun/Ji Yong Ko) as actual relationships. Because we (supporters of Jae Duk as a *su* character in fanfic) started reinventing/receiving Jae Duk through fanfic from our sympathy with him, we don't mind any coupling of him if he would be happy to be with somebody in fanfic (X's favorite member of Sechskies is Jae Duk Kim).¹⁴⁵ Ok, here is a basic rule to couple male idols for fanfic. Usually, a leader and a lead singer of idol boy bands should be coupled. Becoming a lover of the leader of the band in fanfic can be likened to becoming a countess or a duchess. Therefore, I should have my favorite member coupled with the band leader (as a feminine-home, that is, "*su*" character). (In-person interview, August 4, 2016)

As X illustrates, there is a basic custom in Korean fanfic of having a same-sex (male) relationship. The writer marks a couple of two male stars with a slash as in Western fanfic. Assigning masculinity (*gong*) and femininity (*su*) to each character of the stars, the writer lays the *gong* character on the left of the slash, and places the *su* character on the right of the slash. Naming this couple of fanfic with a slash mark, the writer takes only one syllable or one letter from the stars' first names, as the initials of the characters' names in the original text represent the characters for coupling in Western fanfic. For instance, in fanfic reinventing Jiwon Eun and Sung Hoon Kang of Sechskies as a couple, "Jeon," a contractional syllable for Jiwon, and "Hoon," a letter from Sung Hoon, are employed for coupling and then marked as "Jeon/Hoon," as X describes. In this way, fanfic, coupling male members of actual K-pop groups as well as highlighting a homosexual relationship between these members through using a slash mark, is also termed "Real Person Slash" or "RPS" as an acronym.

¹⁴⁵ During Sechskies' activities from 1997 to 2000, Kim was represented as a rube through media (television and magazines) due to his Busan dialect.

This coupling principle suggests how Korean women perceive and represent gender through K-pop fanfic. *Gong*, as masculinity, is identified with dominance or activeness, and *su*, as femininity, is equated with submissiveness or passiveness. This perception and representation of gender, with distinction between the *gong* and *su* characters with a slash in K-pop fanfic, contradict that in Western fanfic. According to Jenkins, “[i]n slash, both characters can be equally strong and equally vulnerable, equally dominant and equally submissive, without either quality being permanently linked to their sexuality or their gender” (1992: 200). Thus, “slash narratives represent a utopian attempt to find mutual equality and autonomy and therefore offer an indirect critique of the rigidity of masculinity as it is currently practiced by most men” (Duffett 2013b: 172). In opposition to view presented by Jenkins, the power relationship in Korean fanfic between the *gong/su* characters is neither equal nor autonomous. Further, the gendered features of both characters in Korean fanfic reproduce and even reinforce existing sexist ideas about masculinity and femininity.

As briefly illustrated in the previous section, some fans, inspired by homosexual fanfic, create pictures of couples of K-pop male stars as fanfic characters, produce postcards or stickers printed with these pictures, and draw comic books about the couples. These fanfic-related goods, such as pictures, postcards, stickers, and comic books, are displayed, promoted, and sold at exhibitions along with printed versions of fanfic.¹⁴⁶ These exhibitions of fanfic-related products are open only to fanfic readers

¹⁴⁶ As mentioned in the previous section, fanfic writers mainly post and share their works online for free. However, some works are published as printed books and sold to readers.

(consumers) who must buy admission tickets in advance. For example, I attended an exhibition of “Kook/V,” a couple in BTS fanfic with a ticket F2 pre-purchased for me. Although I am not a reader of BTS fanfic or a fan of this Kook/V couple, I bought comic books and stickers making use of Kook/V characters in fanfic (figure 4.9).

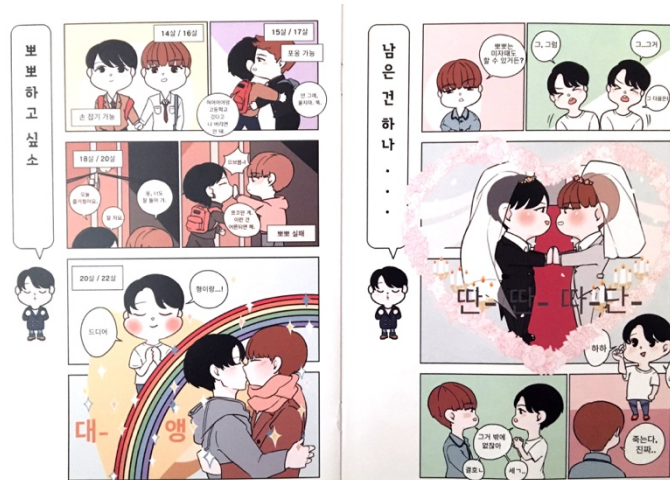


Figure 4.9. Comic book describing a homo-romantic and homoerotic relationship between Kook/V characters (members of K-pop boy band BTS), which I purchased at the “Kook/V Exhibition.” Photo by the author.

This practice of producing fanfic-related goods is termed “*yeonseong*” in the Korean subcultural context. *Yeonseong*, Korean slang within the communities for fans of women-oriented male homoerotic works, indicates this type of work, including writings and drawings, that are produced by amateur “female” creators. These writers or painters are also known as “*yeonseong-rer*,” and their creative activities are defined as a verb form of *yeonseong*, “*yeongseonghada*” (meaning “to make *yeonseong*”).¹⁴⁷ In the context of K-pop fandom, fanfic-related products, such as pictures, picture-printed cards, stickers,

¹⁴⁷ “*Hada*” is a verb ending in Korean.

and comic books, can be *yeonseong*, and creators of these goods can be called *yeonseong-rer*.

Among various forms of *yeonseong*, one may come across short notes with an attachment of photos of K-pop stars on Twitter, which function as synopses or storylines of fanfic. *Yeonseong-rers* term these pre-fanfic notes as “*sseol*” in Korean (meaning story). I was lucky to have D1 as a *yeonseong-rer* practicing *sseol* during my field research. She not only enjoys reading K-pop fanfic but also engages in *sseol* by jotting down plotlines for EXO fanfic in which Chanyeol must be a “*su*” (feminine) character. D1 opened an additional Twitter account only for this storytelling activity (“*sseol pulgi*” as a Korean slang) and tweets her *sseol* to this account.¹⁴⁸ How then did she start *sseol*?

D1: I love writing but don’t have the knack for writing... I prefer fanfic in which only Chanyeol acts as a *su* character while all other EXO members play a role as *gong* (masculine) characters... This type of EXO fanfic is in the minority because Chanyeol is tall and burly actually. As a result, most fanfic writers assign a *gong* character to him... Well, most Chanyeol fans like fanfic reinventing him as a *su* character [in a relationship with another member]. We (Chanyeol fans) know that he is like a baby and softhearted with a nice personality.

(In-person interview, August 6, 2016)

In what D1 recounted, the description of a writer of fanfic assigning a *su* character to her favorite member intrigues me. It suggests that some female fanfic practitioners (writers and readers) find pleasure in detecting and embodying intertwinement between representation and implication of sex and gender of male stars through K-pop fanfic. D1 also prefers that her favorite EXO member Chanyeol plays a role of *su* in fanfic although this coupling is not conventional in EXO fandom. Since she read fanfic in middle school,

¹⁴⁸ In the expression “*sseol pulgi*,” *pulgi* means “to release” or “to express” in Korean.

D1 has liked better her favorite K-pop stars as *su* characters in fanfic than as *gong* characters.

D1: When I was an Infinite fan, I enjoyed reading fanfic in which Sung Jong (D1's favorite member of Infinite) takes on a *su* character... I look up fanfic writers putting my favorite members on the right of slash (*su*) and subscribe their works... When I liked Big Bang, I also read fanfic reinventing Seungri (D1's favorite member of Big Bang) as *su*... I really loved "Nyong/Tory" [as a couple in fanfic]¹⁴⁹... There are many videos on YouTube foreshadowing that Nyong/Tory seems like an actual couple... Watching these videos, I thought G-Dragon and Seungri might be really dating.

(In-person interview, August 6, 2016)

I wondered if there could any reason for D1's preference for her favorite male K-pop stars as *su* characters in fanfic. I found that out from listening to her feeling about the star's relationship confirming his sexuality.

D1: [If he would be in a relationship with someone], I really want Chanyeol to go out with a man rather than to date a woman.

(In-person interview, August 6, 2016)

With this background, D1 came to participate in creating *sseol* (short notes as synopses or storylines of fanfic) herself. She illustrates her practice in relation to *sseol*.

D1: I am not writing fanfic, but releasing *sseol*, so I just jot down plotlines something like that [as a prefiction for fanfic]. I write down the stream of my ideas about or consciousness of fanfic... I tweet only short descriptions of plotlines [for fanfic to my extra Twitter account for *sseol*]. If this simple and short *sseol* is realized as a full piece of writing, this piece can be uploaded to fanfic sites or blogs. The established fanfic writers would not start their works from writing *sseol* because fanfic writing and *sseol* are different.

Me: Are there subscribers to *sseol* in fandom?

D1: Yes... People try to write every day, but as you know, it's not easy for them to create something immediately. However, for *sseol*, I can stop

¹⁴⁹ In Nyong/Tory, a couple in Big Bang fanfic, Nyong (N pronunciation version of one letter of his real first name Ji-yong) represents G-Dragon and Tory (syllables of Victory, an English translation of his stage name) stands for Seungri.

it when I can't come up with anything about it. Also, inspired by fanfic [created by other writers], I can start writing down a different kind of *sseol*. When I hit upon good ideas, I can resume existing *sseol*. That's why I engage in making *sseol*.

Me: If you have similar ideas to other people, does your *sseol* overlap with others' *sseol*?

D1: Yes, it does. However, I do not react to that. It just happens.

Me: *Sseol* is not yet the finished fanfic; no wonder *sseol* writers can't claim their copyright on *sseol*.

D1: Right. Well, there are several *yeonseong-rers* good at *sseol*, while I'm a third wheel.

Me: No way, don't call yourself a third wheel. You're just a prospective practitioner of *sseol*.

D1: Anyway, I happened to know that another *sseol* writer better than me tweeted the same plotlines as those I had written earlier than her... I usually jot down *sseol* very shortly... Also, I attach photos of K-pop stars to my *sseol* tweets to match them.

(In-person interview, September 4, 2016)

Duffett points out that “[f]anfic is not universally accepted or practiced within fan communities” (2013b: 171). Slash fanfic makes some fans uncomfortable (Duffett 2013b). Likewise, not all fans participate in producing and consuming fanfic in K-pop fandom. Although they do not read fanfic at all, some female fans enjoy pairing K-pop boy band members and catching chemistry between these two males in the reality. More specifically, these fans search for and express appreciation for photos and videos of the couple, which exude bromantic vibes, even if the two men make this romantic mood only as fan service for fanfic writers and readers. For instance, F1 recognizes Jeon/Hoon, a major couple of Sechskies fanfic but she has never read fanfic featured by this couple. A big fan of Jiwon Eun (Jeon), F1 collects any photos of Eun, including two shots of him and Sung Hoon Kang (Hoon), that is, “Jeon/Hoon.” According to F1, it is heartwarming for her to see the two shots of Jeon/Hoon and feel the bromantic relationship between the two male members of Sechskies. She claims that she has never been interested in RPS

(Real Person Slash) nor deluded by the media images of Jeon/Hoon into imagining that these two men are in a relationship, unlike many fanfic practitioners, who delude themselves that Jeon/Hoon is a real homosexual couple.¹⁵⁰

Since it appeared in the 1990, K-pop fanfic, characterized by women-oriented male homo-eroticism, has been a subculture that is actively produced and consumed by a small number of members in fandom, just as “a lively minority of fans” have participated in male homo-romantic or homoerotic fanfic writing for several decades in Western popular culture (Duffett 2013b: 172). Finding positive aspects of Korean women’s subcultural practice of fanfic, Su. Kim and Soo. Kim suggest that writing, reading, and speaking about fanfic narratives enables women to reveal their sexual desires (2015: 61). Through fanfic, female writers and readers empower themselves and construct their own cultural taste and identity in terms of gender politics (Ibid.). Building on Su. Kim and Soo. Kim, I argue that Korean female K-pop fans, engaging in fanfic and fanfic-related activities, not only reshape gender and sexuality subculturally through coupling K-pop male stars, but also explore and expand their imaginations.

In the next section, I discuss female fans’ participation in dance performances as a part of K-pop concert-related activities.

¹⁵⁰ Several participants in my research have read K-pop fanfic (E1, F2, F1, K, and T). They point out that many fanfic writers and readers, supporting fanfic couples, delude themselves that these couples are in actual homosexual relationships.

“Dance Cover:” Fans Mimicking K-Pop Dance Choreography

In popular music, the term “cover” means to perform other musicians’ songs. In K-pop culture, the usage of cover is extended to include performance remaking or mimicking K-pop dances in addition to remaking K-pop songs. In the context of K-pop, both “song cover” or “cover singing” (the remake of songs) and “dance cover” or “cover dancing” (the remake of dances) are oft-used terms. As both types of covers are frequently performed by K-pop fans, one can see cover singers and cover dancers in fandom.

In K-pop fandom, there are more fans covering K-pop dances than fans covering K-pop songs. More specifically, the performance of dance covers is more prevalent in international K-pop fandom than in Korean K-pop fandom. For example, K-pop fans in Asia, Europe, and North and South America perform dance covers collectively or individually, post their performances to social media, and hold/participate in dance cover festivals regularly (Jung 2011; Liew 2013; Kang 2014; Sung 2014).¹⁵¹ These international cover dancers have come to outnumber Korean cover dancers; the foreign fans’ dance cover practices are conducted more commonly and more actively than Korean fans’ performances. Conversely, in Korean fandom, dance covers occupy only a small portion of this fandom. In this chapter, I briefly look at a case of the only lasting cover dancing team in Korean female K-pop fandom: Do U Remember (DUR). Also, I

¹⁵¹ In addition to academic articles, there are Korean documentaries charting international K-pop fans’ dance cover or cover dance festivals held in foreign countries. I also consulted these television documentaries. Additionally, I have heard of foreign K-pop fans’ dance cover practices by communicating with K-pop researchers from other countries, whom I have met at multiple conferences.

will talk about why performances of fans' dance covers in Korea are less popular than those in other countries.

Since I was not able to recruit any Korean K-pop cover dancers as participants in my research, I rely on a media interview with the cover dancing team DUR as well as their Twitter postings. If K had not spoken to me, I would not have known about DUR, a cover dancing team consisting of female fans of Shinhwa, because this team will only post that they are performing on the day of a Shinhwa concert. While I participated in Shinhwa's concerts twice in August 2015 and March 2016 during my field research, I failed to thoroughly observe DUR's performances at the concert venue – I didn't know about DUR in August 2015. I arrived at the plaza of Seoul Olympic Gymnastic Arena after the team's performance (1:30 PM on March 27, 2016), and their dance covers were, unfortunately, almost over. However, catching a glimpse of part of DUR's dance covers for a few minutes, I saw how amazing their performance was.

Consisting of female Shinhwa fans in their teens and twenties, DUR was formed in 2012 as a hobby to manifest their fannishness (DUR members were in their early to late twenties in March 2016). They named the team after an acronym of the English title "Do You Remember?," a song included in Shinhwa's 9th regular album.¹⁵² To celebrate the date of Shinhwa's debut (March 24, 1998), DUR performed covers of Shinhwa's dances on the street near concert venues from 2012 to 2016 (Shinhwa typically holds

¹⁵² The team members named themselves DUR to remember and celebrate all of Shinhwa's work over the years through cover dancing (Kim, 2016).

annual concerts at the end of March around their album debut date).¹⁵³ For their performances at concerts, DUR members rent a practice room for the short term and rehearse their covers of Shinhwa's dances a few weeks before the concert. However, not all team members participate in rehearsals or performances at one time (Kim 2016). Since the members engage in dance covers as a hobby, they cannot attend each rehearsal or performance if their school or work conflicts with the performance schedule (Ibid.). Thus, DUR members have learned to balance their daily practices and fan practices. This manifestation of dance covers as a method of fandom is relatively uncommon, and functions as both a demonstration of fandom and a way to relieve stress from their daily lives as students or workers (Ibid.)

Although DUR participates in cover dancing as a hobby, their performances are not hobbyist in appearance. The dancers almost perfectly mimic the choreography that Shinhwa members perform on stage or in music videos; DUR's members are skilled enough to be professional dancers. In addition to detailed dance movements, DUR members accurately mimic Shinhwa members' facial expressions during dance covers. Also, DUR members dress uniformly for their dance covers, just as Shinhwa members do for their performances (figure 4.10). Lastly, DUR sets and utilizes chairs as stage props outside (often seen in Shinhwa concerts), and even has its own members represent both Shinhwa members *and* the Shinhwa backup dancers (figure 4.9).¹⁵⁴ Thus, DUR goes

¹⁵³ DUR has not performed their cover dancing since Shinhwa's concert tour "Unchanging" in the winter of 2016. A member of the team explained to me via Twitter that the concert venue was inappropriate for their dance cover performances.

¹⁵⁴ See DUR's dance cover of "Wild Eyes," utilizing chairs as stage props at <https://youtu.be/OqD11hRU3E0>. Also, see DUR's performance of "Brand New,"

beyond amateurism in their performances to nearly replicate that of the professional Shinhwa members. Accordingly, other fans react to DUR's dance covers as if Shinhwa were performing on stage: the fans chant and cheer loudly in response to DUR.



Figure 4.10. DUR members' pose during their dance cover of "Wild Eyes" at Shinhwa's concert (March 27, 2016). © DUR, used with permission.

Inspired by DUR, a few fledgling cover dancing teams were organized within Shinhwa fandom (Kim 2016). However, these teams' activities ended up as one-time events. Although there have been a small number of fans trying to cover dances in other fandoms (I described fangirls covering Sechskies' dances at the concert venue in Chapter 2), these fans are amateurish compared to DUR. These inexpert performances imitating the choreography for K-pop songs occurred as one-off fan acts. But why are cover dancing practices in Korean K-pop fandom not as popular as those in international K-pop fandom? Why do Korean fans engage in dance covers less actively than non-Korean

including the team members to represent the Shinhwa backup dancers at <https://youtu.be/MCcNq7Dc5nk>.

fans? I search for the answer to this question by drawing on an (Asian) American friend of mine, who participates in K-pop dance covers.

A graduate of the University of California, Riverside, Shirley Woo is a huge fan of K-pop idol groups. Shirley listens to K-pop songs every day and participates in K-pop-related events held in Southern California, including concerts. She also actively engages in dance covers: she practices K-pop dances in her garage; films and posts her performances to social media; and performs dance covers at festivals and competitions held in Los Angeles or Orange counties. As fellow K-pop fans and practitioners (in the role of a cover dancer for her and a researcher for me), we enjoy talking with one another about our fandoms. I will never forget what she said in January 2015. I asked her why she enjoyed covering the choreography for K-pop songs, and Shirley answered that she performed K-pop dance covers because she wanted to become a part of K-pop.

Returning to the question about why K-pop dance covers are less popular in Korean fandom than in international fandom, I suggest that foreign K-pop fans like Shirley find a process for themselves to experience their favorite music and musicians more directly through covering K-pop dances. These non-Korean fans outside of Korea do not fully understand Korean lyrics of K-pop songs, Korean posts shared to K-pop stars' social media profiles, or Korean talks given by the singers at K-pop concerts. Thus, mimicking K-pop dances, the international fans not only overcome the language barrier between themselves and K-pop music/musicians, but also learn about how K-pop music is structured and mediated via dance movements. Thus, the fans can indirectly interact with K-pop musicians. Korean fans, on the other hand, have available a multiplicity of

fan practices, besides dance covers through which they can manifest their fannishness as well as interact with and even influence the stars, of which dance covers constitute a fragment.

Conclusion

In the chapter, as well as the preceding one, I have examined multiple cultures and subcultures created by Korean female K-pop fans. As Hills suggests, “fan cultures cannot be pinned down through singular theoretical approaches or singular definition” (2002: xi); therefore, it is impossible for me to define the diversification of K-pop fan sub/cultures in this limited piece of writing. However, I have attempted an ethnography, albeit brief, of a variety of cultural and subcultural fan practices.

In the first and second sections, I delve into *nanum* (sharing and exchanging practices at K-pop concerts) and discuss *nanum* practitioners wearing masks representing K-pop stars during their *nanum* performances. On the concert day, *nanum* practitioners give other fans K-pop stars’ photo cards, photo-printed stickers, and illustrations for free, all of which the practitioners make of their own accord. Upon receiving these free items, fans give gifts in turn, such as chocolates, candies, dolls, or other pictures of their favorite K-pop stars, to *nanum* practitioners. These mutual sharing activities between *nanum* practitioners and recipients of *nanum* allow the fans to build rapport with one another. Some *nanum* practitioners masquerade as K-pop stars during their sharing practices. Wearing masks of the stars, the *nanum* practitioners not only construct new and different identities, but also roleplay as the stars.

In the third section, I examine young female fans' playing with *moe*-styled rag dolls representing K-pop stars. Through this fan practice, Korean girls and young women perform mothering by describing themselves as *mamangs* (mothers). Additionally, some fans participate in economic practices through producing and selling the K-pop star dolls and clothes for the dolls in collaboration with domestic manufacturers.

The fourth section explores Korean females' engagement in fanfic that reinvents K-pop boy band members as homosexual couples. In addition to writing and reading K-pop fanfic, fans also produce and consume fanfic-related goods, such as pictures, postcards, stickers, and comic books. Some female fans, even without reading or writing these fanfics, imaginatively "couple" K-pop male stars, as they appreciate the chemistry between male bandmates at musical and non-musical events. Through engaging in K-pop fanfic and fanfic-related subcultural activities, female fans manipulate K-pop male stars' gender and sexuality as well as expand their own imagination and creativity.

In the last section of this chapter, I looked at dance covers performed by Korean female fans, comparing these practices with international fans' engagement in K-pop dance covers.

In the next chapter, I will navigate a variety of feminist and political activities performed in Korean female K-pop fandom to argue that it can re-direct traditional Korean feminism, inspire a new phase of feminist activism, and diversify Korean protest culture. Also, I will demonstrate that through fandom, Korean women not only politicize their fan practices but also engage politically in society.

Chapter 5. “Femi-*Ppasun*”: The Expansion of Feminist Views and Actions in Korea by Female K-Pop Fans¹⁵⁵

Exit 10 from Gangnam Station was full of thousands of sheets of colorful Post-its (figure 5.1).¹⁵⁶ These Post-its contained messages of condolence to a dead woman, as well as other women’s experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault by men. The Post-it notes came soon after a brutal murder case in Seoul on May 17, 2016. In the early hours of that day, a twenty-three-year old woman was found dead in the bathroom of a building near Gangnam Station. A man in his thirties with schizophrenia killed her. He said he stabbed the woman, who he had never met, because he felt that women in his work place had always ignored him. This incident horrified women in Korea, including me, causing us to realize that “WE” might be randomly attacked by misogynists. Mourning the victim, women gathered in Exit 10 of Gangnam Station near the murder site. They wrote their condolences to her in Post-its and put them on the wall of Exit 10. Also, they wrote about their experiences of being sexually discriminated against, abused, and even threatened by men in the Post-its. Sharing these experiences publicly but anonymously, women declared that the victim was murdered only because she was a woman, and that they survived only because they did not happen to be there and then, in the bathroom in the wee small hours on May 17. Women would return to Exit 10 of

¹⁵⁵ In the title of this chapter, “femi-*ppasun*” is a compound word of “feminist” and “*ppasuni*.” This word quotes the twitter account of the hub of feminist (female) fandoms, “@femi_basun,” which is managed by several feminist fans.

¹⁵⁶ Gangnam Station (or Gangnam-yeok in Revised Romanization) is one of the most crowded subway stations in Seoul since it serves as a transportation hub at which passengers can transfer to another subway line as well as to buses.

Gangnam Station to protest feeling unsafe in Korea as females. Many Korean citizens and residents agreed with, as well as participated in, this memorial protest. However, some males, identified as members of *Ilbe*, which is an online community for multi-haters, desecrated these Post-it notes and sarcastically sent condolence wreaths to Korean “male” soldiers stationed at Exit 10 of Gangnam Station as an insult to the women involved in the memorial protest.¹⁵⁷ This action by male *Ilbe* users was understood, like the Gangnam murder case, as an expression of hatred of women, the most crucial issue that Korea currently confronts.

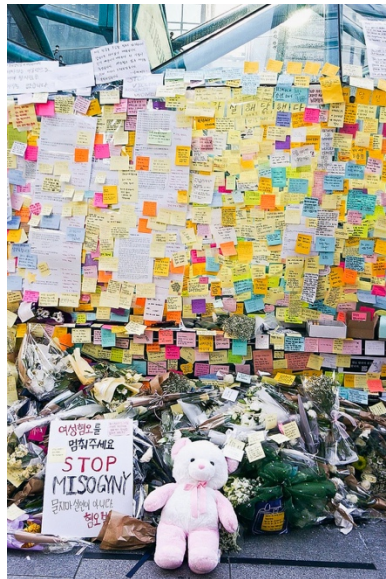


Figure 5.1. Post-its stuck on the wall of Exit of Gangnam Station, and condolence flowers for a female victim murdered by a schizophrenic misogynist. © leejimin (Twitter user @jimjimin), used with permission.

¹⁵⁷ *Ilbe* originated from an acronym for “Ilgan Best” which means the daily best posts, also known as the daily most popular posts in *DC Insider*. To save these posts, a user of *DC Insider* created a site as the storage of data. This online storage developed in *Ilbe* separate from *DC Insider*’s most popular posts.

Hearing about this so-called Gangnam Station murder, the consequent memorial protest, and anti-protest action, I first felt shock but perceived something that was changing in Korean people's feminist consciousness and practices as well as in the geo-cultural implication of the site. Although I earned my master's degree in gender studies, feminism in Korea seemed to me like a macro-discourse used exclusively by scholars, activists, lawmakers, or administrators rather than by ordinary people. Before studying gender studies, I had been sure of myself as a feminist because I had seen gender discrimination in Western classical music performance in Korea, which I had started to participate in at six years old and had majored in for my bachelor's degree. Moreover, I had been eager to change this situation in the music field by activating feminist strategies. However, when I first entered graduate school, I had doubts about my qualifications as a feminist. Fellow students in gender studies welcomed me but on the other hand, they were somewhat reluctant to acknowledge me as a feminist; I had not worked as an activist, like them, involved in movements for women's labor or anti-sexual violence, and I had not majored in political science or sociology in college. To re-identify myself as a feminist, I learned both feminist theory from courses and feminist practices from my colleagues' experiences in the 'field.' I was eventually accepted by the feminist community.

It has been ten years since I went through this process of self-positioning as a feminist in my master's courses. Keeping informed about the Gangnam Station murder, I found out that feminism was no longer specific to a small percentage of women in particular situations. Rather, ordinary women, such as passersby at Gangnam Station,

could be feminists by bringing up mundane but mutual matters of women's daily lives, speaking about themselves, empathizing with one another, building female solidarity, and taking action.

It was also inspirational that the change occurred in "Gangnam Station." As this station has been a traffic hub on both the Seoul Subway Line 2 and the Shinbundang Line, a great number of people have passed through the station.¹⁵⁸ Accordingly, commercial and financial districts have formed around the station, encompassing conglomerates, small businesses, clinics, educational institutes, restaurants, cafés, pubs, movie theaters, and so on. Since there were buses running from my place, Suwon, to Gangnam Station, I used to attend Japanese, English, and Indonesian institutes near the station. Also, although I was hanging out with my friends in places other than Gangnam Station, I headed back to the station to take a bus to Suwon. In the mid-to-late 1990s, Gangnam Station was one of the centers for the young generation, also known as "Generation X," and their culture in Korea. Before talking about the station as a symbol of Korean youth culture in the 1990s, I outline Generation X in the context of Korea.

The term Generation X was coined by Canadian writer Douglas Coupland's novel, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, which was published in the United States in 1991. In this novel about three young persons, the term Generation X was used to describe people born in the late 1960s who grew to adulthood in the 1980s.

¹⁵⁸ There are nine subway lines running in Seoul. Some lines, such as Line 1, 3, 4, 7, and 9, are extended to Seoul's satellite cities and even to the non-Seoul Metro area. The Shinbundang line connects parts of Suwon, Yongin, and Seongnam (all satellite cities of Seoul) to Seoul at Gangnam Station.

This term became popular through American mass media, describing young people who had experienced a recession in the early 1990s. The generation called X was then characterized as follows: some generation X's parents had a double income; 50% of this generation grew up in single-parent families; due to their living with a single parent, this generation had both a longing for and resistance to the traditional family; this generation refused the older generation's values and culture; this generation was exposed to an uncertain job market; this generation distrusted the promises of government and industry; this generation enjoyed cutting-edge technologies; and this generation did not care about social issues but foregrounded individual lifestyle choices.

In Korea, the term Generation X first appeared in 1994 as the tag line in a cosmetic advertisement.¹⁵⁹ Just as in the U.S., this term referred to the younger generation in their twenties in Korea. However, Korean Generation X was described differently from Americans due to socio-economic differences between Korea and the United States during this period. While the American Generation X went through a recession in the 1980s through the early 90s, Korean Generation X enjoyed economic prosperity under a new regime of the civilian government resulting from a pro-democracy movement in the 1980s. Following materialistic values, they actively consumed goods not from need but to construct a showy image. As the American Generation X prioritized their individual daily lives, Korean youth also put emphasis on individualism. Their display of consumption was, thus, to demonstrate their existences as individuals and to

¹⁵⁹ Of course, there were terms calling young people in Korea in the early 1990s, such as “new generation,” “new human beings,” and “orange clan.”

construct their personal identities. To better exhibit themselves, Generation X not only consumed various cultural and hi-tech products, but also produced their own culture using networks with their personal computers. Although they forged collective cultural practices and discourses through PC communication services, Generation X had a stronger tendency towards individualism than the older previous generation. Moreover, like American Generation X, Korean young people of the 90s were less concerned with social and domestic issues than those of the 80s, who had played a leading role in democratizing Korean government. However, they remained much interested in Western culture and products.¹⁶⁰

This new generation in 1990s Korea congregated near Gangnam Station. Getting there, the young people in Western brand clothes, such as GUESS, Calvin Klein, Polo Ralph Lauren, and United Colors of Benetton, ate Burger King Whoppers, bought coffee, and drank beer. They also watched movies, went to karaoke rooms (also known as singing rooms, that is, *noraebang* in the Korean language), and danced at nightclubs. Gangnam Station was a symbolic place representing Generation X's consumer culture. The station was irrelevant to political or social issues or rallies, which most of Generation X did not care about. Gangnam-gu, the neighborhood around Gangnam Station, has been a pivotal area for the Korean popular entertainment industry since the 2000s. For example, SM Entertainment and JYP Entertainment, the biggest K-pop labels, have

¹⁶⁰ After holding the 1988 Seoul Olympic, the Korean government lifted the regulations on public overseas trips in 1989. From the mid-1990s, college students started to backpack in European countries. I also went to Vienna, Salzburg, Venice, Florence, Rome, Paris, and Amsterdam in 1996 when I was a sophomore.

headquartered in Gangnam-gu.¹⁶¹ Thus, multiple K-pop practitioners, including musicians, producers, managers, and fans, have headed to Gangnam-gu to engage with the music scene. Importantly, fans have visited music company headquarters to buy official merchandise produced by the labels, as well as to have a chance to bump into their favorite K-pop stars there.¹⁶² Since the labels are located roughly within four miles from Gangnam Station, many fans using public transportation have transferred through the station. Due to this proximity, Gangnam Station can be understood as part of the cultural and geographic landscape of K-pop.

The Gangnam Station murder has brought changes to the local characteristics of the station, which had been represented by apolitical youth's involvement in popular, globalized, individualized, and consumer culture, as well as by the K-pop industry. Everyday feminism, claimed and fulfilled by ordinary women, has come to occupy the space full of individualism, consumerism, and apoliticism. At Exit 10 of Gangnam Station, the women not only have spoken out about gender and sexual issues faced in their daily lives, but also have banded together with the public, that is, common passersby, for the memorial protest against femicide. I also became aware of this type of change in Korean female K-pop fandom. This chapter charts a variety of the fans' feminist practices and political practices performed through fandom.

¹⁶¹ In addition to SM Entertainment and JYP Entertainment, many popular music labels have their head offices in Gangnam-gu.

¹⁶² When I was at a café in SM Entertainment's headquarters for an interview with a participant in my research on January 4, 2017, I came across a member of K-pop boy band Super Junior, Siwon Choi who passed by the café.

The Development of, and the Issues Facing, Feminism in Korea

Before looking at feminist and political practices in Korean female K-pop fandom, I outline the broader scope of Korean feminism in which the fans and their activities are embedded. Rather than trace its whole history, I review recent tendencies, with a focus on a few specific milestones, and I talk about how both feminism and feminists have been understood in Korean society.

Before the Western-oriented term “feminism” appeared in Korea, Korean women already had acted as feminists since the late nineteenth century by initiating various women’s movements, claiming the right to education for women and to participation in social activities. However, this type of women’s campaign was inactive between the mid-1940s (post-Korean independence) and the 1960s. Instead, government-dominated women’s organizations were mobilized in support of government propaganda for decades (Kang 2004). By the 1970s, female workers’ movements were launched in addition to democratic union campaigns and student protests against dictatorship.¹⁶³ In the meantime, female intellectuals, studying Western feminism (socialist feminism) and recognizing women’s issues with inequality, established a women’s studies department at Ewha Womans University in 1977 to address the issues academically and put their recognition into practice.¹⁶⁴ Those intellectuals and female activists who participated in student protests founded more liberal women’s societies than the 1960s women’s organizations,

¹⁶³ Many young single women in rural areas had moved to towns to work in urban factories since the 1960s.

¹⁶⁴ Ewha Womans University, founded by American female missionary Mary F. Scranton in 1886, is the oldest and most prestigious private women’s university in Korea.

shared the goals of national and democratic movements, as well as seeking women's liberation and the demolition of patriarchy throughout the 1980s (Ibid.). These liberal women's societies aimed to practice feminism as marginalized minorities (Ibid.)

In the 1990s, such women's societies achieved results: the liberal women's movements formed their identities and originalities; the movements specialized in relevant fields, such as reproduction, education, ideology, sexuality, culture, and pacifism; the societies expanded their solidarity with one another and with international activists through different women's movements; and the societies and their liberal movements had a decisive effect on legislation and enforcement of women-related laws in the 1990s-2000s (Ibid.) In particular, their contribution to the women-related laws confirms that feminism operates as a system in Korean society beyond theory and ideology. Among the laws are remarkable special acts on sexual violence and prostitution.¹⁶⁵ The women's societies and liberal campaigns also led to the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2001 (current the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family). Feminists engaging in liberal women's movements have entered the mainstream of Korean civilian government as strategists, administrators, and politicians since the 2000s.

However, such accomplishments in liberal women's movements were criticized by other liberal feminists still in the non-mainstream, also known as "young feminists." These young feminists pointed out that the established and vested feminists who had led

¹⁶⁵ Special act on sexual violence was enacted in 1993, resulting from solidarity between women's societies and social organizations in 1992-1993 (Kang 2004). Special act on prostitution was legislated under the influence of a women's movement in 2004 (Ibid.).

liberal women's campaigns were institutionalized and bureaucratized (Ibid.). The young feminists appeared in the mid-1990s and stood out through the 2000s. As postfeminists influenced by postmodernism, they emphasized gender and sexual identities and pursued a politics of difference. They denied authoritative and uniform relations, but attempted to relate to individuals in liberated and egalitarian ways (Kwon Kim 2017). Censuring the male-dominated social fabric in which men's individual and collective violence was tolerated, the young feminists demanded strategically separation from that social structure (Ibid.). They also recognized that male 'subjectivity' was based on confrontation with and exclusion of others (Lee 2016). In reaction to such male subjectivity, the young feminists did not require women to be subjects (Ibid.) Instead, they wanted to develop women's positive worth which was devalued in male-dominated society, and then turned attention to sisterhood (Lee 2016; Kwon Kim 2017).

Compared to feminist activists in the 1980s, the '90s young feminists performed activities in smaller communities than women's organizations or societies. They made use of cyber space, especially online feminist activities. Through Internet discussion boards, the young feminists disputed the extra points system, which benefited men completing military service when they sought employment, and then they influenced the abolition of the incentive system for men's military service in Korea (Kwon Kim 2017). Additionally, the young feminists, interested in women's daily issues rather than in a macro-discourse on women, wanted to address these issues through utilizing popular culture (Son 2017).

The young feminists and their politics of difference and identities inspired Korean sexual and gender minorities to take part in social movements. In the mid-1990s, the sexual/gender minorities not only started to construct their communities online and on campus, but also launched an alliance for LGBT human rights advocacy (Han 2017). Their movement adopted a more festive form of expression than other social movements in Korea. Since 2000, they have held a cultural festival (the Korea Queer Festival), including parades, performances, exhibitions, screenings, and forums, rather than violently staging demonstrations against homophobia.¹⁶⁶ Through this annual festival, sexual/gender minorities have produced a queer activism and have formulated Korean queer theory through publications. In addition to their own festival, the minorities have joined other social movements in Korea since the late 1990s, such as a general strike, anti-Iraq War protests (against the Korean troop deployment to Iraq), and anti-FTA demonstrations. They are visible at these demonstrations because they bring a rainbow flag, the symbol of LGBTs (Nara 2016)

Encouraged by post feminism, the sexual/gender minorities have built solidarity with young feminists and self-identified as feminists. However, while women's issues, such as discrimination and oppression, were resolved in a measure through feminists' influence on legislation and enforcement of women-related acts, LGBT issues have not been addressed at administrative and legislative levels. Moreover, Christian,

¹⁶⁶ I participated in this cultural festival, also known as Rainbow Festival (current Korean Queer Festival) in Itaewon, Seoul in 2002 to support my LGBT friends. I played Judy Garland's "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and British rock band Queen's pieces on the violin during the festival.

conservative, and right-wing groups have vehemently opposed positive descriptions of sexual/gender minorities in mass media (Ibid.). Accordingly, a prohibition on discrimination encompassing LGBTs has not been proposed yet, even if a pre-announcement of anti-discrimination legislation was already made in 2007 (Ibid.).

One of the most important milestones achieved by Korean feminists is the comfort women issue. In the 1980s, English literature scholar Chung-ok Yun, who was almost drafted as a comfort woman for the Japanese military in the 1940s but barely escaped from it, started her research on comfort women both in and outside of Korea (Kim, Kim, Ju, and Kim 2014). She presented this research at a symposium on comfort women in 1988 (Ibid.). Also, Yun published her articles on the women serially in a newspaper from January 1990, and the comfort women issue was then reported to the public. Meanwhile, Korea hosted the Olympic Games in 1988. Before the Seoul Olympics, as the Korean government promoted the entertainment of Olympic visitors by professional female performers (also known as *gisaeng*, traditional Korean professional female entertainers good at music, dance, painting, and calligraphy), many Japanese men visited Korea to enjoy both the entertainment and sexual services provided by the performers (Lee 1992; Pilzer 2006). Protesting against this promotion of sex tourism at an airport, feminists pointed out that the Japanese men were following in the footsteps of Japanese soldiers who had exploited comfort women as sex slaves (Lee 1992).

On President Tae-woo Roh's diplomatic visit to Japan in May 1990, graduate students in a women's studies department at Ewha Woman's University issued a statement demanding the Japanese government address the comfort women issue.

Through the statement, the students, banding together with other feminist societies, specified the comfort women issue not only as part of the history of Japanese colonialism, but also as part of the history of the sexual abuse of women. However, the Japanese government denied their military's involvement in drafting and exploiting comfort women as sex slaves during World War II. In reaction to Japanese denial, Korean feminist activists founded the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan in November 1990.¹⁶⁷ Many other Korean and non-Korean feminists participating in different women's movements united in working with the council. They searched for the now-elderly women who had been comfort women (also known as *halmeoni*, literally meaning grandmother in Korean), and interviewed *halmeoni* about their experiences as sex slaves for the Japanese military.¹⁶⁸ Encouraged and supported by the council, *halmeoni* filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government. Also, since 1992, the council members have held peaceful rallies in Seoul with *halmeoni* and the public every Wednesday to demand a sincere apology from the Japanese government.

Such feminist activities led the Korean government to investigate the issue of comfort women. The government then provided *halmeoni* with dwellings. The Korean government also called on the Japanese government to take action on behalf of these women. The Japanese prime minister eventually admitted the governmental involvement by expressing his apology for the compulsory draft of the women and reflecting on it.

¹⁶⁷ Chung-ok Yun was the first co-representative of the council.

¹⁶⁸ In August 14, 1991, Hak-sun Kim firstly gave a press conference to reveal her experience as a comfort woman.

Moreover, the UN Commission on Human Rights debated the comfort women issue in 1993.

Up to this point, I have reviewed the history of feminism in Korea from the 1970s to the 1990s as follows: socialist feminism was introduced in the 1970s; in the 1980s, feminists focused on gender and class issues under the influence of Marxist feminism; and post-feminism in the 1990s encouraged young feminists to emphasize identities, such as gender and sexuality, and to value difference and diversity. The dominant definition of feminism in Korea is now understood as a means of negotiation, through which both women and men can survive, rather than as resistance (to the governing group) in the world ruled and dominated by a single voice (Chung 2013[2005]). Feminism is a movement for negotiation, survival, and co-existence (Ibid.). Feminism also helps both women and men identify and politicize their perceptions and actions within social relationships, as the foundation for reconfiguring their perceptions and actions (Ibid.). Furthermore, feminism enables people to reflect on mainstream ideas and actions from the perspectives of various minorities based on their body, class, ethnicity, and race in addition to their sexuality and gender (Kim 2008).

Embracing the current understanding of feminism, new younger feminists have appeared in Korean society since the mid-2010s.¹⁶⁹ They perform online activities and pay more attention to feminist practices in women's daily lives than to the macro-discourse of/on women collectively, as '90s young feminists had done. They pursue

¹⁶⁹ According to Huijeong Son, these feminists identify themselves as “young young feminists” (Son 2017).

everyday feminism, which encompasses individual and diverse women and their daily issues. Among these new younger feminists, “megalian” (radical feminists on *Megalia*, the website) are well known for their peculiar practices.¹⁷⁰ Via their website, megalian (megal as an abbreviation) spew insults at Korean men, even using offensive sexual words. Thus, megalian re-direct misogynistic speech acts, typically performed online by Korean men, toward a different target. Through this re-direction, megalian strategically expose quotidian misogyny (Son 2017). While some people speak highly of such a practice as demonstrating the commitment to the feminist movement by the new generation, others criticize the practice as merely reproducing hatred (Ibid.).

Criticism of megalian and radical feminists has led to negative views of all feminists for many people. Unfavorable attitudes towards feminists and feminism in Korea have been demonstrated through various cases. For example, a teenage boy declared his hatred of feminists through social network services and left Korea to join ISIS voluntarily.¹⁷¹ A famous (male) film critic described feminism as a brainless ideology more dangerous than ISIS. In a popular webcomic illustrating the worst blind

¹⁷⁰ Megalia is a compound word of “MERSC” (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) and “egalia” (the female-dominated land excerpted from Gerd Brantenberg’s novel *Egalia’s Daughters*). When MERSC spread throughout Korea and other Asian countries in the first half of 2015, it was said that two Korean women symptomatic of MERSC did not follow a quarantine rule in Hong Kong. Hearing of this news, many netizens posted misogynistic words to the discussion board for MERSC (portal site *DC Inside* MERSC gallery). In response to these misogynistic posts, women visited the board and poured out misandristic language there, imitating misogynists. The board suddenly functioned as an arena for a verbal battle between men and women rather than as a forum for discussion about MERSC. The women finally opened up their own website titled *Megalia* on June 2015 (megalian.com). Currently, *Megalia* is on hiatus.

¹⁷¹ See a news story about this case at <http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/22/world/isis-korea-teenager/>.

date the main characters experienced, one told the other that the worst girl he met on a blind date was a feminist (Yun 2016). Although it was recently changed, the word feminist was defined by the National Institute of Korean Language as a man with favorable attitudes about women. Such misconceptions of feminism and feminists have made many Korean women hesitant to recognize and practice feminism, as well as to identify themselves as feminists. Nevertheless, some women actively learn feminism and act as self-identified feminists in their everyday lives. Among these feminists, I find female K-pop fans and I look at how they perform feminist practices through their fandom.

Boycott of an Artist: J(Y)J Fandom's Prompt Response to (Y's) Sex Offenses against Women¹⁷²

It was my seventh time attending XIA Junsu's concerts, including musicals featured by him. He held solo concerts in Seoul, on June 11 through 12, 2016 as part of his 5th tour in Asia, and I attended the second concert on June 12. As always, his singing, dancing, and even speaking throughout the concert perfectly gratified me. In response to his performance, I screamed with exhilaration, sang along to his songs, chanted concert slogans, and waved my light stick rhythmically and vigorously. The thrill of experiencing Junsu's live performance did not cool down easily even after I returned from the concert to my home. Suddenly I was reminded of my excited conversation with G1 about JYJ's

¹⁷² As a member of J(Y)J fandom boycotting Yu Chun Park, a sex offender, and as an autoethnographer, I have no choice but to parenthesize Y, which indicates Yu Chun of JYJ.

music after we had together watched the musical *Dracula* starring Junsu on February 8, 2016. She had recommended to me some YouTube videos of JYJ's performances, in which the three members of JYJ harmonized beautifully, building up chords. I looked forward to JYJ's future concerts, which would be held in two years after all the members – Jae Joong Kim, Yu Chun Park, and Junsu Kim – complete their military services in 2017 and 2018. Listening to “Fallen Leaves,” my favorite JYJ song, I was happy to imagine that my fandom would “walk on only the flowery way.”¹⁷³

My “flowery way” (*kkotgil* in Korean) to perform JYJ fandom did not last long. On the day after Junsu's second concert (June 13), headlines proclaimed that JYJ member Yu Chun was accused of sexual assault. He had been working as a public servant as an alternative form of his mandated military service since August 2015. According to the news, he visited a bar with his friends after work on June 3, 2016. The bar's female servers also entertained male guests. In the bathroom of the bar, Yu Chun raped a prostitute/barmaid in her twenties. She accused him of sexual assault on June 10. In response to this news, C-JeS Entertainment, the label promoting and managing Yu Chun and JYJ, released a statement denying the accusation. Since the police investigation of this case was in progress, members of JYJ fandom, including myself, had to wait for the investigation results, even though we were shocked at both his visit to such a bar and his sexual relationship inside the restroom. On June 14, the barmaid dropped the charge

¹⁷³ This song includes the lyrics, “After flowers fall off, we will begin anew” (original written in Korean, translated by the author). This sentence was adapted and altered by other K-pop fandoms as a catchphrase, “Walk on only the flowery way” to support and cheer up their stars. This phrase then became a buzzphrase in Korean popular culture, as it was widely circulated via mass media.

against Yu Chun, saying that the sex had been consensual. She said that the reason she filed the charge was because she felt that Yu Chun and his friends looked down on her. Although JYJ fans found it still hard to understand his having sex with a female server at the bar, the fandom felt relieved about her withdrawal of the charge of sexual assault.

My performance of JYJ fandom never returned to the flowery way. It entered the thorny way when a second rape victim accused Yu Chun of sexual assault on June 16, 2016. She was a prostitute/barmaid, like the first accuser. She claimed that he had raped her in the bathroom of a different bar. In addition to her, two more prostitute/barmaids filed complaints against Yu Chun with the police. They all had been allegedly raped by him in the restrooms of the bars where they worked, or in the bathroom in his house. The more the stories about his sexual violations, as well as about his sexual preferences and even about the psychology of his attitudes towards sex, unfolded via news media, the more devastated I got. Although I identified myself as a member of JYJ fandom, I could imagine how badly and deeply other (existing) fans were feeling. Longtime fans were miserable and shattered about Yu Chun. The fandom's history traces back to TVXQ in 2004:

U: I became a fan of TVXQ [JYJ] in 2008. Before then, I already had known their activities, and liked their music though.
(In-person interview, August 20, 2015)

H2: I have been a fan of them [JYJ] since February 2004.

Me: Wow, you remember the month [you became a fan]!

H2: Yes, I do. I remember their first appearance on the public TV networks. They debuted in February 2004 as one of the monthly rookies presented by *Music Camp* (the music show on MBC). At that time, they were TVXQ.

(In-person interview, September 3, 2015)

O: I have been fond of them [JYJ] since they made their debut as TVXQ [in 2004], when I was an elementary school student. (In-person interview, December 18, 2015)

Moreover, as explored in Chapter 1, JYJ fandom had supported JYJ members' separation from SM Entertainment. In what Lee described as "fan activism," JYJ fandom carried out various activities on behalf of the group (S. Lee 2013, 2015). Thus, the history of JYJ fandom is not understood only by its time continuity, but is also characterized by their passionate fan practices. The fans, hearing about Yu Chun's sexual assault, faced a new vicissitude in their fandom. However, the veteran fan activists, the female fans in *DC Inside JYJ* gall, swung into action as soon as the second rape victim was reported. Through threads written in the gall post, they discussed how they should react to the charges against Yu Chun. Fans opened the voting to make a decision about their stance and reaction. All fans in the gall were not able to vote, however. To qualify as voters, they had to prove their fannishness by confirming their possession of JYJ's albums through the online discussion board. After the vote was completed, the fandom disclosed the results of the voting and stated the fans' position about Yu Chun Park's case of sexual assault as follows:

1. DC JYJ gallery supports only two members, **Jae Joong Kim** and **Junsu Kim**, as of June 17, 2016.
2. Condemning Yu Chun Park, who causes a stir in society, we will henceforth stop our activities related to him, and exclude all the textual and image content of him in the gall.
3. Since Jae Joong Kim, Yu Chun Park, and Junsu Kim started litigation with their former label in 2009, we, DC JYJ gallery, have supported these three men standing against an unfair contract with the label. The reason why we've done everything in support of JYJ is that we believed their conviction that they should resist an unfair act [by the entertainment industry] and strike a blow against it. However, since *Park has frequented a place for sex peddling*, it does not stand to

reason at all that the fandom, conducting a campaign to break down unfairness [in the K-pop industry], continues to back him. **Therefore, JYJ gallery recants all our erstwhile support for him.**

4. Also, DC JYJ gallery will try to counteract any negative rumors about, as well as any slander or libel on, the other two members, Jae Joong Kim and Junsu Kim, when nothing could be further from the truth.
5. Finally, we want to express our deep disappointment and indignation at Park, who has betrayed fans' faith in him, as well as fans' youth [committed to him], for the last thirteen years.

(Originally written in Korean and translated by the author; bold in the original posting)¹⁷⁴

The above statement was uploaded as an image posting, and the image was named “fucking my youth.” This name was a very pithy remark which represented how JYJ fandom was feeling. I first laid an eye on the last item of the statement. The fans specified the length of their fandom, thirteen years. As I described earlier, to the fans, that time is the history of themselves. The hero shaping their histories was, it later transpired, a filthy guy. The history of JYJ fandom was threatened by its re-construction or even deconstruction due to Yu Chun's misdeed. The fans felt a sense of frustration at the years they had spent on developing, expressing, and confirming their fannishness. Although she had become a member of JYJ fandom in recent years, G1 tried to read other fans' minds, and then pointed out:

G1: The time I have invested so far would first come to my mind. I wanted [to become a fan], I liked him [Yu Chun]. I also decided to invest my time on him of my own free will. However, I do not consider such things [that I liked him and I invested my time on him] at this time. Rather, I think, “Bring my time back,” “Give me my money back!” [Like other fans] I feel betrayed [about his true person].
(Telephone interview, January 5, 2017)

¹⁷⁴ See details at <http://gall.dcinside.com/board/view/?id=jyj&no=1825795>.

Indeed, H2 and O, as quoted earlier, had started JYJ (former TVXQ) fandom in 2004 when they had been fifteen-year-old and ten-year-old girls, respectively (H2 was born in 1989 and O was born in 1994). Thus, Yu Chun, an ‘artist’ in K-pop, had shaped these young women’s adolescence during which they, constructing and performing their own fandom, had been willing to invest their time and money to demonstrate their fannishness.¹⁷⁵

It is worthy of note that JYJ fans recognized Yu Chun as a sex offender through their statement posted to JYJ DC gall. This recognition suggests that the fandom is not confined to a league of pop star worshipers or supporters on a personal level, which is a generally biased understanding of fandom. Instead, the members of JYJ fandom, like other members of Korean society, evaluate their stars in relation to social norms, and even criticize Yu Chun’s violation of these norms on a public level. H2 also stressed the role of social norms in shaping how fandoms can be performed and de- or re-constructed:

H2: The boundary through which I can decide to continue my fandom is drawn by whether my favorite “artists” commit a crime, *breaking social norms*, or by whether they act in accordance with [their] convictions. In this respect, I regret the case of Yu Chun Park. While I give infinite affection to the artists, I want to support them in a critical way. However, since the case [of Yu Chun] was beyond what I can accept, I no longer support Yu Chun Park, the artist... I do not want to recall and talk about this case, because it affronted me so deeply.
(Mobile messenger chat, January 31, 2017)

¹⁷⁵ As K-pop labels promote their musicians as “artists,” their fans describe K-pop stars as artists. Participants in my research frequently used the term artists during interviews.

On the other hand, G1 contextualizes Yu Chun's behavior in male adults' unhealthy recreational activities, which have been implicitly allowed in patriarchal Korean society:

G1: If I were in my teenage years or my twenties, I would have been shocked so much [by his visit to bars to be entertained by female barmaids]. However, I already knew [where and how adult men have fun after work]. Generally speaking, there are still more Korean men going there [to such bars] than those who have not been there. I'd say [to Yu Chun], "You should have behaved yourself with discretion. There are many girls loving you with pure hearts. Why do you hurt them, getting caught [behaving smuttily]?"
(Telephone interview, January 5, 2017)

I agree with G1 to some degree because many Korean men, even including the police, prosecutors, and congressmen, have visited bars to be entertained by prostitutes/barmaids not only for leisure, but also on business. I have heard stories about this nasty type of Korean adult males' culture from news and reportage, as well as from my male friends. However, as a feminist, I oppose such male culture in which women must prostitute themselves, where women's sex is exploited as a bribe, and women are then treated inhumanely. Prostitution represents a relationship in which men dominate and suppress women (Barry 1995). Also, prostitution allows the buyers to purchase not just sex but the power to control other human beings (Davidson 1998). Thus, prostitution can be understood as an institution through which customers can attain power to temporarily give sexual orders to prostitutes (Ibid.). Even under this dominant-subordinate relationship and power relationship in sex, prostitutes should not be raped by their clients. That is why I was so disgruntled with Yu Chun. Furthermore, he was very much aware that more than 85% of his fans are females, as well as how devoted these female fans are

to the group. The fans thus felt insulted from a position as women, who could relate to the prostitutes/barmaids raped by Yu Chun, and they condemned his behaviors against social norms as a sex offender:

Me: I'd like to connect this [Yu Chun's] case to a human rights issue. In some ways, JYJ [as an idol group] wanted to separate [from SM Entertainment], arguing that their human rights had not been protected properly [by the label]. Having claimed that they had not been well treated, Yu Chun then did something bad at bars, places which are like legal limbo [because prostitute/barmaids also do not have their rights respected]. For this reason, I cannot forgive him.

F1: So two-faced!

Me: Also, he knows how power is exercised [from having worked with SM Entertainment]. However, he used his power to control women sexually [at the bars].

U: ... Everything [the way in which Yu Chun treated women at the bars] was exposed. How then has [he] seen us [female fans]? While we said [to him], "Do it better!" and "Go better!", how much has he sniffed at us? Thinking of this, I felt betrayed [by him].

(Group interview, September 10, 2016)

The above quoted interview was not in fact conducted to discuss JYJ fandom's reaction to sexual violation committed by Yu Chun. Conducting preliminary participant observation of Sechskies's first concert in Seoul on September 10, 2016, I accompanied F1, U, and Seung-Ah Lee. While F1 and U attended the concert that day, Lee and I just looked over Sechskies fans, their pre-musicking, and the concert venue. Before F1 and U entered the concert venue, we had lunch together and chatted about K-pop and our own fandoms. With others' consent, I counted our conversation as an informal interview. During lunch time, we continued to share tidbits of gossip about pop stars, which we knew or heard about from other people and mass media.

Me: I was shaken by a Japanese [female] fan's comment online [about Yu Chun's case] saying, "They [the prostitutes/barmaids raped by him] should have been honored to have slept with Yu Chun."

U: A Japanese [female] editor of an entertainment news medium texted me that she would be willing to have sex with him as many times as he wants.¹⁷⁶ [As she was thinking that way], I did not want to meet up with Japanese fans any more. I had known her for five years but I quit our friendship in a day [due to the difference between our thoughts about Yu Chun's case]. I think that he should go abroad [for his comeback]. He wouldn't be able to perform in television dramas or films in Korea for the next decade.

F1 and me: In Korea, those who abdicate their military service and have sex scandals should give up their careers [as pop stars].

Lee: [Yu Chun's case is] the worst ever among other idols' scandals!

U: In the case of Seven (K-pop idol solo singer, also known as Se7en), he just went [to a massage parlor] but didn't do anything [sex with a masseuse].

Me: But he was condemned by the whole Korean people.

Lee: Rather, what if [Yu Chun] visited bars and fell in love with a prostitute/barmaid?

U and me: How romantic!

F1: Ho Young Son (a member of g.o.d.) did [fall in love with and date a prostitute/barmaid].

U: So did Ji-ho Oh (Korean actor)!

Me: So did Gyu-woon Jung (Korean actor)!

F1: Jiwon Eun (a member of Sechskies) drove drunk twice.

Me: That would be better [than other celebs' sex scandals].

U: Only Junsu is OK among JYJ members. Jae Joong did drink and drive. (Group interview, September 10, 2016)

The case of sexual assault committed by Yu Chun led to lots of gossip among both JYJ fandom and the public. However, the fandom did more than just gossip about him. The female fans censured him for sexual offences and boycotted his role in the group. Furthermore, contextualizing his deeds in social norms, the fans publicized their condemnation and boycott of their star beyond a discourse within the fandom. I have noted a series of such fan practices in relation to gossip. I argue that JYJ fandom's

¹⁷⁶ As mentioned in Chapter 1, she became a member of TVXQ (JYJ) fandom in Japan in 2008 by a Japanese female fan's recommendation. Since then, she has interacted with Japanese JYJ fandom both online and offline.

reaction to gossip about sexual violation by Yu Chun challenges a prejudice against *ppasuni*, which claims that K-pop female fans shield their stars at every turn, by referencing Jenkins's suggestion:

Gossip's power as a "feminine discourse" lies in its ability to make the abstract concrete, to transform issues of public concern into topics of personal significance. This shift in the level of discourse traditionally allowed women room in which to speak about factors that shaped their assigned social roles and their experiences of subordination... If the public discourse of politics was reserved for men, the private and intimate discourse of "gossip" offered women a chance to speak about controversial concerns in a forum unpoliced by patriarchal authorities because it was seen as frivolous and silly. Gossip may have been a means by which women regulated violations of gender expectations and enforced conformity to social norms... (1992: 86).

Also, I claim that JYJ fandom, problematizing "sex peddling," practiced a feminist discussion in deciding to renounce support for Yu Chun and to boycott him, even though the fans did not directly use the term feminism.

Girls Angry about Boys in Trouble: B1A4, Infinite, and Block B Fandoms Against Sexual Harassment

As explored in Chapter 1, K-pop stars do not serve only as musicians but they play multiple roles as entertainers, such as actors/actresses, commercial film models, emcees, etc. Thus, they not only perform music at concerts but also appear in various media. Television programs, including music shows, variety shows, reality shows and dramas, feature K-pop stars prominently. *Saturday Night Live* in Korea (hereafter SNL Korea) has showcased K-pop musicians as guest hosts.¹⁷⁷ In this series, the musicians use

¹⁷⁷ Licensed by the original U.S. *Saturday Night Live* on NBC, the same format of SNL has aired in Korea since December 2011.

their competence in singing, dancing, and participating in comedic skits with other cast members. In 2015 and 2016, thirty singers and thirteen groups in K-pop were featured in episodes of SNL Korea as special guests or guest hosts.¹⁷⁸ As part of their musicking, these K-pop musicians' fandoms, informed of their stars' appearances, not only watched SNL Korea in real-time on television or online but also visited its social media page to obtain photos or videos of the stars taken behind the scenes. Getting these data, fandoms liked the posts on the social media page and expressed their fannishness by writing comments such as "I love you" and "you are so cool."

It happened on the last Saturday of November in 2016. SNL Korea posted a video to its Facebook page. This video was taken backstage to promote K-pop boy band B1A4's appearance as guest hosts. In the video, cast members and B1A4 members were meeting and greeting one another for the first time. To show their delight at seeing B1A4, a couple of female cast members rushed to the members and touched their bodies. However, their greeting was overly physical. Since the women suddenly tried to touch body parts near the men's hips, B1A4 members looked flustered and even seemed to cover their groins with their hands to avoid unexpected touches by the female hosts. Watching these scenes in the promotional video, B1A4 fans expressed aversion to such physical contact with their stars and raged at it in comments made on the video post. The fans argued that their "*oppadeul*," that is, the members of B1A4, were sexually harassed

¹⁷⁸ These singers include both solo musicians and individually featured members out of their groups. Also, I count hip-hop musicians as K-pop performers.

by SNL Korea's female cast members.¹⁷⁹ This fandom's action echoed similar reactions by other K-pop fandoms when the bands they follow had previously been featured on SNL Korea. Infinite and Block B fandoms started to follow threads by B1A4 fandom and reported cases in which the members of those boy bands also experienced a similar type of sexual harassment by female cast members in the show.¹⁸⁰ The fandoms provided evidence for their case by capturing and posting specific scenes of sexual harassment of the male stars appearing on SNL Korea. As B1A4, Infinite, and Block B fandoms' accusation of sexual harassment of K-pop boy bands won the sympathy of other fandoms, as well as from common viewers, the fandoms demanded an apology from the production crew of the show via the show's official website. In response to these fandoms' demand for an apology for the female cast members' acts of sexual harassment, SNL Korea announced an apology statement at their Facebook page on November 27, 2016 as follows:

Hello, this is SNL Korea.
We apologize to B1A4 and its fans for other cast members' violent action in the promotional video post, due to which B1A4 might have felt displeasure. It was inappropriate way to treat the guest hosts. We will ensure that this action will never happen again.
Our sincere apologies to B1A4 members and fans one more time.
(Originally posted in Korean and translated by the author)

¹⁷⁹ In the term "*oppadeul*," *oppa*, explored in Chapter 1, indicates male stars, and "*deul*" is added to make a plural form of the word.

¹⁸⁰ In the promotional video of Infinite taken backstage, a male production staff's voice was recorded, saying to flustered Infinite members, "Hey men, take your pants down!"

Also, Se Young Lee (or Se-young Lee), a female cast member who grabbed B1A4 members' crotches and exclaimed exultingly "I touched all of them," made an apology for her action on her social media profile on November 28, 2016 as follows:

Hello, this is Se Young Lee.
My apologies for my improper deed on SNL Korea, causing many people so much anxiety.
I already offered an apology to each member of B1A4.
I want to apologize again to the members and their fans through this posting.
I will reflect on myself over and over to avoid letting this happen again.
I am awfully sorry.
(Originally posted in Korean and translated by the author)

However, B1A4 fandom did not accept her apology. Moreover, the fandom continued to make complaints about the apology statement on the SNL Korea's Facebook page. The fandom asserted that both the apologies by Lee and SNL Korea lacked sincerity. To me, Lee and the show seemed to overlook an important item, which had to be mentioned and reflected on in the apologies – sexual harassment. They did not understand what was wrong in treating K-pop boy bands on the show in the way they did. It was not about a problematic action exclusively specific to B1A4, but about a crucial human rights violation, including sexual assault and sexual harassment, which the fans had to critically recognize and deal with in their daily lives. The fandom eventually filed this case as a civil complaint at the government-managed People's Online Petition and Discussion Portal website (also known as *Gungmin Sinmungo* in Korean), and requested the police to investigate cast member Se Young Lee on suspicion of sexual assault.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ *Gungmin* means the people. *Sinmungo* refers to a big drum, having been hit to publicize, listen to, and satisfy petitioners' grudges. This word originated from the governmental system using the drum in Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897), a Korean kingdom

Thanks to publicity about the series of B1A4 fandom's actions towards Lee and SNL Korea, the police accepted the case of sexual harassment on the show and started an investigation of it. Lee then dropped out of SNL Korea on December 1, 2016, saying she needed time off for self-restraint and self-reflection.

The police took five weeks to conduct their investigation. On January 4, 2017, the police released the results. A representative of the police said that they could not discover any evidence of sexual harassment of B1A4 by Lee, quoting the statements, given by the members of B1A4, Infinite, and Block B, that she had not actually touched their bodies but merely pretended to touch. Accordingly, the police dismissed the case as 'no-suspension' and forwarded it to the public prosecutor's office. Although I was not an insider of these K-pop boy bands fandoms, I, like these fandoms, watched the promotional videos showing suspected sexual harassment of these boy bands by SNL Korea's female cast members.¹⁸² Like their fans, I also felt discomfort at the female cast members' touching of the male musicians' groins, which caused the men to look abashed. The videos were not taken in accordance with the previously screened scenario, but to show viewers what happened backstage for the promotion of the guest hosts featured on the show. Thus, the women touched the men without their consent. The fandoms criticized and then took action against this sexually unwelcome and uncomfortable deed.

before the Republic of Korea. Drawing upon the Joseon's petitionary system, Korea launched the online *Gungmin Sinmungo* in 2005.

¹⁸² As I revealed in Chapter 1, I became a "light" fan of Woo Hyun, a member of Infinite, taken by an Infinite fan's "*yeongeop*" during participant observation of Infinite fandom (I already defined the term *yeongeop* in Chapter 1. Also, see Appendix A for details). Thus, I can label myself as an insider to a lesser extent.

Of course, many female fans must have felt resentment about the aggressive way in which their “*oppadeul*” were obscenely treated by “other women” – the fans would not dare to touch the male stars because the rules of fandom would not allow that. Since most K-pop stars appear in television programs for the promotion of their new releases, they might not want to be on everyone’s tongue due to non-musical affairs, like sexual harassment, rather than due to their music. For example, this came up in my research in the following manner:

Me: As the majority of B1A4 fans were teenage girls, they tended to watch television rather than to go offline [for their musicking] so that they could find out [about sexual harassment of the members] and bring it up.

R: It could be, but I thought because [the SNL Korea’s video] went out at the same time as their [B1A4’s] comeback with their new release, [fandom] could criticize [sexual harassment in the show] more strongly. (Mobile messenger chat, November 29, 2016)

Indeed, B1A4’s label made an official announcement about the band’s appearance on SNL Korea on November 29, 2016 as follows:

We regret to have an unexpected issue with the band.

However, we already received an apology from both the production crew and female cast member Se Young Lee. As B1A4 has not released a full album in a long time, we wanted to focus more on their comeback than this issue. They want to show you their best through their musical activities, such as with the title track, “A Lie.”

We are sorry for unintentionally having occasioned many people so much anxiety. We will take care not to let it happen again.

(Originally announced in Korean and translated by the author)

As mentioned earlier, the issue of sexual harassment of K-pop boy bands’ members, which their fandoms raised, was declared by the police not to have occurred. However, the fandoms and many netizens still criticize it. Although the cases of B1A4, Infinite, and Block B on SNL Korea were not proved as sexual harassment, the fandoms’

reaction to these cases demonstrated how female fans' awareness of sexual assault could feed into their musicking. They saw that not only women were victims of sexual violation, but that men were also sexually harassed. More importantly, the fans grasped what mattered in sexual relationships – mutual agreement. If one touches the other without the least intention of harassing sexually but without the other's consent, and if this touch displeases the other, it is a definite case of sexual violation. The fans also led other people, including non-fandom, to recognize and remonstrate against sexual harassment, which was common and tacitly accepted in the entertainment industry. Thus, the fans' perception of, and reaction to, sexual harassment of their stars does not merely express their fannishness but also suggests their acceptance of Korean feminism, even though they do not mention it directly. Feminists have formulated and disseminated theories of sexual relationships based on self-determination of sex beyond celibacy or physiological processes (Kim Hwang 2012). Also, they have re/conceptualized sexual violence and carried out anti-sexual violence movements as well as sexual violence prevention education (Byun 2004; Kim 2015). I argue that the fandoms, belonging to the younger generation, have been influenced by these feminist practices. Obviously, most of B1A4, Infinite, and Block B's fans are teenage girls and young women in their twenties.¹⁸³ These age groups have benefitted from various achievements of the 1990-2000's feminist movements. They also have been the students of feminist sex/sexual violence education since the 2000s. Therefore, the issue of sexual harassment of K-pop

¹⁸³ I referred to data of concert ticket buyers' genders and ages, which are provided by *Interpark*, one of the biggest ticket sales sites in Korea.

boy bands on SNL Korea, as I emphasize, results from the feminist influence on the fandoms, as well as from their musicking through which their learning and understanding of feminist practices have been realized.

From “Miss Right” to “21st Century Girls”: Recursive Conflict between BTS and Female Fandom around Misogynistic Music and Musicians

Since the Gangnam Station murder occurred on May 17, 2016, the term “misogyny” has resonated within Korean society. Feminists, other scholars, and commentators debated which actions would be defined as misogyny. Netizens disputed misogynistic cases in their daily lives with one another through online discussion boards. The issue of misogyny then started to come up among K-pop female fandoms a week after the Gangnam Station murder. BTS female fandom opened a Twitter account to publicize misogynistic music by BTS rather than debating it within the official fan club.¹⁸⁴ Although long, I cite tweets posted to the fan account, as well as by the BTS label’s interview and statement in response to the fans’ tweets. It is worth quoting the resulting exchanges in their entirety. My intent is partly to offer these extended exchanges as primary materials not readily available to an English-speaking, non-fan audience, because I believe they represent an important and extraordinary shift in public discourse around misogynistic violence. The fandom tweeted a statement to demand an explanation for misogynistic lyrics of BTS songs, as well as for misogynistic tweets, from both the group members and BigHit Entertainment, the BTS label, as follows:

¹⁸⁴ This account was named ‘the publicization of BTS’s misogyny.’ The URL of the account is at https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1.

We (@bts_female_fan1) would like to receive feedback from BTS members and their agency BigHit Entertainment regarding the issue of misogyny.

BTS has their own twitter account which members use to communicate with their fans and to create many unforgettable memories that they can share with their fans. In January 2016, they even received an award from Twitter Korea for being an exemplary Twitter user. Recently, however, some of their tweets have been brought forward for their misogynic [sic] comments.

On May 17, 2013, Suga, a member of BTS, posted a picture of himself holding a camera with the caption, '*My dear, I have got my eyes on you. So if you look elsewhere, I will smash the back of your head with this camera's edge.*'

Other controversial examples can also be found within the lyrics of the songs that BTS wrote themselves. For example, the lyrics from RM's mix tape '*Joke*' say "*Yea you're the best woman, losing to pussy so you do fucking well, being bossy**** pull out and tell your lover you have gonorrhea.*" (<https://t.co/XcRio7XBHx> ...).¹⁸⁵ In the song '*Converse High*' they say "*I like you but still don't wear Converse Lows.*" (<https://btsdiary.com/2015/05/02/lyricsromeng-bts-converse-high/>).¹⁸⁶ In '*Hormone War*' they "*Girls are the best present.*" (<https://t.co/GMj81G3A0q> ...). These aforementioned lyrics have been criticized by the public for being misogynic [sic].

As the aforementioned examples implicate [sic], "*I will smash,*" and "*I will handle*" can be considered a threatening expression for women as they are often considered to be physically weaker than men. Although these tweets carry multiple meanings through their word play, it doesn't erase the implications of the more violent meaning of the phrase.

What's more, the word '*gonorrhea*' used in RM's mix tape is interpreted as sexual. Misogynistic words are commonly used to demean prostitutes. A pure goddess and virgin are the exact opposite of prostitutes. Thus, woman [sic] with gonorrhea, which can be referred to as a promiscuous prostitute in this case, is extremely misogynistic. Women with gonorrhea—as mentioned in the mixtape—is easily made into an object of hatred without any doubt from the original producer (RM).

¹⁸⁵ RM is the abbreviation for Rap Monster, a member of BTS.

¹⁸⁶ Since a hyperlink in the original tweet was broken, I modified it.

'Converse High' and *'Hormone War'* include misogynistic lyrics as well, as they illustrate women as objects of worship, as well as projecting the boys' desire of what they deem worthy in a woman. What should be pointed out, is that the unconscious word choices that they make are actually discriminatory against women. Whether it was intended or not, this could attribute to the intensification of sexual hierarchy by bringing adhesion. BigHit Entertainment and the BTS members should keep in mind that although the way they express it is slightly different; sexual objectification, deification, and reverence are basically the same and they all originated from misogyny. More detailed examples and expertise related to feminism could sufficiently support this statement.

No one can be perfectly free from misogyny. People have accepted misogynistic concepts without posing any doubt or criticism. Some female fans, who are also a part of A.R.M.Y. (BTS's official fan club), have habituated themselves to sexual objectification in their daily lives by fitting themselves into the members' ideal types, as an example.

For such reason, this issue is important to not only their female fans but for the BTS members as well. The majority of BTS' fans are females in their teens and twenties, and are in the midst of learning gender roles fixed by the (Korean) society. These teenagers are more vulnerable to recklessly adapting to the gender roles suggested by the media. Hence why BigHit Ent. and BTS should be more cautious when making gender-related comments.

BTS and BigHit may feel this demand is bothersome and may think that the fans who are asking for feedback are making a big deal out of nothing. The fact is, however, most of the people who are asking for their feedback about their misogynistic behavior are also A.R.M.Y.s who have been supporting BTS for a long time, and if possible, want to protect BTS from the negative events of the past.

Nobody is perfect and anyone can make mistakes. However, one does have free will and is able to choose their manner of action after the incident. Whether one becomes more mature and grows into an exemplary adult or confronting a limit in one's life depends on the way they make up for their mistakes.

In conclusion, **we would like to receive a response from the BTS members and their agency BigHit Entertainment about the misogynistic tweets and songs they made in the past.** We are not saying that the members are men of bad character, not are we blaming BigHit for not dealing with the problem properly at the appropriate time. We assume

that the issue of gender equality is a matter not to be handled lightly, and if it is not managed properly, the problem can be aggravated and the members could lose what they have achieved until now. BigHit may have struggled contemplating about how to handle the issue effectively.

We all know that BTS members are musicians, not people who engaged in a social movement. Therefore, what we want from the members is not a profound knowledge of gender equality. We do know that limits exist. However, apart from anything else, **this is a matter of which stance BTS will take to become a rival-less global celebrity in the future.** We want them to have a healthy mind and receive more love.

Please do not categorize this situation as some form of nitpicking. It is more of a form of affectionate advice for the members to become more mature, rather than just nagging. **We are curious as to what attitude the BTS and BigHit will project in the future.**

Thank you for reading such a long article. We are hoping for positive feedback.

(Both tweeted in Korean and English; bold in the Korean statement and italicized in the English statement)¹⁸⁷

BTS fandom, however, did not receive any feedback on this statement from BTS and BigHit Entertainment when it was tweeted on May 22, 2016 for the first time. The fandom continued to re/tweet their call for responses from both the group and the label. The fandom's activity was eventually covered by the Dong-A Ilbo, one of the most

¹⁸⁷ Since this statement was long, the fandom tweeted it as image files four times. It was originally tweeted in Korean on May 22, 2016. As a BTS fan volunteered to translate it into English, an English translation of the statement was tweeted as well on July 12. I quote the English-translated tweet. See the Korean statement at https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/734285464945856515, https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/734285571653144576, https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/734285667216154624, and https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/734285734379544576; the English statement at https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/752760260864073728, https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/752760357899210752, https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/752760497041121280, and https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/752760567916474368.

popular newspapers in Korea on July 6, 2016 (Im 2016). Through the interview with a reporter for this news article, BigHit Entertainment explained as follows:

We came to know that since the end of the last year, BTS's lyrics could be misogynistic or demeaning to women regardless of the group's intention to create music. These lyrics could cause discomfort to women. We, BigHit and BTS, apologize to fans and other people who feel uncomfortable about some BTS song lyrics, as well as about tweets by BTS members. We will take all comments [given to us] and our previous problems into account for BTS's future creative activities. (Originally written in Korean and translated by the author)¹⁸⁸

The label also released a statement to give the fandom feedback on the issue of the group's misogynistic lyrics and tweets via BTS's official online fan club as follows:

Hello, this is BigHit Entertainment.
Since the end of 2015, BigHit Entertainment and BTS have recognized that BTS's lyrics had generated controversy concerning misogyny. Reviewing the lyrics, we came to know that parts of the lyrics, regardless of the group's intention to create music, could be misunderstood as being misogynistic, and could cause discomfort to many people. Also, we confirmed by ourselves that parts of posts in SNS, which BTS members had written before their debut, could be offensive content to women. Accordingly, BigHit Entertainment and BTS have been concerned about the issue. The reason why we had not stated our stance officially was to give you our sincere feedback in a right way to say correctly at the most appropriate moment.
We, BigHit and BTS, apologize to fans and other people who feel uncomfortable about some BTS song lyrics, as well as about tweets by BTS members. We will take all comments [given to us] and our previous problems into account for BTS's future creative activities. Through self-review and discussion, we recognized that, since music creation could be influenced by individuals' growth processes and experiences as well as by what people see and learn in a society, music could not be free from any social bias or mistake. Also, it could be inappropriate that women's roles and worth are defined from a male perspective.

¹⁸⁸ Hiyun Im, ““Bangtansonyeondan Oppadeul, Yeohyeomieyo?”...Ilbu fan, Gasatweeter geul Haemyeong Yogu [“BTS Oppadeul, Are You Misogynists?”...Fans Demanding an Explanation for Song lyrics and Tweets],” *Dong-A Ilbo*, July 6, 2016, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://news.donga.com/3/all/20160706/79039096/1>.

As a part of idol groups making a trend in popular culture, BTS members are aware that the members' speech acts and behaviors can have a strong influence on people and society. Additionally, BigHit Entertainment feels deeply responsible for the ill-considered production of BTS musical content, as well as for causing many people anxiety. Please keep an eye on BTS's development. If you can point out the shortcomings, we will listen to our fans and society's advice with more effort. We appreciate your cheering and supporting for us as always. (Originally posted in Korean and translated by the author)¹⁸⁹

BTS fandom was overjoyed by this feedback from both BTS and the label.¹⁹⁰ The fandom appreciated the fans who had joined a movement for clarification of the group's misogynistic music and actions. Many other fans, however, did not agree with this movement and expressed antipathy. In particular, international BTS fans reprovably replied to the fandom's Twitter posts, such as "You are not A.R.M.Y.," and even cursed by saying, "Fuck you bitch." To persuade these opposing fans, the fandom posted tweets to define misogyny, to analyze misogynistic lyrics, and to explain why that issue matters in a Korean context as follows:

... We've received a number of questions from fans around the world, so we have decided to answer to [sic] some of the frequently asked questions.

Why are these lyrics misogynic [sic]?

First of all, let us define the word misogyny. What is misogyny? Oxford dictionary says "Dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women." It is often mistaken as just 'disliking feelings against women,' but that is only a small portion of misogyny. It includes not accepting women as full human beings by degrading their desires or objectifying

¹⁸⁹ This statement is only open to the online fan club members at <http://cafe.daum.net/BANGTAN/jbaj/326>.

¹⁹⁰ The fandom tweeted their feelings and thoughts about the statement at Korean https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/750744280587644929 (Korean) and https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/752760943600250880 (English).

them. We would like to focus on why the following lyrics and tweets were problematic, especially in Korean context.

‘Converse High’ and ‘Miss Right’

There is a term ‘된장녀’ (Bean paste girl) in Korea. This is a labelling term for women who like luxury living, going to Starbucks or buying fashion items like shoes and bags. In Korea, Starbucks or luxury bags are a symbol of women wasting money on vague things, or even playing a role as a stigma to namecall women spending their money unwisely. This is easily dragged to an urban myth that pretty girls take an advantage of men by nagging them to buy luxury goods. (Btw, South Korea has the biggest wage gap between men and women among all the developed countries in the world.) The derogatory term ‘된장녀’ limits women’s free will to spend money on whatever they want, and decorate themselves to make them feel good about themselves.

‘**Converse High**’ is problematic in a way that the song particularly presents a type of ideal woman who is casual and modest by not buying expensive branded goods. This reinforces the societal prejudice against women that women who buy luxury goods are bad. ‘Miss Right’ also contains the words ‘luxury bag’ in the lyrics, which unnecessarily segregates the women in the song by ‘luxury bag girls (bad girl)’ and ‘the one holding my hand (good girl).’

‘Boy in Luv’ and ‘War of Hormones’

These two songs were loved by so many fans, still, contained a misogynic [sic] point of view. The ‘Boy in Luv’ music video is full of images of the boys pointing up her skirt. The lyric ‘뒹치기 전에’ (“Before I jump into you” or “Before I attack you”) is clearly aggressive, with a possible implication of sexual or domestic violence.

‘War of Hormones’ is about praising women, but the perspective is objectifying and dispensing rather than accepting them as equal human beings with desires just like men. The speakers’ attitude throughout the song is wolf-whistling at women, by mentioning their see-through clothes, or asking them to wear more high heels. Calling women “the best presents” is a good example of objectification; not admitting that they are also independent human beings. However, as they clarified in their official statement, they admitted that these lines could be perceived as misogynic [sic] regardless of the intentions of the creator.

‘Joke’

This particular track among Rap Monster’s first mixtape contains a very coarse language, but the language itself is not what makes it misogynic [sic]. The controversial lines say the following:

그래 넌 최고의 여자, 갑질
So 존나게 잘해 갑질
아 근데 생각해보니 갑이었던 적이 없네
갑 떼고 임이라 부를게, 임질
Yes, you are the best kind of woman, Gabjil*
So you're so good at it Gabjil
Oh, but I never thought of you as a Gab**
Then I'll call you Imjil (gonorrhea) instead

* Gabjil: An act of being rude or taking advantage of someone by using their power from their superior position. ** Gab: The one in the superior position. For instance, a customer yell [sic] at a service provider just because they pay for the service. It is not the service provider's responsibility to become their emotional dumpster. The speaker brings up women out of nowhere to humiliate a targeted man. It is reasonable for women to feel uncomfortable about using their gender just to discriminate [against] someone. Not just that, by using the word Gabjil, the speaker implies that the best kind of woman (perhaps a popular woman) takes an advantage of men. In the end, it adds the last word Imjil, which means gonorrhea in Korean, a type of STD. By pairing 'a popular girl' and an STD, it gives a very negative impression, possibly interpreted as referring [sic] to popular girls as "dirty."

So, why bring this up now?

The problematic tweets and lyrics by BTS could have been pulled out and used against them at any time. When Suga's old tweets were being retweeted and became viral again (View this Soompi article for the actual tweet and translation), we decided to ask BTS and BigHit to do something about it.¹⁹¹ As BTS has become more and more popular, this misogynic [sic] issue could keep coming back again to haunt them. We did see their gender-sensitivity was improving, since In the Mood for Love Part 2 had no problematic lyrics at all, but this shouldn't be an excuse for their old deeds.

Then, why BTS and BigHit?

We do see many other misogynic [sic] lyrics and comments made by other idol groups within Kpop scene. Kpop culture, in part, reflects the societal

¹⁹¹ *Soompi* is one of the oldest and most popular English websites of K-pop, encompassing all information, such as news, music, fashion, videos, and photos (<https://www.soompi.com>).

views of Korea and Korean culture. With that in mind, it is inevitable to see all the misogyny laid around because Korean culture itself is highly misogynistic. We are born and grown in this culture that constantly criticizes women for their looks, gives them low wages, and pushes them away from important and influential positions in the society. Then, why BTS and BigHit? Above all, because we are the fans of BTS. BTS writes their own lyrics, so we thought it was very important to make sure that they were aware of this issue, which matters to women who make up the majority of their fandom. Another reason was that we saw signs that BigHit has been doing the right thing in their Public Relation activities. BigHit admitted their errors regardless of whether or not they were intentional. By responding to our request, BigHit proved that they were willing to listen to their fans and society, which makes them more hopeful than any other company [sic]. No one is perfect, everyone makes mistakes, but it is rare to see that they admit their past and promise for improvement. We are glad that we are fans of BTS in that way, and we are excited to see them grow and succeed. (Originally tweeted in English and bold in the original tweets)¹⁹²

After this long account of the issue of misogyny in BTS's music and activities was tweeted on July 12, 2016, some of the opposing fans relented and stopped negatively replying to or swearing at tweets in which BTS's misogynistic behaviors were pointed out. Of course, many BTS female fans ignored the misogyny issue and some of these fans are still at odds with the members of the fandom bringing up the issue. However, as BTS and BigHit Entertainment admitted their insensitivity about gender issues and accepted the fandom's request for feedback on the group's misogynistic lyrics and deeds, the tension between pop music practitioners, including performers, producers, promoters and consumers, was reconciled. Owing to this reconciliation, many BTS fans must have

¹⁹² See details at https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/752761268008652800; https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/752761394894811137; https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/752761687615246340; https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/752761752119414784; and https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/752761800312000512.

expected that their fandom would re-enter the “flowery way,” as G2 indicated to me off the record during my research.

Their flowery way shifted to the thorny way in just three months. When BTS released a new album on October 10, 2016, the fans were once again haunted by misogynistic lyrics in the song “21st Century Girls.” The lyrics describe the ideal girl of the twenty-first century. The lyrics also indicate that the “lady” portrayed in the song is in a relationship with BTS members. The members then tell her to grow strong through the lyrics. With respect to the song, BTS fandom pointed out as follows:

...we totally felt disappointed at “21st Century Girls.” Women have had to [physically] conform for decades, due to the pressure of media images set not by their own criteria but in accordance with the standard set by men, who are seen as superior to women in terms of gender. Not only the standard of beauty but also a lot of women’s images have been constructed in the male-dominated way. [The fans’ critique is that BTS was also creating a male-dominated image for women to live up to through this song.] In the song “21st Century Girls,” for whom should a ‘strong girl’ grow strong? By whose standards is she good? A girl or woman can be ‘strong’ of her own free will, or cannot. An actual girl, whether being ‘good’ or bad, is a ‘21st century girl,’ and a girl or woman living in the present. That’s for women to determine. You, BTS, more privileged than women in terms of gender, do not need to decide it. In the official feedback to us last July, it was said that you came to realize that “it could be inappropriate that women’s roles and worth are defined from a male perspective.” Don’t you think that the lyrics of “21st Century Girls” are contrary to that feedback from you?... (Originally tweeted in Korean and translated by the author)¹⁹³

Also, the fandom re/tweeted feminist posts, in which feminist terms and concepts were explained simply and lucidly, as both a logical and ideological basis for criticism of misogynistic music and musicians.

¹⁹³ See details at https://twitter.com/bts_female_fan1/status/786174955343912960.

Looking at this chain of episodes and online controversies about misogyny in a K-pop scene, I was amazed to find that a feminist camp emerged within K-pop fandoms. Due to the continual disputes over the misogynistic music and musicians, BTS female fans have been feuding with one another, as well as with their favorite BTS members and the label. Several fans have done “*taldeok*” out of their fandom (I already described the term *taldeok* in Chapter 1). I am concerned that most of these renegade fans identify themselves as feminists. They are also called “*teufemi*” by their opposites with a scornful tone.¹⁹⁴ I found out that the self-identified feminist female fans or *teufemi* established their own community on Twitter and engage in various activities online. I had to examine these women and their practices.

“@femi_basun”: Publicity, Solidarity, Victory, and Festivity against Misogyny, Hate Actions, and Cyberbullying

The feminist female fans from BTS fandom created a Twitter account, “@femi_basun.” As feminists from other fandoms joined this community as volunteer account managers, it functioned as the hub of feminist (female) fandoms. The feminist fans nicknamed the account “femi-basun-hub” (hereafter *febahub*) and described it as ‘a haven for hip femi-basun (feminist *ppasuni*).’¹⁹⁵ They searched for various misogynistic factors in K-pop from song lyrics to music videos to musicians’ speech acts at concerts and on the air. The fans then publicized these misogynistic representation and narratives

¹⁹⁴ *Teufemi*, as slang, is a mixed word using “Twitter” and “feminists.” This word stands for feminists active on Twitter in Korea.

¹⁹⁵ As the account is commonly called “*febahub*,” the acronym for “femi-basun-hub,” I use *febahub* throughout the text.

by re/tweeting them with hashtags. Also, as the hub of feminist *ppasuni*, they promoted and quoted other Twitter accounts to point out and criticize misogynistic K-pop stars to promote solidarity among fandoms. Helping one another, each account for feminist fandoms was connected to their hub account, as well as to one another, through following one another, retweeting and quoting posts from one another. They discussed not only how to circulate the issue of misogyny in K-pop among other (non-feminist) fans, but also how to make their stars recognize their misogynistic music and actions. For the latter in particular, the feminist fandoms, posting tweets, tagged the official Twitter accounts for the stars and labels, and hash-tagged catch phrases for their campaigns, such as “[We]wantfeedback [from K-pop musicians and labels]” and “[We]wantfeedback [on K-pop stars’ misogynistic music and behaviors].”

Further, the fandoms planned to perform feminist practices offline beyond their online movements. For example, Sechskies feminist fans sent books on feminism to Sechskies member Jae Jin Lee, who used a disparaging term for women on a television show, hoping that he would acquire and develop gender sensitization. EXO feminist fandom canvassed the fans’ opinions to recommend books about feminism, colorism, and racism, which would be given to EXO members as part of *jogong*, that is, a type of fans’ present to stars (I defined and detailed the term *jogong* in Chapter 3). Fans’ sending feminist books to the stars implies a performative act of alternative public criticism of non-feminists. Additionally, the feminist fandoms searched out and pointed out a variety of hatred for minorities, such as homophobia, xenophobia, racism, ableism, and ageism, which were represented and narrated through K-pop song lyrics, music videos, live

performances, and K-pop stars' speech acts. While some fans concurred with such feminist *ppasuni*'s arguments and activities, others disapproved of the feminist fandom and even committed cyberbullying to *teufemi*, including abusive language, intimidation, and Internet shaming. Coping with the bullies, the feminist fans tweeted the hashtag, “#Cyberbullying_out_within_fandoms” to proclaim and criticize what they suffered online. However, the opponents of *teufemi* did not stop attacking feminist fans and their supporters. To exclude the feminist fans and their followers from their fandoms, members of the anti-*teufemi* group not only blocked and blacklisted those fans, but also distributed this list to all the members of the fandom, encouraging many other fans to reject the listed fans. Thus, the anti-*teufemi*, as a major group within the fandoms, did not listen to the different voices of this minority of K-pop fans, that is, the feminist female fans' voices, and even obliterated their voices through blocking and blacklisting the fans.

Of course, as the term *saeujeot* describes and connotes, K-pop fandom, as a flock of fans, tends to privilege a holistic stance rather than considering diverse voices uttered by individual fans (I already talked about the word *saeujeot* in Chapter 1). However, fandom, as Duffett defines it, is both “collective” and “personal” (2014: 7). Also, it features individual fans' performances of practical movements (Duffett 2013b). In this regard, although a fandom represents a collective voice by the majority, minority views need to be valued within the fandom. Therefore, feminist *ppasuni*, as a minority in K-pop fandom, should have been acknowledged and respected. I could not wait to listen to the feminist female fans also known as “femi-*ppasun*.” Moreover, as a feminist, I wanted to identify myself with the feminist *ppasuni* through my research.

It was fortunate for me that E1, one of the founders of the hub for feminist *ppasuni* (*febahub*), readily participated in my research. I was able to interview her in person in Seoul during winter break for my short-term follow-up research. She used to be a fan of BTS and now performs “meta-*deokjil*” with NCT, a recently-debuted K-pop boy band – she did “*taldeok*” from BTS fandom but has done “*ipdeok*” to NCT fandom.¹⁹⁶ According to the blogger nicknamed Taengal, meta-*deokjil*, as a compound word of “meta-“ and “*deokjil* (performance of fandom),” simply means “critical *deokjil*,” that is, critical performance of fandom, or “criticism about *deokjil*,” that is, criticism about fandom (2017) (I already talked about the term *deokjil* in Chapter 1). This word has been used on Twitter to describe a phenomenon within K-pop fandoms since last year (Taengal 2017). However, its etymology and first user are unknown (Ibid.). As several fans began to reflect on their consumption of K-pop or their performance of K-pop fandoms, these fans’ practices have been described as meta-*deokjil* (hereafter I use both meta-*deokjil* and meta-fandom in the text). While meta-fandom encompasses fans critical of their fan practices and their favorite stars, it primarily typifies feminist fans. E1 indicated:

E1: NCT fandom has two faces... One is performing its fandom like the established fandoms, but the other is doing meta-*deokjil* as feminists. These two sides of the fandom always fight with each other. (In-person interview, January 3, 2017)

Returning to feminist *ppasuni*, I wondered how the fans learned feminism and self-identified as feminists. E1, a twenty-five-year-old woman, majored in law as an

¹⁹⁶ I already defined *ipdeok*, a term to describe the construction of K-pop fandom in Chapter 1.

undergraduate. I assumed she might take feminism-related courses on campus in relation to her major. However, she had not learned feminism through formal education at schools. She recalled how she came to know feminism directly, through classmates, books, and social media:

E1: I became interested in feminism thanks to my high school teacher. I went to a girls' high school. Also, I was so lucky to meet good female [feminist] mentors [in a law society] after entering college. Although there were not many female students in the department of law, they were all nice.

Me:... So did you learn feminism by discussing it with those feminists in the law society?

E1: [Yes] Additionally, [I learned it] via Twitter...Also, [I] studied on my own and read books [about feminism].

Me: Tweets posted about feminism or by feminists?

E1: Yes. [As mentioned earlier] I was really fortunate to meet [female feminist] mentors [in the law society]. When I was a freshman, I attended a rally [with members of the society]. A [male] leader said, "You have to trust me, 'oppa,' and follow me" there. Well, I had no idea what's wrong with his words then. However, one of my female mentors pointed out why he was saying it like that, [and why he should not have said it like that]. At that time, I couldn't understand her but learned [feminism] from her.

Me: Which book on feminism did you read?

E1: *Feminismui Dojeon* [Challenges of Feminism] by Hee-Jin Chung (or Hee Jin Chung).¹⁹⁷ Also, when I was a sophomore, I read a lot to conduct a seminar [on feminism for the law society]. [Was it] feminism for daily lives? We read four or five books including the word feminism [in their titles] all at once.

Me: Did your [female feminist] mentor take the lead in the seminar?

E1: No, she didn't but I did. The law society, "Democratic Law Society" was so liberal. However, it had not been aware of feminism. My mentor had introduced [feminism]. Following her, I conducted a feminist seminar, and then a younger colleague took over from me.

Me: So did you search for books by the keyword feminism and read them?

E1: Yes, we did.

Me: Did you read Korean versions of foreign feminist references [in addition to Korean feminist books]?

¹⁹⁷ This book was first released in 2005 and its second edition was published in 2013. It is ranked one of the bestsellers in the social sciences category in Korea.

E1: Yes, we did. We also read books on sex workers.
(In-person interview, January 3, 2017)

While she acquired feminism from her female colleagues of the law society, she became a member of K-pop fandom. She used to like EXO prior to BTS. However, BTS was the first K-pop group fandom she joined and performed collectively. Produced and pitched by BigHit Entertainment, a smaller and newer label than the top five K-pop companies (SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, FNC Entertainment, and Starship Entertainment), BTS has made use of Twitter and YouTube to attract K-pop listeners' attention more quickly since the group's debut in 2013. E1 used to be a light fan, mainly listening to music and watching music videos. However, after becoming a BTS fan, she joined Twitter in 2015 to follow all tweets by the group. At the same time, she continued learning about feminism on Twitter. Her identification as both a member of BTS fandom and a feminist began to falter. While she loved the group's music and members, she perceived some of BTS's lyrics and acts as misogynist. As both a BTS fan and a feminist, she could not stand by observing them. She found a small number of BTS fans had pointed out BTS's misogynistic music and behaviors on Twitter. She then contacted and joined these fans. Their campaign to request feedback on the misogyny issue from BTS and BigHit Entertainment, as explored in the previous section, achieved the desired outcome since the official apology statement was announced by the group and its label. However, the group's new song, "21st Century Girls," which includes misogynist lyrics, made E1 disappointed again and even furious. She eventually decided to renounce her fandom of BTS – *taldeok*. She emphasized her own choice to leave the fandom:

E1: Now, I'm in *taldeok* [out of BTS fandom]. One of my Twitter friends said, "[Fans] should be able to choose their *deokjil*." I'd rather... I feel suffering from this [BTS's misogynistic music/actions and non-reflexivity] more than pleasure from being fond of [BTS]. So I have done *taldeok*. Also, [except for my favorite BTS member, Jimin], I was so sick of the other members because they kept [their misogynistic] things going... I felt like I couldn't perform fandom any more, as I had done, and I then did *taldeok*. I chose to do *taldeok*.
(In-person interview, January 3, 2017)

Although E1 quit her fandom, other BTS (non-feminist) fans did not quit cyberbullying her. At that point, feminists within different fandoms reached out to her, and united in supporting her online. Forging friendships with one another, these feminist fans launched *febahub* on Twitter at the initiative of E1. She related the situation at that time:

E1:... as I was violently attacked by (non-feminist) fans [on Twitter], feminist fans retweeted this situation, and [thanks to these retweets] my followers increased to 100-120. I then became [online] friends with feminists within other fandoms. You know *teuchinso*? Let me introduce my Twitter friends.¹⁹⁸ Through *teuchinso*, I was asked to introduce feminist idol fans. I was retweeting [the feminist fans' tweets] and matching them to one another in order to introduce [the feminist fans]. I needed a new Twitter account for this [*teuchinso*]. This account was "@femi_basun," the current *febahub*. I meant it only for *teuchinso*. However, I was asked so often [by followers of the account]. Many things were required to express feminism. There was a lot wrong with [K-pop] lyrics or products, as well as with fans' consumption [of K-pop]. Thinking about how to better point out all such things, I recently recruited volunteer managers [of *febahub*]. Six managers in total are working for the *febahub*. We every day toss around the better ways [to deal with issues within fandoms].
(In-person interview, January 3, 2017)

¹⁹⁸ In Korean, "Twitter *chingureul* (my friends) *sogaehapnida* (let me introduce)." This sentence is made an acronym as '*teuchinso*.' *Teuchinso* is a Twitter mechanism for being introduced to a stranger through a mutual friend.

The first task undertaken by *febahub* was to archive K-pop idols' misogynistic remarks, as well as utterances indicating hatred of minorities. As described earlier, feminist female fans have criticized various hatreds, such as homophobia, xenophobia, racism, ableism, and ageism, which were expressed both directly and indirectly by K-pop musicians. This critical activity demonstrates that the fans grasp gender as a starting point for various discriminative institutions and dominant-subordinate relationships. Feminists have re-conceptualized gender as the fundamental institution of hierarchy and inequality, after which discriminatory treatment (disparagement, oppression, exploitation, and hatred) of social minorities, based on their class, age, race, sexuality, disease, and disability, were modeled (Chung 2016). Fans in *febahub*, fully aware of such an intersectional perspective on gender, put feminist ideology into action through their fandoms, as daily cultural practices.

Moreover, feminist *ppasuni*'s complaints against racism and xenophobia in K-pop are noteworthy because, as discussed in Chapter 1, K-pop industry has targeted the global market by selling albums in foreign languages and holding concerts abroad, as well as by hiring foreigners or Korean mixed race performers as K-pop group members. However, Korean musicians and audiences do not recognize or practice inter/transnationality and multiracialism, which are required for global K-pop performance and consumption, and participate in racist and xenophobic discourse. E1 illustrated an example of this phenomena with a story about EXO and their fandom:

E1: EXO fandom looks creepy. The fans said to the last foreign member [Lay], "Will you leave the group [like other Chinese members]?" Also, they exclude [Lay fans] from the fandom, by refusing to make friends with Lay fans. Many EXO fans are xenophobic, just as the group members are.

When the group consisted of twelve members [including four foreign members from China], I used to like Baekhyun (an EXO member). Well, he badly mocked one of the Chinese members. Also, if Korean members of the group touch him, he makes nothing of that but, when foreign members handled him, he brushed off the body part touched by the Chinese men. [He] said [to a dark Korean member], “As your face is dark, you have a burnt smell.” However, his fans think that such behaviors are cute, and enjoy those actions [as a way of musicking].

Me: If they were fans [of Baekhyun], they should have pointed out what’s wrong with his deeds.

E1: What you said!

Me: Moreover, SM Entertainment has made money from the Chinese market, by releasing Chinese-language versions of [SM-produced K-pop] albums. So the label should have checked its musicians’ racist words and actions, as well as their xenophobic fandom, I think.

E1: Exactly! If one points them out [SM-promoted musicians’ racist and xenophobic speech acts and behaviors], the label and musicians react. They say, “Since all the group members are chummy with one another, such [racist and xenophobic] things can be OK [for the foreign members]. It’s not a big deal [for the members], why do you criticize it?” Following the label and musicians, fans also think that it is OK to mock him [a foreign member of a K-pop group]. In this way, racism and xenophobia [in K-pop] can be continually transferred to fandoms.

(In-person interview, January 3, 2017)

Since I already had heard of some episodes of discrimination and exclusion targeting Lay, a Chinese EXO member, and his fans, from other EXO fans participating in my research, I wondered how feminist EXO fans cope with this racism and xenophobia. Tracking *febahub*’s retweet of posts by EXO fandom to publicize EXO’s hatred of the marginalized and minorities (@exo_feedback), I visited the account. The fans underlined statements by EXO members that could suggest misogyny, racism, xenophobia, and colorism, through analyses of EXO’s speech acts and behaviors on mass media. For instance, citing the group members Kai and Sehun’s media interviews about their Miss Right, the feminist fans point out that the members regard women as objects for childbirth or as housewives doing filial piety for their husbands’ parents. The fandom

argues that the members' conception of gender roles is misogynistic. According to the fandom, Baekhyun, as E1 described, mocked Chinese members' Korean pronunciation on television shows. Identifying his mockery as racist and xenophobic, the fans also criticize broadcasters, SM Entertainment, and other fans because these practitioners of EXO music featured, spread (broadcasters), oversaw (the label), and even enjoyed (fans) Baekhyun's racist and xenophobic actions. The feminist fans also censure the colorism that permeates EXO's Korean members, through analyzing cases in which dark-skinned members were teased about their skin color by other members on television shows. The fandom has demanded feedback on such hate-related issues from EXO members and SM Entertainment by tagging the member and the label's official Twitter accounts. However, unlike BTS's fandom, the feminist EXO fans have not heard anything from the group or label yet. Furthermore, they still suffer from other fans' cyberbullying.

Still, some feminist fandoms, banding together with *febahub*, have had notable achievements. In response to Block B fandom's criticism of homophobic lyrics, Zico (a member of Block B) changed the word "faggot" into "freaky" in his song "Tough Cookie" (Taengal 2017).¹⁹⁹ In the case of the music video for "Bomb," a solo song from Vixx member Ravi, Vixx fandom succeeded in getting feedback on misogynistic scenes in the video from both Ravi and his label Jellyfish Entertainment. I remember the moment when feminist Vixx fans won this victory. On the morning of the day I returned

¹⁹⁹ Releasing his solo song "Tough Cookie" in 2014, Zico wrote lyrics using the English slang term "faggot." Although he recently changed this word into "freaky" for his live performances, one can still hear the lyrics, "You're such a faggot bitch" in the official music video (2:59). See the music video at <https://youtu.be/P2RLb-RryEs>.

to the United States in January 2017, I was on an airport shuttle. When I was texting my farewell to my brother, *febahub*'s retweet of Ravi's post popped up on my iPhone. I had to stop texting and check it out. He tweeted his apology for his misogynistic music video to his fans and all Twitter users. Although I was not a fan of Vixx, as a member of feminist fandom, I was overjoyed to see Ravi's recognition of misogynistic representation through his music video, and his listening to feminist fans' voices. His label also issued an apology statement. The label finally deleted misogynistic scenes in the music video for Ravi's solo song "Bomb," and released a revised music video.

In addition to such achievements, feminist fandoms are gradually growing. E1 wants to expand *febahub*'s influence:

E1: [I decided to participate in your research and accepted your interview request] because I wanted to give wider publicity to our [*febahub*'s] activities. Actually, while followers of named [fans] go beyond 10K, *febahub* has just over 1000 followers. We're in a hurry. Hopefully, we can become a trending account so that [feminism] can spread out [within K-pop fandoms]. [It's a good thing that] our followers keep increasing day by day...

(In-person Interview, January 3, 2017)

Among the new followers of *febahub* are teenage girls and men. Thus, younger generation feminists and male feminists appear within K-pop fandoms. With the addition of these new feminist fans, *febahub* is currently preparing to hold a fundraising party for feminist fandoms. Following *febahub*'s tweets for the party, I cannot help smiling because I came up with the idea for a fundraiser during my interviews with E1. She was concerned about finance for *febahub*'s activities. Volunteer managers of *febahub* considered submitting an article to a feminist webzine to earn money. However, the managers did not consider fundraising. Listening to her worry, I suggested she hold an

offline screening of misogynistic and other hate-related examples of K-pop music and musicians, for which *febahub* members could charge visitor fans for admission and beverages. I also suggested an online promotion of the fundraising screening to her. As an autoethnographer, I was thrilled that I could not only take part in *febahub*'s activity as a proponent, but also could identify myself with feminist *ppasuni*, and that I could be regarded as a fan friend inside fandom rather than as a fan scholar outside of fandom by my research participant.

Fans have been described in academia as “theorists,” “critics,” and activists in regard to diverse fan practices (Jenkins 1992; Lee 2015). Drawing from my auto/ethnography of feminist female K-pop fandom in this section, I argue that fans utilize theories and ideologies to analyze, criticize, reflect on, and determine actions towards both their stars and themselves. E1 indicates how feminism can be interwoven with her self-analytical and self-reflexive performance of fandom (*deokjil*):

Me: You know exactly about you [your *deokjil*]. You definitely realize whether you consume [K-pop] idols in a way of a quasi-romance or not.

E1: I didn't really know in the past. Moreover, [K-pop labels] sell [idols] indistinguishably [between non-romantic and quasi-romantic fannishness]. So I didn't know [my fannishness] actually. I didn't know it before I learned feminism.

Me: Did [your realization] happen after you had learned feminism?

E1: Yes, after I had learned feminism. I thought of them [fandom and feminism] separately at first. Feminism is feminism. Idol *deokjil* is idol *deokjil*. In this way, I thought of them separately. At one point, [feminism and fandom] overlapped, at the time I campaigned for feedback from BTS. From a feminist view, I realized that my desire couldn't be what I truly desired [change in her way of consuming K-pop idols]. My fondness for Jimin (member of BTS) resulted from a [vicarious] projection of myself. I found myself through him. That's why I liked him. I so hated the other BTS members. However, when I had liked Baekhyun (EXO member), come to think of it, I had felt really like a quasi-romance. I had loved him because he had been handsome... [Now], I can see at which points I

empathize with him [Jimin]... I thought about why I liked Jimin so much. I have an inferiority complex a lot, even though I never reveal it to others. So, it is said that I look very confident. Unlike me, Jimin always shows his complex by saying that he has feelings of inferiority. Also, he speaks out [to media] like this, "I'm second to Jungkook (a member of BTS) in many things." I felt he's so cool like that. But at the same time, I could find out that he's feeling inferior, and could project myself to him. I feel the same way [as him]. While I couldn't talk [about my sense of inferiority] to anybody, he [Jimin] is so much stronger than me [that he's willing to disclose his complex in public]. Thinking this way, I liked him more and more, as well as deeper and deeper. He's so fabulous. (In-person interview, January 3, 2017)

Her self-analytical and self-reflexive *deokjil*, not separated from feminism, suggests "lifestyle feminism" (hooks 2000: 5), which bell hooks defines as follows:

Lifestyle feminism ushered in the notion that there could be as many versions of feminism as there were women. Suddenly the politics was being slowly removed from feminism. And the assumption prevailed that no matter what a woman's politics, be she conservative or liberal, she too could fit feminism into her existing lifestyle. Obviously this way of thinking has made feminism more acceptable because its underlying assumption is that women can be feminists without fundamentally challenging and changing themselves or the culture (hooks 2000: 5-6).

I note that bell hooks proposes lifestyle feminism as one of plural feminisms.

Associating a multiplicity of feminisms with Korean female K-pop fandom, I argue that feminist *ppasuni*'s online activities not only comprise variations in traditional Korean feminism, but also inspire established feminist activists to open up a new phase. Korean women acquire "lifestyle feminism" and demonstrate "feminism for everybody" through their analytical, critical, and reflexive fan practices.

While I have explored feminist practices so far, I talk about political practices in the following two sections of this chapter.

“With the Brightest Light We Have”: Democratic Fandom’s Union to Diversify Korean Protest Culture

Korean people held and attended rallies twenty times in October last year through March this year, calling for the impeachment and imprisonment of the former President Geun-hye Park. Among the people, young K-pop fans made their presence known. They participated in those protests in their own unique way. This section examines K-pop fans’ participation in Korean political protests and its implication. Before the examination, I detail a chain of political events causing the protests to explain how I discovered the fan protesters as well as to better contextualize K-pop fandom in Korean politics.

On the day I returned to California, the news first revealed the political scandal, also known as “Choi Soon-sil (or Choi Sun Sil) Gate.”²⁰⁰ The Hankyoreh, one of the most famous newspapers in Korea, reported on September 20 (in Korean time) that Soon-sil Choi, a clandestine powerbroker close to President Geun-hye Park, took a hand in the establishment and management of the K-Sports Foundation. Other news media then started to cover Choi’s immoderate and illegal interference in and influence on the government administration. Taking advantage of her status as the President’s associate, she enrolled her daughter illicitly at Ewha Womans University. Her uncontrolled, illegal deeds and her relation to the President were continuously highlighted by news media. JTBC, a nationwide general cablecast company, unearthed a tablet PC which Choi had owned and used, and then spotlighted details of unlawful activities documented on it.

²⁰⁰ I arrived at the Los Angeles International Airport on September 19, 2016 – September 20 in Korea. The news story was first released on September 20 in Korean time.

In response, President Park gave a statement to the nation on October 25, 2016, but her speech –a pre-recorded message of just 1 minute and 40 seconds– simply said that she was very sorry for the scandal but had intended to oversee government affairs more carefully, and that her intentions were pure. Koreans were outraged by this half-hearted statement. They began to protest against President Park, gathering at Gwanghwamun Square in Seoul on October 29, four days after her speech.²⁰¹ During the protests, people held up lit candles and called for Park to resign and tell the truth about the political scandal. The more protesters congregated at Gwanghwamun Square, the more they were fired up. Protests soon spread all over the country, and to Korean people living around the world. While I was in Washington, D.C. to present my paper at the Society for Ethnomusicology’s annual meeting, I participated in a rally held by Korean immigrants in Annandale, Virginia on November 11, 2016.²⁰² In solidarity with the people in Korea, we chanted, carried placards, lighted electric candles, and sang protest songs. On that day, November 12 in Korean time, one million people gathered for the third protest against President Park in Seoul.

In the meantime, Choi, as well as associates of both she and Park, were arrested and charged one after another in November. Park released her second and third statements on November 4 and 29, respectively. Through these statements, she conceded her relationship with Choi but still did not admit her association with alleged

²⁰¹ Gwanghwamun Square is a public place in central Seoul. It is located 0.8 miles away from the Blue House (Cheong Wa Dae in Korean), which includes the Korean President’s office and official residence.

²⁰² Additionally, I joined a rally in LA’s Koreatown on November 26.

irregularities committed by Choi. Furthermore, Park's message in the speeches hinted that she would reject the people's demand for her resignation from the presidency. People became even more outraged and determined, and protracted protests were held demanding that the National Assembly to impeach Park. While protesters spoke out against President Park, their rallies became more exciting, compelling, and festive. The protests were both political action and cultural practice. For example, during the protests, a wide range of people, from an elementary school student, a college student and a housewife in her sixties to a female caregiver, white/blue collar workers and a male farmer, delivered speeches on the political and social status quo; both professional and non-professional musicians staged their performances; poems were recited; effigies of Park, Choi and their accomplices were set up at Gwanghwamun Square; and the people created participatory paintings (figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2. Participatory paintings created by protesters at a rally for President Park's impeachment. Photo by the author.

Individuals and small-group protesters participated in the rallies with their own banners. Some parodied the flags of political groups and displayed unique catch phrases and images (figures 5.3 and 5.4). Through these waggish banners symbolizing different personal interests, protesters expressed and emphasized their distinctive personalities as both political and cultural agents. Collective acts of protest reflected individuality and diversity. This new phenomenon indicated the change in Korean protest culture. Protests in Korea had long been understood at large as violent and aggressive demonstrations dominated by politicians, college students, labor union members, and activists. These demonstrators had put stress on their solidarity and collectivity by parading the flags representing their groups during the protests. Demonstrators would throw firebombs at the police suppressing them with tear gas. To promote the demonstrations and to encourage one another, protesters formerly played traditional Korean percussion instruments such as *buk* (traditional Korean rustic drum) and *kkoenggari* (traditional Korean small gong)²⁰³ and sang *minjung gayo* (people's songs or grassroots songs) or folk-styled music as protest songs during rallies.²⁰⁴ This type of protest is what I remember as the culture of pro-democracy, student, and labor movements in 1980s-90s Korea.

²⁰³ According to Katherine Lee, *pungmul* (also typed as *p'ungmul* in McCune-Reischauer romanization), "a folk percussion genre associated with rural peasants and pre-modern Korea," became essential to Korean protest, by being performed by college students during Korea's democratization movement in the late 1980s (Lee 2012: 180).

²⁰⁴ *Minjung gayo*, literally meaning people's song or grass-roots' song, has been composed by activist musicians and sung by protesters during rallies. Most *minjung gayo* songs have had simple melodies and rhythms in the style of a march so that participants in protests, cheered by the music, have followed it easily. Also, the genre has been combined with folk and pop styles (Lie 2015).



Figure 5.3. Flags of colleges carried to a rally by student protesters. Photo by the author.



Figure 5.4. A personal banner brought by an individual participant in a protest. Photo by the author.

While I was concerned about the results of the impeachment of President Park and the prosecutorial investigation of her surroundings, I also noted the news of ongoing protests and their changing forms of both consolidation and diversification. Korea's National Assembly ultimately passed a presidential impeachment motion on December 9, 2016. Although I was living in California, I was euphoric as a Korean about the National

Assembly's decision, like other Koreans in my homeland and around the world. Even after the impeachment motion was passed, the people continued to rally for the Constitutional Court's speedy final decision to impeach Park at Gwanghwamun Square on every Saturday. News media not only updated the progress of investigation and trial but also reported the protests and public reaction.

Reading the impeachment-related news pouring out of Korea, I was intrigued by a story that described a mass of people outside of the National Assembly building, ecstatic about the passage of the impeachment of Geun-hye Park. In the news article, members of K-pop fandoms in their teens and twenties, self-identified as the 'democratic fandoms' union,' were interviewed about their feelings and thoughts about the result of the National Assembly's vote on the impeachment. Later in December, I learned that K-pop idol fans participated in the protests, holding up their light sticks (or glow sticks) used at concerts instead of candles. I searched for information about these fan protesters, also known as "*minjufandomyeondae* (democratic fandoms' union, hereafter DFU)," on Twitter and succeeded in recruiting a core member of the group as a participant in my research.²⁰⁵

On December 28, I arrived back in Korea and met the following day with Y, a member of DFU at SM Town. She was an eighteen-year-old fan of EXO. Although she has lived in Korea since July 2016, she attended the 7th to 11th grades in Vancouver, Canada. Studying abroad as a teenage girl, she had become interested in Korean history,

²⁰⁵ The term *minjufandomyeondae* is a compound word of "*minju* (democratic)," "fandom," and "*yeondae* (union)."

as well as in political and social situations in Korea. In her history class at a Canadian high school, she had wanted to write an essay about Korean history, especially about Korean comfort women who had been forced into sexual slaves by Japanese military before and during World War II. Her history teacher knew nothing about the topic and was unable to recommend any references to help Y develop her essay, so she searched for all information about the women on her own. Hearing about Korean politics while in Canada, she had felt frustrated at them. She wished to do something to change the discouraging situation in her homeland. She decided to major in political science or diplomatic science at a college, returning to Korea after graduating high school early. After learning about her background, we talked about her DFU activity:

Y: DFU had started as “the light stick [holders’] union (*eungwonbongyeondae* in Korean).”²⁰⁶ I had come to participate in that union, even if I had hesitated to go [protest with the union members]. However, I was pleased to see those sharing similar thoughts as me, [and to rally with them]. As we had been getting through to one another, we got to be friends soon and easily. Because only light sticks [had been stressed], the leader of the union had been criticized [for excluding less affluent fans], so she had quit [and disbanded the union].²⁰⁷ I was so sorry for this, and had thought that the union could be better with making up for its weakness. I thus asked a few close members if they would be interested in joining a new group, which I would create to replace the light stick union, as volunteer staff. They all said OK, and DFU was established.

Me: Had the light stick union started after the candle light protests?

Y: It began around the fourth or fifth protest.

Me: Although you had merely been one of participants in the light stick union, you played a leading role in re-organizing it as DFU... How

²⁰⁶ *Eungwonbongyeondae* is a compound word “*eungwonbong*,” which means a stick for cheering, and “*yeondae*,” which stands for union. Normally, *eungwonbong*, made with a luminous paint or a light emitting diode (LED), is used to respond to music at K-pop concerts. I mainly use the terms light stick or glow stick rather than *eungwonbong* throughout the text.

²⁰⁷ Indeed, K-pop fandoms’ light sticks function as means to classify and even distinguish fan groups, as mentioned in Chapter 1.

fabulous you were! Well, were the close members [who joined you] as old as you were?

Y: I had not asked their ages, but it seemed like they're around my age – the youngest member in her late teens and the oldest member in her mid-twenties. We're all female.

(In-person interview, December 29, 2016)

I was thrilled to learn that all the founding and key members of DFU were young women in their teens and twenties. The interview continued:

Me: You might not know exactly because you attended middle and high schools in Canada, but do you think it's difficult for people to manifest their identities as part of fandom in Korean society?

Y: I do! That's right!

Me: So, there is the term "*ilko*" [for fandom].²⁰⁸ However, you had to identify yourselves as "fandom" during social practice [protests]. To me, it doesn't sound easy. I wondered how you could show your identification with fandom to the public [during protests].

Y: Before the light stick union appeared, I had thought that it would be good to bring [EXO official] LED [light] stick [to a protest]. Some [protesters] had carried other light sticks like Pikachu stick [in addition to candles], for example. If so, could we use *the brightest things we have* [for protests]? The [protest] organizers had said that it would be OK to carry any luminous items [to protests]. The light stick union then appeared, and I was so happy [to protest as a member of the union], but then the union disbanded...[simultaneously] it had been [mockingly] said, "Hey, *ppasuni!* You know nothing [about political and social situations] cause you've been burying yourselves in [following] celebs all the time. What have you [*ppasuni*] known about politics? What are you doing here [at protests]? Why are you protesting? Do you protest to promote your [idol] stars?" In this way, [other people] criticized us. However, [as you know] I was so interested in politics that I wanted to major in political and diplomatic sciences. Also, people around me [the union members] had a lot of concern for politics like me. To be honest, I hoped to break this bias [against female fandom]. Additionally, I believed that, while our or fandoms' gathering might cause a fight between each other, fandoms could create a mutual synergy effect, if we [fandoms] would share a single common goal we wanted to achieve or determine. [We were good at] lining up, waiting, things like that.

Me: These things are our [fandoms'] specialty!

²⁰⁸ I already defined the term *ilko* in Chapter 1.

Y: Right, specialty! Also, shouting. Looking at general protesters, I felt like they were weak in memorizing songs or responding [to leaders during protesters]

Me: Memory for songs as well as response are our [fandoms'] specialty too!

(In-person interview, December 29, 2016)

I realized that DFU deliberately and strategically displayed their fandom during the protests. While fan acts, such as “lining up,” “waiting,” “memorizing songs,” and “responding,” were described as fandoms’ “specialty,” the acts were also essential to protesters. However, as Y pointed out, some protest participants were not skilled at these *sine qua non* of rallies. The DFU protesters’ acts are parts of fandom that not only set an example to people unaccustomed to basic protesting activities, but also allow fans to self-identify as fans. She highlighted these aspects of DFU’s participation in protests:

Y: Participating in protests four or five times, I had seen that on our way to march, many people did not hold microphones and did not chant protest slogans. However, we [DFU] made them chant the slogans, by leading them with our megaphones carried in both our first and last lines. Without realizing it, other protesters, lining up, followed us. Looking at this, I thought that’s it! We *contributed our capacity* [for performing fandom] to protests, by doing what we’re good at.

(In-person interview, December 29, 2016)

On the first Saturday of 2017 (January 9), I was able to conduct participant observation of DFU at the eleventh protest at Gwanghwamun Square. The place and time for K-pop fan protesters to meet was tweeted via DFU’s account: at Sejongro Park and at 5 PM.²⁰⁹ DFU’s volunteer staff appeared earlier than the given time. They hoisted a flag symbolizing DFU and announced their presence at the protest by tweeting a photo of the

²⁰⁹ Sejongro is the name of the street running parallel to Gwanghwamun Square. Along this street, Sejongro Park is located just across from the square.

flag (figure 5.5). Other fan protesters arrived at the park in an hour. DFU distributed their own logo-printed stickers and their own slogan-printed flyers to the fan protesters (figure 5.6). The slogans were “With the Brightest Light We Have” and “Geun-hye Park, Walk on Only the Imprisonment Way.” The words “the brightest light” in the first slogan symbolized the light sticks used by K-pop fandoms at concerts. It implied that DFU held up the light sticks during the rally. The second slogan, calling for the investigation and detention of President Park, parodied a buzzphrase, “Walk on Only the Flowery Way,” which had been created by fans to support their stars and was well-known in Korea. Thus, the DFU slogans made the protesters’ identities as members of fandoms instantly legible.



Figure 5.5. DFU flag. Photo by the author.



Figure 5.6. The front and back of DFU's slogan-printed flyer. Photo by the author.

A total of twelve fans, including myself, congregated to participate in the protest.²¹⁰ Of these participants, two were men in their twenties, and nine were teenage girls (from a thirteen-year-old girl to a nineteen-year-old girl). Since volunteer staff and previous participants were already acquainted with each other, they seemed intimate and were on first-name terms with one another. Still, they welcomed new participants and shared various episodes of their fandoms. A thirteen-year-old fangirl of EXO, escorted by her mother, asked me which fandoms I follow, and from when I had begun participating in fandom. After listening to our conversation, her mother asked me to take care of her daughter and she turned back to Gwanghwamun Square to join other protesters. Girl DFU protesters continued their conversations about fandoms even during other protesters' speeches at the square. When a survivor of the *Sewol* ferry accident read her letter to her friends, the victims of the accident, the girls started to talk about how they were shocked

²¹⁰ They belonged to BtoB, EXO, Girls' Generation, Infinite, and Sun-hee Lee fandoms. See Appendix A for details about each K-pop musician. I self-identified as Xia Junsu or J(Y)J fandom to other participants, but carried a light stick for Shinhwa during the protest because my light stick, which I had used at Xia Junsu's concerts, was broken.

and sad about the news of the accident.²¹¹ Hearing the letter, Y broke into tears and other DFU members calmed her down.

After all the speeches and music performances at Gwanghwamun Square, protesters proceeded to march in procession toward both the Blue House and the Constitutional Court around 8 PM. Heading to the court, DFU members and I switched on our light sticks. At the head of DFU, Y led chants of protest slogans through a megaphone. Standing right next to Y, a girl raised the DFU flag high. Another girl, holding the other megaphone, stood at the tail of our group. We followed Y's lead in the chants. Since our voices did not sound loud, she cried out to us, "Let's imagine we're encountering and calling out our stars we really want to see!" I recalled how I shouted at concerts held by Jong Shin Yoon and XIA Junsu. Our voices were getting much louder. As Y had described in the interview, many other protesters followed us, as well as our chanting of the slogans. Moreover, some protesters showed curiosity about us, amazed by

²¹¹ The *Sewol* ferry accident happened on April 16, 2014. The ferry, running between Incheon and Jeju Island, was sunk in the sea near Jindo Island's Paengmok Harbor. Among 476 passengers aboard the ferry, 172 were rescued, 299 died, and 5 were never found. This accident is one of Korea's worst national disasters for many reasons. First, when the sinking started, the captain of the *Sewol* announced that the passengers should stay inside the ferry, and he let them remain there without any help to them. He was one of the first rescued. Most passengers were high school students on their way to a field trip to Jeju Island. Having learned that they must obey orders from adults in a position of authority, the students followed the captain's announcement, stayed in the sinking ferry, and then met their death. Second, maritime police, sent to the sinking *Sewol*, did not actively participate in rescuing the passengers, and then laid the responsibility for rescue on private diving contractors. Last and most terrible, since both the maritime police and local government mis-reported information about the sinking to the Blue House, President Geun-hye Park did not take any action to rescue passengers in the ferry for "seven hours" after the accident. Furthermore, she ignored calls by the victim's families to investigate the truth behind the *Sewol* ferry accident. Her irresponsibility affected the National Assembly's bill on her impeachment from the presidency.

our light sticks and flag. They asked us who we were, and what DFU meant. Also, they told us, “DFU, you’re so cool.”

DFU arrived near the Constitutional Court alongside other protesters. As the ending time of the rally was approaching, we headed back to Sejongro Park, the place we first had met. On our way back to the park, we, as Y had recounted in the interview, sang Girls’ Generation’s “Into the New World,” which was like a DFU anthem. Y had talked with me about this song in our interview:

Y: Damanse (an acronym for “*Dasi Mannan Segye*,” the Korean title of “Into the New World”), which Ewha Woman’s University students sang [during a campus protest], is a terribly meaningful song.²¹² The lyrics are so great – “For now, a farewell to sadness [that is endless in the world].” Singing is what we’re best at. Singing and chanting together is a break when we get tired during the march. Then at the end of the rally, DFU always gets together and sings *Damanse*. Before completing the protest and returning to our home, we lay the DFU flag on the ground, put our light sticks on it, and take a picture of the lights on the flag. (In-person interview, December 29, 2016)

The series of actions performed by DFU during the protest was a ritual. In addition to “Into the New World,” DFU sang another protest song, titled “The Truth Shall Not Sink with *Sewol*,” while heading back to Sejongro Park.²¹³ Arriving at the park, our ritual proceeded exactly as Y had described. We spread our flag on the ground and placed

²¹² In the end of July 2016, students at Ewha Woman’s University protested on campus against its chancellor’s decision, made without the students’ knowledge, to establish Ewha Extension for workers in the beauty industry. In response to the student protesters, the chancellor called the police, and policemen in the thousands were sent to suppress the students on campus. Surrounded and suppressed by this police force, the students sang Girls’ Generation’s “Into the New World,” which had been released in August 2007 as the musicians’ debut, to encourage themselves.

²¹³ This protest song was composed by activist composer Min-seok Yoon soon after the *Sewol* ferry accident.

our light sticks on the flag (figure 5.7). Everyone took a picture of the sticks glowing in the dark and uploaded it to our social media profiles. After discussing DFU's plan for the next week, we dispersed around 10 PM.



Figure 5.7. DFU protesters' light sticks laid on DFU flag for the final stage of a rally. Photo by the author.

In the subway to return to Suwon, my hometown, I was overwhelmed by my first participation in a protest against President Park in Korea as a member of K-pop fandom, and by my performance of a fans' ritual with DFU during the rally. At the same time, I was wondering whether the young fan protesters might attend the rally merely to spend time with their fellow fans by chanting, singing along, waving their light sticks, and parading. I wondered why they paid no attention to other protesters' speeches or music performances, but had instead focused on chatting with one another about their episodes of fandoms during the protest. I already had asked Y about this in the interview but she had not given me any answer to my query – she turned to another topic in the interview. However, I got hints from what she added later:

Y: We [DFU] made “Happy Impeachment Song” in which we changed the original words from the Happy Birthday song lyrics into new ones – birthday into impeachment and dear somebody into hateful Geun-hye Park. Singing this adapted song together, we, fan protesters were so gleefully marching... We were talking about what we wanted [with regard to fandoms], and then feeling relieved.

Through conducting participant observation of DFU’s attendance at the rally, I learned that DFU came to the fore at the recent protests. DFU extended their identification with fandom to the political and social situation beyond K-pop sites, by making use of fandoms’ musicking, such as waving light sticks, singing along to songs, and chanting slogans, to participate in protests. These ways of musicking during the rally also functioned as ritual for fandoms outside of their own communities. As part of the current changing of Korea’s protest culture through a variety of protesters’ acts, I claim that DFU diversifies the protest culture by applying our performance of fandom to protesters’ activities. Our light sticks add various colors to other protesters’ yellowish candlelight, and our singing of K-pop songs adds a different soundscape to the established soundscape of Korean protests still characterized by the *minjung gayo* genre or folk-style songs. I contextualize DFU’s singing “Into the New World” during the rallies by drawing on Turino’s suggestion:

...music and dance are so important to people’s understanding of themselves and their identities, to the formation and sustenance of social groups, to spiritual and emotional communication, to political movements, and to other fundamental aspects of social life (2008: 1-2).

DFU’s participation in rallies not only makes fandoms socially, politically, and culturally engaged, but also helps DFU protesters better understand themselves and their identities in relation to larger societal groups beyond their individual fandoms.

“It’s Totally Like a Political Scene”: The Politics of Korean Female K-Pop Fandom

As explored earlier in this chapter, Korean female K-pop fandoms engage in political activities. For instance, J(Y)J fandom discussed the issue of Yu Chun’s commission of sexual assault and voted to decide whether they would boycott him or not. Through discussion and voting, fans share different opinions on fandom and stars. To facilitate these practices, an executive team may work within fandoms. The executive fans are normally volunteering and even chosen by other fans’ votes. While conducting a group interview with some managerial members within Jong Shin Yoon’s official fan club, I happened to observe their meeting. They discussed what products would be made and sold as fan merchandise in the name of the official fan club Gongzone, how and to whom the fan goods would be delivered, and when and how the next executive team would be selected. Several weeks after the meeting, the executive fans posted an agenda about the selection of a new executive team to the fan club’s website, and asked for other fans to volunteer for the team. I noted that the agendas or the minutes of the executive members’ meeting were not shared with all fan club members. However, through the observation of the meeting, I realized that the managerial fans did not seem to feel any sense of entitlement but rather grappled with how to economize on the production of fan merchandise, and how to communicate fans’ concerns and ideas to Jong Shin Yoon and his label.

Further, K-pop fans vote on their musicking. Y describes how EXO fandom takes a vote on their musicking during an EXO’s concert:

Y: (Fans) select a fan song [which is sung by fans during a concert]. We sing fan songs, such as “Don’t Go (Butterfly Girl),” “Angel (Into Your

World),” and “Peter Pan,” for EXO during a curtain call at the concert. Also, we create a catch phrase [to barrack for EXO] through online votes. Moreover, we vote to decide the songs for, and when we do, *ttechang* (fan chanting and singing) after getting a setlist (I investigated *ttechang* in Chapter 2). So, this song is sung for the first day [of EXO’s concerts], and that song is sung for the last concert. In this way, songs for *ttechang* change [by fans’ voting].

Me: Decision making by fan votes sounds so democratic.

Y: In some ways, fandom runs most democratically. EXO-L (EXO’s global official fan club without membership fees) doesn’t have an executive team within the fandom. Of course, there are volunteer staff fans. Well, any fans can apply for the volunteer staff to SM Entertainment. The volunteer staff fans mainly help organize other fans at a TV live show [where EXO appears]. However, other fans [do not respect the volunteer staff fans but] react [to the staff fans], “Who are you [to do things this way]?” If there is an executive team [within the fandom] and they don’t do very well, we [EXO fans] will drag them down from their position... [Fans] express their opinion a lot on any small things [about EXO and its fandom]. For this reason, the fandom is always in an uproar [over the fans’ miscellaneous opinions]. Sometimes young fans do not accept others’ opinions.

(In-person interview, December 29, 2016).

Y’s description of her fandom indicates that EXO fans’ musicking, which takes place through a majority decision, observation, and suggestions, is democratic and political.

The case of Sechskies fandom shows how politics operates throughout both musicians’ and fans’ musicking. As explored in Chapter 1, Sechskies found their way back into the K-pop scene in April 2016 after a sixteen-year hiatus. As their comeback concerts, also known as “Yellow Note,” were scheduled in September 2016, their fans got wildly excited about the concerts.²¹⁴ The fandom was well prepared for their musicking at the concerts. Sechskies’s label YG Entertainment also prepared for the concerts by planning a special event in which fans would be able to take part as a choir

²¹⁴ As described in Chapter 1, K-pop fandoms have their own colors to identify and symbolize themselves. The color of Sechskies fandom is yellow.

during the concerts. For the event, fans had to upload videos of their covers of Sechskies's "Couple" to their SNS. The label would choose some fans from among those singing videos. The selected fans then would sing along with Sechskies at the concerts as a fan choir representing the whole fandom. Fans not only would be offered free tickets and label-produced official merchandise, but also given a chance to watch rehearsals and take pictures with Sechskies members. However, most fans disapproved of the event, and the original fans expressed strong opposition. The fandom discussed the fan choir event online and eventually issued their statement via the *DC Inside* Sechskies gallery as follows:

1. We demand the cancellation of the event [for a fan choir at the 2016 Sechskies Yellow Note concerts].
 2. We want the concerts to be, not for a small number of selected fans, but for all fans.
 3. It is possible that some applicants for the event would participate in the concerts for their personal benefit, rather than for the pure intention of being a fan. Thus, it could be far from the original purpose of the event that fans join the concerts.
 4. When the event is held, it is possible that the content could be leaked before the concerts.
 5. We longed for the concerts for sixteen years. We do not want a rerun of fans' singing along with Sechskies, as on the TV show *Fantastic Duo*. We want concerts at which artists (Sechskies) can present their musical abilities.
 6. If a choir is needed for musical completion, a professional chorus can be hired. If Sechskies want the performance in company with their fans, all audience members can participate in that at the concerts.
 7. If our demand for the cancellation of the fan choir event will not be accepted, we'll boycott the event performance [with the selected fans as a choir], uniting with other [Sechskies] fan sites.
- (Originally written in Korean and translated by the author)

In addition to this statement, Sechskies fans took various actions to pressure the label to cancel the event. For instance, they faxed that statement to YG Entertainment;

they not only hash-tagged, “#Demand_for_the_cancellation_of_the_fan_choir_event” on their social media profiles, but also uploaded their videos criticizing the event instead of singing videos; and they sent emails to news reporters to publicize their opposition to the fan choir event.

Both longtime and new fans collaborated in speaking out against the fan choir event at Sechskies’s concerts. As mentioned in Chapter 1, since Sechskies longtime fans belong to a comparatively older generation, many of them were not accustomed to social media or online culture, and did not know even how to use SNS. Accordingly, new and young fans helped the longtime fans learn to use Twitter and Instagram, as well as to use hashtags on social media. Fans thus combined forces to achieve their target and show their power as a fandom, as well as to exert their power over others’ musicking (YG Entertainment’s production of Sechskies concerts featuring a performance event with a fan choir). Ultimately, the label announced that the fan choir event would be cancelled and the already submitted videos of fan covers of “Couple” would be used only for the promotion of the concerts. This outcome suggested that the united power of fandom gained the upper hand in K-pop power dynamics, re-confirming that fandom was a force to be reckoned with in the K-pop industry. After YG Entertainment’s announcement, Sechskies fans enjoyed their victory against the label and then devoted themselves to a variety of musicking at concerts, being proud of their united *hwaryeok* (literally meaning firepower but indicating power of fandom). Their musicking at the concerts demonstrated how longtime and new fans were bonded together by their fannishness online and offline irrespective of their generational difference – intergenerational integration in Sechskies

fandom. However, this unity started to crack after Sechskies's concerts. As the splintered sparks flew among the fandom, those fans accessible to relatively more *hwaryeok* than others drew other contingents of the fandom to them. Thus, the fandom split.

Divisions within the fandom could have been expected to some extent, due to the diversity among Sechskies fans resulting from the group's breakup in 2000 and reunion/comeback in 2016, as illustrated in Chapter 1. As members of Sechskies fandom, F1 (a new fan) and M (a longtime fan), both in their thirties, related their observation and experiences:

F1: Why are Sechkie (a nickname for Sechskies) fans always making a fuss? Cause are they older comparatively?

M: Fans' ages don't matter. I think that's because multiple people of different backgrounds get together for fandom. If fans had been from similar backgrounds, it [divisions and uproar within the fandom] would've been less. This fandom includes people who have done *fanjil* (performance of fandom) for other pop musicians, and people who have done *fanjil* only for Sechskies.

F1: Olbie (olbie/oldbie in Korean style meaning longtime fans) and newbie (new fans). Fans of various ages.

M: Fans who have not known either [*DC Inside*] gall or Twitter. Fans of only Sechkie. And fans who have tried all things. Fans of such different backgrounds are mingling.

(Group interview, January 8, 2017)

Since *ipdeok* for (becoming a fan of) Sechskies in June 2016, F1 had learned how to do *deokjil* (performance of fandom) at the DC Sechskies gall. Although she was not interested in social networking via Twitter and Instagram before becoming a member of Sechskies fandom, she currently uses both social media for her *deokjil*. Thus, while she is a "newbie" in the fandom, she was not used to SNS because of her age and status (a housewife in her thirties). On the other hand, M has the long history as a member of the fandom. She became a Sechskies fan when the group made their debut in 1997. At that

time, she was eleven years old in her last year of elementary school. After Sechskies disbanded in May 2000, she joined and performed other fandoms. However, she returned to Sechskies fandom when the group reunited and made their comeback in April 2016. To do her *deokjil* for the group and other popular musicians, she mainly stays connected to Twitter.²¹⁵

I had already noticed the enmity among Sechskies fans online when I interviewed E1 (a member of the feminist *ppasuni* group). She mentioned Sechskies fandom as one of the most notorious fandoms for cyberbullying of feminist fans. However, the division and friction among Sechskies fans seemed more complicated than simply understanding it as a conflict between feminist and non-feminist fans. Also, as M points out, the difference in fans' ages is not necessarily the cause of the split within the fandom because they accomplished 'intergenerational integration' through their musicking. In the case of Sechskies fandom, the fans' behavior reflects the power dynamics within the fandom. The political schisms within the fandom can be seen on two different social media sites, the DC Sechskies gall and Twitter, on which fans congregate and mobilize *hwaryeok*. Recounting the power relationship between such two fan "parties," M looked stressed:

M: At this point, [Sechskies fandom] is dichotomized. In a broad way, a contest between [the DC Sechskies] gall and Twitter. However, not all galler (gallery users) and twitterians (Twitter users in Korea) [as Sechskies fans] fight with one another. Many fans on Twitter are more critical [about Sechskies's drawback than other fans]. Their bringing up critical issues [about the group] is fine. On the other hand, fans on the gall are exclusive [in terms of the fandom] but prefer [positive comments about the group], tending to overindulge [the group]... There was a fight between them [the galler and the twitterians]. However, some fans on

²¹⁵ M used to perform fandom at the DC Sechskies gall. However, she no longer visits the gall for her *deokjil*.

Twitter did not agree with those critical twitterians. I was one of them [disagreeing with the critical fans, but I valued that the conversation was happening]... It was ridiculous that gallers signed up for Twitter and attacked twitterians with the intention of cleaning up [Sechskies fandom on] Twitter. The problem was that the gallers concentrated on attacking two twitterians. One twitterian was a volunteer staff who had led a communal purchase of [banners with fan] slogans [used for Sechskies concerts]. That means many other fans [gallers] knew her home address [because the slogans were shipped to her address]. So, some gallers on Twitter mentioned her or sent direct messages to her, “Don’t come out of the house. We’ll kill you.”... She felt fear due to that... [To talk about the other twitterian attacked by gallers], we rented buses to go to Sechskies concerts in Busan. Gallers called critical twitterians *kkappa* meaning “*kkaryeogo fanjilhaneun aedeul* (fans doing *fanjil* to criticize their stars).” Moreover, the gallers revealed a list of Twitter handles for *kkappa*. A twitterian I knew was included in the list. I can tell you she is never *kkappa*. I know her personally. There’s no doubt about her deep fondness for Sechkie and her authentic fannishness. [The gallers branded her as *kkappa*] because she talked to *kkappa* on Twitter or didn’t block *kkappa*. Actually, she has over 1000 followers... To rent buses, a fan from the gall opened a cafe (online fan community) for passenger fans. The fan also signed up for Twitter. She disclosed herself as the community launcher and then tweeted that because she hated *kkappa*, she didn’t want *kkappa* to take buses together with other fans. Well, someone mentioned to the fan that my acquaintance, mistaken for *kkappa*, would use a rented bus. Something bad happened to my acquaintance. She eventually couldn’t take any bus with other fans... She then publicized this issue, expecting that other fans would stand by her, responding “Your on-site fan activity must not be restricted in any case.” However, they reacted to her, “Well, how were you hurt?” [Standing beside her], I was so scared [at other fans having this apathy to her]... She had to delete her Twitter account. She made herself an invisible fan. That definitely hurts her. I know how much she loves Sechkie. I don’t understand what the hell the gall thinks it is doing, and why the gallers judge others’ fannishness... Anyway, she came to watch the concerts in Busan. I came across her covering her face with a mask and a hood, and I was really upset. Even now, I feel like I could cry. (In-person interview, January 8, 2017)²¹⁶

²¹⁶ I planned a small group interview with F1 and M that day. Since F1 was late due to a traffic situation, I conducted an in-person interview with M prior to F1’s arrival.

M's description not only elucidates the dispute between fans on the DC Sechskies gallery and those on Twitter, but also the conflict among critical twitterians within Sechskies fandom. She elaborated upon this disagreement in her own party, that is, the fandom on Twitter:

M: When *teufemi* (feminists on Twitter) first became powerful [within Sechskies fandom], I was irritated, so I blocked and muted them [even though I identify myself as a feminist].²¹⁷ Meanwhile, [among Sechskies fans on Twitter], some twitterians started to post tweets to refute *teufemi*'s arguments. I found a secret satisfaction in their refutation. Actually, I didn't wanna join the fray online. I preferred to keep mum [about disagreement among the fans on Twitter]... The fans [fighting against *teufemi* within the fandom] were so silly... [but I still] wanted to side with them. Well, *it* [the quarrel among the fans on Twitter] *became a political dispute*...

Me:... It's totally like a political scene. Fandom is like the political arena.
M: I was very tired... I had a fellow fan of Sechskies on Twitter, and I used to meet up with her offline... She was first in line to fight against *teufemi* [within Sechskies fandom] on Twitter through mentions. Thus, she constructed the scene of a quarrel. In fact, several fans pushed her into leading a confrontation with *teufemi*. So, the fight began. It was fine when she steamed in at first. To be honest, I was on her side... Her initial attack on *teufemi* was effectual because their attitude died down... She is so smart and *political*... She amazed me. Thanks to her, I came to know how politics works [among people]. First, she won other fans over, and then she persuaded them into agreeing with and supporting her when she brought up issues. Those fans who were drawn to her, and became her ally, had collectively over 1000 followers of their own on Twitter. So, by tearing into *teufemi*, she led these fans to make a coordinated attack on *teufemi*. Also, she set up other fans to take her side or to stand down if they wanted to take neither side. The dispute [between her and *teufemi*] went this way... However, she became problematic. When she fought against *teufemi*, she copied their tactics, such as their mockery [which is much disliked among twitterians]... So eventually, the fans on her side were gone... I thought she had been a good friend of mine, but I can't see her any more after that.
(In-person interview, January 8, 2017)

²¹⁷ As a self-identified feminist, M is not an anti-*teufemi* at all but just complains about a part of *teufemi* within Sechskies fandom.

Further, the above episode indicates that fandom functions as a political scene in which fans not only meet and part but also take advantage of one another according to their different needs and interests around fan practices. A fan who conducted a cyberbattle on behalf of twitterians against *teufemi*, is reminiscent of a political figure, and is described as “political” by M.

The shaping of politics within fandom by influential fans also occurs through so-called “named” (fans) in different K-pop fandoms. These fans perform their practices mostly on Twitter, as in the case of Sechskies fandom. They wield their leverage to form fans’ popular opinion on political issues within fandoms such as feminist practices. E1 illustrates how the named fans influence others within K-pop boy bands’ fandoms:

E1: Seventeen fandom was somewhat different from other fandoms. [Feminist fans’ campaign for feedback on the misogyny issue from K-pop groups and their labels] started from BTS, EXO, and Seventeen, respectively. The role of named [fans] is important within fandoms. In the case of BTS fandom, named [fans] hurled the F-word from the beginning [of the feminist fans’ campaign]. However, in EXO fandom, while some named [fans] agreed [with feminists], other named [fans] disagreed [with feminists]. So, we thought there is hope in EXO. But more influential named [fans] disputed with [the feminist fans], “Why do you perform fandom, if you criticize [misogynistic EXO]?” So, public sentiment [within EXO fandom] was totally overturned. Now, [the feminist EXO fandom] is in a difficult situation. [Unlike EXO fandom], the opponents [of feminist fans] in Seventeen fandom cannot say anything in public, even though they really do not agree. It’s because all [Seventeen’s] named [fans] agree [with feminist fandom]. Also, it’s because all named [fans] are friends of *teufemi* (feminists on Twitter). Many other fans thus do not say anything but see how the winds blow on Twitter even though they don’t feel [Seventeen and their music are] misogynistic. Of course, some timid [non-feminist] fans gripe like this, “If you like [feminism] so much, you should have studied [it] personally.” But there are not any [Seventeen] fans who brand [feminist fans] as anti-fans like BTS’s fans. We still have hope for Seventeen.

(In-person interview, January 3, 2017)

In his auto/ethnographic study of Bruce Springsteen fandom, Cavicchi suggests his fandom is akin to “religion rather than politics.” In doing so, he disagrees with fan researchers in the social sciences, including cultural and media studies, who tend to consider fandom as a “social force” related to “institutions and ideologies,” or as rebellion against an oppressive industry (1998: 7-8). He then emphasizes ethnographic research on fandom, in which fan practices or experiences can be understood through fans’ own descriptions (Cavicchi 1998). As an auto/ethnographer examining popular music fandom like him, I agree with his points. However, looking at various cases of Korean female K-pop fans, I find it necessary to adopt approaches to fandom from both Cavicchi and social science scholars. I thus claim that fans, through practices and experiences involving their relationships with one another, as well as with popular music practitioners outside of fandom (musicians and labels), make fandom into a political and/or ideological arena.

K-pop systems of music production and rendition can be considered closed and even undemocratic.²¹⁸ I contrast those systems with political activities within fandom, such as voting, meeting, following and unfollowing, and engaging in power dynamics, throughout this section. Additionally, I argue that female K-pop fans’ political practices challenge such exclusive and undemocratic systems, by referring to Duffett’s suggestion:

Fandom is a link between that ordinary, mundane world and somewhere else, yet it contests the idea that an emphasis on stardom is undemocratic.

²¹⁸ According to a concert band conductor (composer and arranger) and a concert band director (violinist, arranger, and composer) I interviewed as K-pop practitioners, most K-pop labels do not openly recruit performers, such as instrumentalists and backup singers, for album recording or concerts. Moreover, the labels tend to monopolize these performers exclusively for specific K-pop musicians.

Indeed, pop fandom tends to suggest that music appreciation, music making and stardom can be closely interlinked, and that the mundane and democratic can occur *within the world of culture and meaning established by icons* and their genres, myths and legends (2014: 7).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined feminist and political practices performed by Korean female K-pop fans, contextualizing these practices in recent societal situations in Korea. For the contextualization, I opened the chapter by relating ordinary people's feminist activism in reaction to a misogynistic murder case that occurred near Gangnam Station in Seoul. I also discussed the geo-cultural significance of Gangnam Station to K-pop fandom, demonstrating how the area brought together feminism and fandom. Following this prologue to the chapter, I summarized feminisms in Korea in the first section. In the second section, I recounted how J(Y)J fandom perceived alleged sexual assaults of women by a male musician (Yu Chun) and took action in response to his sex scandals. Understanding sexual violation of prostitute/barmaids as an abuse of power over women, J(Y)J's female fans denounced Yu Chun as a sexual offender, recanted their fannishness for him, and boycotted his ongoing membership in the group.

The third section explored how young female fans recognized and reacted to an incident of sexual harassment of K-pop boy bands B1A4, Infinite, and Block B by female comedians, which was televised as part of the entertainment show SNL Korea. The fans' recognition of, and reaction to, sexual harassment not only resulted from their fannishness but also from their perception of sexual relationships as being based on mutual consent. I highlighted that this perception was influenced by feminist

theorizations of sexual relationships as well as by the feminist anti-sexual violence movement. Moreover, I stressed that the young female fans applied their learning and understanding of feminist practices to their musicking. Focusing on the case of BTS and its fandom, the fourth section addressed misogyny, which was presented in the group's song lyrics, and narrated through the group members' social media profiles. I described the conflict between the group/label and their fandom over misogynistic music and musicians by citing the statements published online by both BTS/BigHit Entertainment and the fandom. Looking at female fans' online campaign to demand feedback on the misogyny issue from the group and the label, I found out the fans used feminism as the basis of their critique and identified themselves as feminists. In the fifth section, I spotlighted these feminist fans, also known as *femi-ppasuni*, and their activities in their community (*febahub* on Twitter). I also examined how *femi-ppasuni*, congregating from different fandoms, coped with misogyny and other hate-related issues in K-pop, as well as with cyberbullying among K-pop fans.

For the sixth and seventh sections of the chapter, I moved on to K-pop fans' political practices. In the sixth section, I talked about recent political developments in Korea to contextualize fandom's role in political activities. Noting protests against (former) President Park, I investigated young K-pop fans' participation in the rallies with their light sticks. The fan protesters, also known as democratic fandoms' union (DFU), not only diversified Korean protest culture, but also made fandoms socially and politically engaged. In the seventh section, I looked at power dynamics within K-pop

fandom. Influenced by the variety of power relationships within fandom, the fans politicized their participation in fandoms.

In the next chapter, I propose two concepts to integrate the diversity of aspects and issues of Korean female K-pop fandom, as well as to help better understand K-pop as an inclusive cultural phenomenon.

Intermission II: Self-Vindication and Self-Criticism as a Member of Femi-*Ppasuni*

Before moving on to the next chapter, I, as a Korean feminist K-pop fan, will briefly discuss my own stance on negative comments within fandom about femi-*ppasuni*. As indicated in the previous chapter, feminist K-pop fandom is controversial since many other fans disapprove of self-identified feminist fans. Their adversaries point out that feminist fans are not qualified to criticize misogynistic music and musicians when these feminist female fans also engage in the consumption of K-pop male idols' bodies represented as sexual objects through media. Thus, the opponents of these feminist fans not only doubt the authenticity of a feminism practiced by fans who sexually objectify men, but also contend that feminist fans, as misandrists, do not get to have any say about misogyny in K-pop. To refute the opponents' argument, I cite Seong-yun Kim's analysis of Korean female fandom as well as Hyun-jae Lee's suggestion of a new femininity:

As visibility became a new focus of fandom, a trend in *fanjil* (the performance of fandom) changed... Teenage girls started consuming images of male bodies, contrary to the socially and sexually normative system to which the girls should conform... No discussion on women's overindulgence in male bodies has been made in any introductory books on visual culture. Thus, a new trend [of fangirls' enthusiasm for male stars' bodies] in female fandom in the 2000s has subverted the conventional frame of the male gaze and sexual objectification as well as a power relationship between looking and being looked at (Kim 2016: 13).

Female-dominated cafes (internet communities) foreshadowed the emergence of female "abject" (a combination of "a-" and "object," meaning an undefined object) in the process of urbanization. Women in these communities are no longer good objects reflecting male superiority. These women express their emotions and desires in a more masculine voice than men. The women do not represent a passive femininity any more, such as frugality or prudence, which was expected of them... These women volitionally choose an object of their affections or actively

consume a fantasy about an object multiplying their pleasure (Lee 2016: 63-64).

Drawing upon Kim and Lee, I vindicate feminist *ppasuni* criticized for their consumption of images of K-pop male stars' bodies. This consumption can be rather a manifestation of feminism because through the consumption, these women not only defy conventional gender expectations but also undermine female objectification by the male gaze and a power relationship between looking and being looked at. Women find and express their own sensual pleasure through male objectification via their consumption of images of K-pop male stars. This practice enables women to create new gender characteristics by, for, and of themselves against a traditional femininity expected and manipulated by men.

However, as a self-criticism, I have concerns about feminist *ppasuni* sharing gossip regarding K-pop male idols' sexual orientations. During an interview with E1, I learned that she and her fellow feminist female fans read homoerotic fan fiction about K-pop male idols. Listening to how she enjoys fan fiction, I could hardly believe my ears. E1 said that, as feminists, she and other feminist *ppasuni* can easily identify which K-pop male idols might be gay. According to E1, the femi-*ppasuni* read fanfic together and compare the idols' fictional sexualities with their real sexual orientations, as "detected" by feminist female fans. After listening to that, I wanted to tell her that feminism's purpose is not to judge others' sexual orientations, that is, to develop "gaydar," but to respect all sexual orientations as well as to encourage, empower, and empathize with sexual minorities. However, I said nothing because I hoped E1, as she learned more about

feminism and engaged in more feminist activities, would realize herself how to deal with sexuality on both public and personal levels.

In conclusion, I suggest that the dispute between *femi-ppasuni* and the opponents of these feminist fans within Korean female K-pop fandom can create space for a debate on female sexual desire as signaled in the performance of popular music fandom. I also claim that, reflecting on themselves as both sexual objects and subjects in relation to gender dynamics in the K-pop scene, female K-pop fans define and practice their own versions of feminism.

Chapter 6. Towards K-Popping: The Creation of Multifaceted Fanscapes Among Korean Women in K-Pop Cultures

Researching Bruce Springsteen fandom auto/ethnographically, Cavicchi points out:

[T]he definition of music fandom lies not in any terse phrase or single image but rather in the tension between all of these relationships at any given moment. That is why fandom is so difficult to grasp. It is also why fandom is so central to understanding popular music (1998: 107).

I know of no better account than Cavicchi's sentences of the challenges a fandom researcher confronts. Although I have been a member of Korean popular music or K-pop fandom during most of my life and conducted an auto/ethnographic study of the fandom for years, I do not think that Korean female K-pop fandom can be entirely grasped through my dissertation research project. My study of fandom is akin to piecing together a jigsaw puzzle of K-pop. I have attempted to create a multimedia collage of female K-pop fandom encompassing images, sounds, words, actions, and so on.

This chapter brings together my two perspectives in looking at Korean female K-pop fandom from both a bird's eye view and a bug's eye view. For the challenge, I integrate pieces of various factors and issues of fandom, which I examined throughout previous chapters. Based on this integration, I suggest two concepts for a new understanding of K-pop and its female fandom in Korea. I term these concepts "K-popping" and "fanscape," respectively. K-popping and fanscape not only lead people to better understand K-pop fandom, but also encourage "*ppasuni*," that is, Korean female K-pop fans, to experience their own fandoms with greater self-esteem.

From K-Pop to K-Popping

In this section, I discuss how K-pop can be understood as an activity as well as a cultural product. As explored in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino argues that music is “not a unitary art form” (2008:1). Musicologist Christopher Small conceptualizes music as “an activity people do” (1998:2). Thus, the term music is not only a noun, but can be extended as a verb like “musicking” or “to music.” As a verbal form, “to music” is to participate in “a musical performance” “in any capacity,” whether by composing, performing, rehearsing, or practicing, or by dancing (Small 1998: 9). This concept of music as “an activity people do” can be applied to K-pop so that it can be inflected as “to K-pop” or “K-popping.”

As explored in Chapter 1, there are different ways to approach K-pop. In a narrow sense, K-pop has been defined as a musical genre stylized by “danceable” rhythms based on “infectious beats” and “simple, earworm-inducing” melodies, as well as the strong intonation of English lyrics (Shin 2009a: 507; Lie 2012: 356). However, K-pop is not only an audio-oriented genre, but is also image- and video-centered (Shin 2013). As K-pop is an up-to-date version of “photogenic” and “videogenic” popular music, a music video is the optimum medium to disseminate and experience K-pop (Lie 2012: 356; Shin 2013: 59). To get familiar with K-pop, one should watch music videos or live performances rather than simply listen to albums or sound files (Shin 2013: 61). One could see spectacles in which young, “fit,” “attractive” performers are singing, rapping, and dancing with high-speed, organized, and synchronized movements. The concept of music as a verb frames our understanding of K-pop performances.

Those performers of K-pop are known as idols, and idols are central to defining K-pop. These idols also can lead to the re-conceptualization of K-pop, a noun, as K-pop, a verb, through their activities characterizing K-pop. Once K-pop is performed via a music video or a live performance, listeners are stimulated to amplify their visual senses more than their aural senses. Listeners become viewers. Watching K-pop music videos or live performances, the viewers' eyes are riveted by performers who show very well-designed, high-speed, and synchronized dance movements along with their "photogenic" and "videogenic" looks. In the case of non-idol musicians, performers and viewers also engage in similar activities to idols' K-pop performances. For instance, PSY, as mentioned in Chapter 1, was not trained and promoted as an idol, but generated a K-pop craze around the world beyond Asia, which had been the major market for K-pop. As the music video to his song "Gangnam Style" went viral, his dancing in the video, which mimicked horse-riding, succeeded in catching the global popular music fans' eyes.

In this way, K-pop can be explained through its performers' and listeners' (viewers') actions that together assemble performances. Given these activities, K-pop is not simply a noun referring to a thing but instead functions as a verb describing the activities. Multiple persons and activities are mobilized to present a K-pop performance. As explored in Chapter 1, idols go through various training courses before making their debut as K-pop performers. They learn vocal techniques from vocal trainers, rapping skills from hip-hop musicians, and dancing steps from choreographers. Idols learn how to compose songs from composers and to produce albums from producers; they learn acting from actors or actresses, and foreign languages from language tutors. Qualified trainees,

after completing these training courses, enter the stage and appear in music videos as K-pop performers. To present this performance, additional practitioners are involved in diverse activities: backup singers for a chorus; backup dancers for choreography; and makeup artists as well as hair and fashion stylists for making up and styling the performers. Moreover, for live appearances, K-pop performers are accompanied by instrumentalists.

Recognizing these activities, existing K-pop studies have applied the term “system” to describe the activities and the activity practitioners (Cha and Choi 2011; Shin 2013).²¹⁹ K-pop-related actions and practitioners have been understood as a mechanism to manufacture popular music products. Contrary to this simplification of K-pop-related activities and the activity practitioners as a system, I argue that these actions and practitioners demonstrate K-pop as “an activity that people do” beyond as a product of the Korean pop entertainment industry or a form of Korean popular music. I then re-conceptualize K-pop as its verbal form, K-popping or to K-pop.

Korean female K-pop fans also contribute to shaping the concept of K-popping. As investigated in Chapter 2, they perform a diversity of fan activities in relation to K-pop performances. For instance, the fans not only participate in K-pop performances through *ttechang* (fan chanting and singing in response to musicians’ performances), but

²¹⁹ Woojin Cha and Jisun Choi describe an idol as a “cultural system” (2011). Hyunjoon Shin suggests an “in-house system” to define K-pop labels as entertainment enterprises that encompass performers, composers, arrangers, producers, recording engineers, choreographers, A&Rs, managers, fashion stylists, interns for these employees, and so on (2013: 95). Also, Shin explains the process of discovering, educating, and pitching idol stars in the Korean pop entertainment industry as the K-pop star system (Ibid.: 96).

also wave light sticks to the rhythms of songs at K-pop concerts. In Chapter 2, I claimed that through these activities, the fans create K-pop and its fandom as a participatory culture. From now on, I restate that the fans practice *K-popping* in pursuit of a participatory culture.

In the next section, I propose a second concept to provide a new understanding of K-pop and its female fandom in Korea. This concept will be more specific to Korean female K-pop fans than the concept of K-popping.

Fandom, Fan Practice, and Fanscape: Descriptions of Female K-Pop Fans' Identities and (Sub)Cultures

In the previous section, I suggested K-pop could be understood as a verb. This concept not only describes but also frames activities that all manner of practitioners taking part in K-pop performances in any capacity do, from musicians singing and dancing as well as audience members listening to music, to ticket sellers marketing concerts and sound engineers controlling acoustics. In this section, focusing on K-popping done by female fans in Korea, I discuss an expansion of these fans' K-popping outside of K-pop performances, and propose a new concept to embrace the existing concepts of fandom and fan practice. For this discussion, I first review various fan practices examined in previous chapters according to the concept of fandom.

As K-pop is not merely a thing but an activity, K-pop fandom is not exclusively defined as a noun but understood as a verb because fandom enables fans to experience “different practices” (Duffett 2013b: 19). Indeed, as explored throughout the text, Korean female K-pop fans do multiple activities both in relation to, as well as outside the

framework of, musical performances. For example, some female fans take photos and videos of K-pop stars' musical and non-musical activities, edit these photos and videos, and produce fan merchandise making use of the photo and video images. Other fans consume this fan merchandise in addition to the star-related official goods produced and promoted by K-pop labels. Some other fans create art works, such as paintings and drawings, to express their fannishness or their reactions to K-pop. Through these activities, Korean female K-pop fans practice “active consumption and grassroots creativity” (Jenkins 2006a: 246).

Fandom “involves different experiences...in various contexts” (Duffett 2013b: 19). For instance, Korean female K-pop fans collect money, purchase supplies (such as food and fuel), and donate these supplies to charities for needy neighbors or animal activist groups in the names of K-pop stars.²²⁰ Fans participate in philanthropic activities by performing collective donations and practice eco-friendly activities by taking part in the construction of public parks in Korea. Fans raise funds, buy trees and flowers, and donate these trees and flowers to public agencies in the names of the stars. The trees and flowers are planted to create public gardens and woods within the town in the names of K-pop stars. Through this participation in greening public spaces, the fans incorporate their fandom into the urban landscape, and expand their philanthropic activities to perform ecological practices. Korean female K-pop fans do not limit their philanthropy to domestic donations but extend it to make donations to people and for an eco-system

²²⁰ As examined in Chapter 3, the supplies, decorated with flowers, ribbons, and the stars' photos, are exhibited at the concert venue on the day of K-pop concerts.

outside of Korea, as explored in Chapter 3. These activities allow the fans to engage in K-pop fandom as a “sociocultural phenomenon” (Cavicchi 1998; Duffett 2013b: 5).

Another example of Korean female K-pop fandom as a sociocultural phenomenon is provided by young female K-pop fans’ participation in political protests calling for the impeachment of the President in Korea. These fan protesters took part in the protests by bringing their glow sticks, which are mainly used at K-pop concerts, while other protesters held candles during the protests. Fan protesters chanted their own protest slogans during marches, just as they chant in response to K-pop musicians’ performances at concerts. Whereas other rally participants performed general Korean protest music, such as *minjung gayo* (people’s songs or grassroots songs), the fan protesters sang K-pop songs. Young female K-pop fans diversified Korea’s protest culture by applying fan practices to a political event.

Fandom is defined as an “identity” that is “performative” as well as “(dis)claimed” (Hills 2002: x). Fandom provides a way in which fans understand “their selves and their relationships to others” (Cavicchi 1998: 8-9). Similarly, Small declares that musicking is a way to understand “ourselves” and “our relationships with other people” as well as to “experience those relationships” (Small 1998: 13, 137). Korean female K-pop fans demonstrate this intersection of fandom and musicking by practicing a diversity of K-popping outside of music performances. As explored in Chapter 4, the fans build rapport with one another through *nanum* (sharing and exchanging practices before K-pop concerts outside of the concert hall). Some *nanum* practitioners, wearing masks

representing K-pop stars and roleplaying as the stars, perceive themselves as embodying a new and different identity.

Several girls and young women create and practice a (sub)culture within Korean K-pop fandom through playing with *moe*-styled rag dolls representing K-pop stars. In this (sub)cultural practice, the female fans perform mothering by describing themselves as *mamangs* (mothers) of the dolls. To engage in the play, the fans manipulate both their own and the stars' identities, as well as their relationships with the stars. Some female K-pop fans, engaging in fanfic and fanfic-related activities, reconstruct gender and sexuality subculturally by fictively coupling K-pop male stars.

It is necessary to formulate a new concept that encompasses this multiplicity of Korean female K-pop fandom: a sociocultural phenomenon consisting of involvement in many different practices and experiences, the construction and practice of identities and relationships, and the creation and performance of cultures and subcultures. Duffett, a specialist in popular music fandom studies, articulates that fandom is “an umbrella term for various potentials: elements like fascination, celebrity following, group behavior and exuberant declarations of conviction” (2013b: 20). Building on Duffett, I suggest a new “umbrella term,” the concept of “scape.” This term is, like a scene, defined as not only a specific place or event but also as a collage of views, which is distinctive as well as applicable to everyone's surroundings. Although I highlight the intensity of Korean female K-pop fan practices, I do not confine the fans to “dom,” which differentiates and even marginalizes the fans. Instead, I expand their fandom to integrate it with scape and propose the concept of “fanscape,” through which one can see and hear Korean female

K-pop fandom anywhere and at any time like the background music and wallpaper of life.

How then can fanscape be applied? Let me provide a couple of examples through the lens of fanscape. In Chapter 3, I talked about pedestrian roads characterized by trees named for K-pop stars in the Seoulo 7017 Skypark, a public park area in Seoul. These trees were planted with donations by the stars' fans, who are mostly female, in the names of the stars. In addition to the trees named for K-pop stars, this park is planted with many other trees donated by individual Seoulites (the citizens of Seoul) as well as Korean and multinational corporations (figure 6.1). Serving as public property rather than as personal belongings, all these trees green the park and provide spaces to sit in shade for the public. Walking or sitting by the trees named for the stars along with other donated trees, passers-by in the park can breathe in fresh air and take a short rest whether they are insiders of or outsiders to K-pop fandom (figure 6.2). This function of the fan-donated trees as a part of the public convenience and urban landscape confirms the construction of a K-pop fanscape beyond K-popping and K-pop fandom.



Figure 6.1. Bamboos donated by BMW Korea to the Seoulo 7017 Skypark. Photo by the author.



Figure 6.2. People sitting by a fan-donated tree named after the K-pop boy band Sechskies on the pedestrian road in the Seoulo 2017 Skypark. Photo by the author.

Henry Jenkins points out, “[f]an slang draws a sharp contrast between the ‘mundane’—the realm of everyday experience and/or those who dwell exclusively within that space—and fandom, an alternative sphere of cultural experience that restores the excitement and freedom that must be repressed to function in ordinary life (2006b: 42).” Likewise, slang expressions coined and used by K-pop fans tacitly describe the construction and performance of fandom, as well as self-identification with fandom, which are usually separated from other daily experiences involving outsiders to fandom. As I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, K-pop fandom colloquialisms are employed as neologisms and even become buzzwords outside of fandom through mass media. The word *kkotgil*, meaning a flowery way or path, is one of the most popular buzzwords in Korea, originating from a catchphrase, “Walk on only the flowery way,” which Korean

K-pop fans coined and used to support and cheer up their favorite stars. This phrase was a part of K-pop fandom slang, but became a buzzphrase widespread among outsiders to fandom, as it was extensively distributed via mass media. This idiomatic usage of *kkotgil* by the public outside of K-pop fandom can be explained through the concept of fanscape, and it demonstrates the integration of fanscape into other realms of public life.

To Better Understand Them/Ourselves and to Better Experience Their/Our Own Fandom

In the summer of 2016 when I wrapped up my field research, I met up with C1. We had dinner, drank tea, and chatted about our daily lives, including our fandom. We got to know each other at a tennis class for the first time in 2014 and became friends very quickly and easily because we have many things in common as “*ppasuni*.” At that dinner, C1 recommended to me a new book, entitled *What Do Ppasuni Desire* (this book was originally in Korean, so I translated its Korean title into English).

Published in July 2016, this book is subtitled “Fandom as a struggle for interactive community building.” In the abstract of the book, the author Junman Kang points out that hatred for *ppasuni* is the same as misogyny (2016). Also, suggesting that the issue of *ppasuni* has to be discussed in terms of human rights and communication, Kang expresses his support for *ppasuni*, prime movers in developing popular culture in Korea through their emotional, financial, and temporal commitment to the stars (Ibid.). As a matter of fact, this book was written by Kang and his daughter, who had been a TVXQ fan. Thus, Kang wrote a monograph on fandom, drawing upon his daughter’s experience as an *ex-ppasuni*. Additionally, he referenced term papers on popular culture

and fandom written by his two students, also TVXQ fangirls. Kang notes these three female informants throughout the text, and stresses that his monograph relies on observations and interpretations by insiders of K-pop fandom and brings up fandom-related issues in accordance with these insiders' observations and interpretations (Ibid.). Seeing fandom as a site or a process of practicing and struggling for interactive community building, he then states that the book will touch on various issues within fandom including discrimination, solidarity, sense of belonging, interaction, desire for recognition, *sasaeng* (stalker fans), *jogong* (fan tributes), fan donations, and so on, which the existing studies have not discussed or glanced at (Ibid.).

I acknowledge and appreciate Kang's interest in and support for *ppasuni* as well as his analytical discussion of fandom. However, for this discussion, he just refers to some academic papers on fandom, reportage on fandom, and blog posts shared by fans. In his book, there is only a fifteen-page introduction that is written by Kang's daughter, an ex-TVQX fangirl who seems to regret her fandom. Of course, Kang quotes his students' term papers on K-pop fandom, but this quotation is not enough to demonstrate how fans construct an interactive community through fandom. Kang did not directly observe how fans construct and perform fandom. He has not been in a site or a process where fans struggle for and practice community building, but has only indirectly heard of others' interpretations of fan practices. Kang combines these interpretations with his opinions on fandom. He generalizes about Korean female K-pop idol fans simply as "fandom," but the concept of fandom employed in his book is not clear. Although he meant to better understand "them" (Korean female K-pop idol fans) through his

monograph, Kang ended up citing others' partial understanding of the fans as well as disputes over fandom due to an absence of his participant observation of fandom.

John Lie and Hyunjoon Shin have provided insightful analyses of K-pop in a broader sense. Lie argues that K-pop represents “a break with” traditional Korean music as well as earlier forms of Korean popular music, which were influenced by “colonial and postcolonial Japanese” pop and US pop (2015: 4). Shin defines K-pop as a geographical or “geocultural” phenomenon, but he throws doubt on the historicity of K-pop (2013: 114). I agree with Lie's and Shin's suggestion of an ahistorical aspect of K-pop to some degree because of the external formation of the term K-pop and the importation of this terminology, even as I claim the coexistence and mixture of different genres of Korean popular music in the 1990s, the beginning period of K-pop, in Chapter 1. As both Lie and Shin recognize that fandom has been the driving force behind the prosperity of K-pop, I propose that Korean female K-pop fans shape K-pop as a historical experience through their own individual histories of fandom. This historicity of K-pop, demonstrated through its fandom, can provide a guide to better understand both K-pop itself and its fans.

Fandom is a useful way for people to reflect on their specific “historical and social moments” (Duffett 2013b: 18). The participants in my research looked back on their own individual histories of their *fanjil* or *deokjil* (the performance of fandom) when telling me about their fandom (I already showed glimpses of these histories by looking at the fans' examples of *ipdeok* (becoming a fan), *hyudeok* (pausing fandom), and *taldeok* (leaving fandom) in Chapter 1). For instance, Q was a fangirl of the Korean male ballad singer Mun-se Lee, and now belongs to the K-pop boy band Bing Bang. R was a big fan

of Hae-chul Shin. Currently, she follows the K-pop boy band Infinite as well as Sang Yoon, a male singer-songwriter. G2, a fan of BTS and EXO, was not interested in Korean idol groups when she was a teenage girl. G2 was an enthusiast of Juck Lee, a member of the Korean male duo Panic, and enjoyed listening to Lee's social-critical and philosophic songs. C1 is a fan of Si Kyung Sung, but she was fond of the first Korean idol boy band H.O.T. when she was a middle school student. A2 was also a H.O.T. fangirl, and currently engages in Dongryul Kim fandom. These changes in those women's fandoms do not merely show how their musical tastes have flowed, but indicate that Korean popular music, whether it is termed K-pop or *gayo* (songs in Korean), can be mapped continuously by means of fandom. I suggest that these flows not only construct histories of individual fans and their fandom, but also become a part of the history of K-pop itself. Korean female K-pop fans can serve as carriers and creators of K-pop history. The histories of individual female fans and their fandom allow one to better understand "them" and the process of the construction and performance of female K-pop fandom in Korea.

To conclude this chapter, I, a member of Korean female K-pop fandom, must tell other members:

The concepts of K-popping and fanscape do not only help outsiders to fandom to better understand us, Korean female K-pop fans. I created and proposed these concepts to encourage us to experience our own fandom with greater pride. Also, I want us to see ourselves more analytically and reflexively through the lens of K-popping and fanscape.
(Message from Jungwon, a *ppasuni* to you, anonymous *ppasuni*)

Exit from a Concert: The Conclusion of an Autoethnography of Herstories of K-Pop Fandom in Korea

I officially launched my field research for this dissertation project on August 20, 2015. I met Seung-Ah Lee and U at Seoul Museum to attend J(Y)J Membership Week, where photos of the group members, taken by their label at both musical and non-musical events, were exhibited. This exhibition was only open to J(Y)J's official fan club members. Although I was not a member of the fan club, U found me a ticket to the exhibition. After watching this exhibition, I conducted the first interview with U. Since then, we have attended Junsu's concerts and musicals as well as Jae Joong's concert together as *deok*-mates (friends sharing fandom with each other) beyond as a researcher-research participant relationship. At this point, U and I are not just *deok*-mates but actual friends. We ask after each other and chat about our daily lives in addition to our *deokjil* (the performance of fandom).

U and F1 became acquainted with each other through my introduction. U helped F1 to get a ticket to the Sechskies concerts on September 10 and 11, 2016. U, F1, and I gathered together on the days of the concerts and watched the concerts together. Whenever F1 went on trips to Busan, U's hometown, to attend Sechskies concerts held there, F met up with U and these two women went to the concerts together.

C1, as an elementary school teacher, lives a mundane, routine life. For her, traveling to Osaka and Tokyo on the weekend to attend Si Kyung Sung's concert tours in Japan is a good way to escape from the treadmill of her life. As soon as she gets off work on Friday, C1 leaves for the airport and flies to Japan. In addition to going to the

concerts, she enjoys herself by exploring local restaurants and shopping for Japanese sweets. After attending the concerts, usually held on Saturday and Sunday, C1 returns to Korea on Monday early morning and leaves for work right after arriving at the airport. Through this short trip, she not only performs her fandom but also refreshes herself.

H2 has been to many cities in East and Southeast Asian countries to follow J(Y)J's or each group member's concert tours. With money made from her job, H2 has paid for her family to accompany her on these trips. She travels to perform fandom as well as grow closer to her family.

G1 got married and had a son while I was writing this dissertation. She went to Junsu's year-end concert with her husband in December 2016 when she was still pregnant. I wonder how G1 will resume attending Junsu's concerts and musicals or Jae Joong's concerts as a working mother. Will she hire a part-time babysitter to go to the concerts or musicals, as L does? Or will G1 ask for help from her mother, as F1 does? As a working mother, L employs a nanny for weekdays. To attend Si Kyung Sung's concerts, L asks this nanny to babysit during the weekend and pays overtime for weekend babysitting. F1 receives help from both her husband and her mother to take care of her sons when she attends Sechskies concerts or participates in other fan events. F1's mother is a dependable supporter of F1's engagement in fan practices. The mother approves of the daughter's fandom because it brings happiness to F1.

I recently contacted V via a message on Instagram to ask if I could use photos of her fan art works for my dissertation defense flyer. I discovered that she has not updated her IU drawings since last April. I was afraid that she no longer uses Instagram, so I

emailed her fellow fan art creator to ask if she could forward my message to V, because I had communicated with her only through Instagram. Another fan art creator told me that V does not engage in IU fandom any more. V did *taldeok*. Why did she quit her fandom? What happened to her? Mercifully, V found my message and gave me permission to use the photos for the flyer. After I return to Korea, I would like to listen to her story about her *taldeok*.

Another member of IU fandom, Z still uses IU's photo as a profile picture of her mobile messenger. This confirms that Z continues her fandom. Viewing her profile picture, I wonder whether Z is currently employed or if she is still actively performing fandom as an *anbang*-fan (closet fan).²²¹ If she got a job, she must have been able to purchase tickets for IU concerts, ridding herself of an *anbang*-fan. Like other participants in my research from middle and upper class, Z must have been able to attend the concerts multiple times if she earns enough money to engage in various fan practices. After I come back to Korea, I will contact Z and ask if she is still an *anbang*-fan, even though I will not ask her directly about whether she is employed or how much money she makes.

As I suggested, female members of *febahub* (a group of feminist *ppasuni*) gave their first party as a fundraiser on March 18. At this party, the members played K-pop music videos or K-pop star-related videos that illustrate misogyny and hatred towards social minorities, such as queer people and people of color. Also, the members and other attendees discussed how to practice feminism as Korean female K-pop fans. As several

²²¹ When I interviewed Z on February 17, 2016, she was hunting for a job after graduating from a two-year-course college.

young female K-pop fans responded positively to this meeting, *febahub* held their second party for a gathering of feminist *ppasuni* on July 22. Additionally, they participated in the 2017 Korea Queer Culture Festival, expressed their support for LGBTs in Korea, and promoted feminist *ppasuni*, a minority of Korean female K-pop fans. In addition to these offline activities, the *febahub* members have tweeted, retweeted, and replied to gender-related issues represented in K-pop music videos, song lyrics, and K-pop stars' speech acts, as well as recognized within K-pop fandom, including mansplaining and male voyeurism toward women.

On March 10, 2017, the Constitutional Court of Korea decided to unseat President Geun-hye Park. Upon this judgement, both protesters against and supporters of Park gathered around the court building. K-pop fan protesters, also known as DFU (democratic fandoms' union), were among these protesters. As soon as the decision to impeach President Park was announced, DFU tweeted, "Congratulations on the impeachment!" Tweeting this message, they must have sung out "Happy Impeachment Song," an adapted song in which DFU members altered the original lyrics of the Happy Birthday song ("birthday" into "impeachment" and "dear somebody" into "hateful Geun-hye Park"). Since Park was impeached and arrested, DFU has stopped their activities. However, if Korean society is again plunged into turmoil and Korean people stage a candlelight protest against this social disorder, I believe K-pop fan protesters will resume participating in the protest with their LED light sticks.

After the impeachment of the former President Park, Jae-in Moon was elected as the new President of South Korea on May 10, 2017. As a member of K-pop fandom and a

fandom researcher, I believe that supporters of President Moon and their activities are no different than those in K-pop fandom. Some supporters produce President Moon-related goods, such as calendars printed with photos of President Moon, and sell them to other supporters. Earnings from the sale of these goods are donated to charity. This example is the same as Korean female K-pop fans' production and consumption of fan merchandise and their collective donations. Other supporters collect news about President Moon from media outlets, edit this news, and share the edited news via YouTube. This practice is not different from fans' collecting, editing, and sharing photo and video data about K-pop stars. As many female K-pop fans call their favorite male stars *oppa* or nicknames (EXO member D.O. nicknamed "Dyo," for example), Presidential supporters call Moon "Honey Moon" or "Ini" (-y nickname for "in," the last syllable of the President's first name). These supporters encourage him in conducting state affairs, saying, "Our Ini, do whatever you want!" I deem these politically supportive practices for President Moon as a manifestation of the supporters' fannish affection for him. Looking at Presidential supporters and their activities, I suggest that K-pop fan fandom, permeating Korean society, has unknowingly influenced outsiders to fandom and their behavior patterns. The scene constructed through the relationship between President Moon and his supporters is an extended version of K-pop star-fandom phenomena, demonstrating that cultural practices, inspired by K-pop fandom, can engage with political practices in Korean society.

It is time to conclude this (auto)ethnography of Korean female K-pop fandom with my own story. I am currently figuring out how to label myself across academia and

fandom. I am an autoethnographer who “critically assesses and reflexively reports on my own fandom in depth” (Duffett 2013b: 271). While ethnomusicology is my field, this dissertation on Korean female K-pop fandom, “relocating and legitimating the passions that fans and scholars share,” can also be listed under “fan scholarship” (Jensen 2014: 211). As an autoethnographer in fan scholarship, I am also positioned as an “aca-fan.” Academic fans or aca-fen (the plural form of aca-fan) refer to “[r]esearchers who self-consciously serve and speak for fan communities by using their own identities as fans” (Duffett 2013b: 267). More specifically, since I have been a fan of Korean popular music or K-pop long before I became an ethnomusicologist, I am fully qualified to self-identify as an aca-fan.²²² Moreover, I examined Korean female K-pop fans’ creative practices throughout the chapters, confirming my position as an aca-fan, since Jenkins and Duffett point out that aca-fen “focus on and promote the creative ingenuity of ordinary members of the fan base” (Jenkins 2006b: 13; Duffett 2013b: 267).

On the other hand, as I touched on in Chapter 1, other members of Korean female K-pop fandom called me *seongdeok* because I interviewed my favorite star (Jong Shin Yoon) and took photos with him backstage, thanks to my unique fan activity (academic research on K-pop as a fan). Hearing of my research on K-pop fandom in addition to K-pop itself, R described me as a seeker after “*deokeobilchi*.” As a combination of *deok* (an abbreviation for *deokjil*, the performance of fandom), *eop* (work), and *ilchi* (coincidence), this term refers to a situation in which *deokhu* (fans) enter into professions dealing with

²²² Jenkins said, “I come to both Star Trek and fan fiction as a fan first and a scholar second. My participation as a fan long precedes my academic interest in it” (2006b: 251). He then described himself as an aca-fan and the term aca-fan became widespread.

objects of their interest (an animator as a *deokhu* for animations, for instance). Since I am learning about K-pop and its fandom both as a fan and a researcher, R considered my study the process of *deokeobilchi*.

An autoethnographer, an aca-fan, a *seongdeok*, or a seeker after *deokeobilchi*: which would best describe me? I like all of them. I would not mind being labeled as any of them but would prefer to self-identify as a *ppasuni*-doctor: both a doctor who is a Korean female K-pop fan, and a doctor in studies on Korean female K-pop fandom.

I will likely continue my research on Korean female K-pop fandom even after finishing this dissertation because our experiences are never-ending stories. Some of us might do *taldeok* (leave fandom), or some of us might do *ipdeok* (enter fandom) for a new K-pop star, or some of us might do *hyudeok* (pause fandom). “Herstories” of K-pop fandom repeat themselves. I must continue to listen to these stories, and share my own ongoing story, because I am ultimately an ethnomusicologist who studies human perspectives on music and how human behavior expresses those perspectives. As an ethnomusicologist, I look forward to getting to know female K-pop fans outside of Korea and learning about their K-popping and the fanscape they create in their countries.

Appendix A: Glossary of Korean Terms and K-Pop Fandom Lingo Used in the Text

Akgae: Fans who only focus on their favorite member of K-pop idol groups, but intentionally denigrate other group members or spread malicious rumors about these members.

Anbang-fan: Closet fans.

Bar-suni: Prostitute barmaids.

Buk: Traditional Korean rustic drum.

Chongdae: Gunstock. It also means “on behalf of.”

Chwiketing: Action to reserve and purchase concert tickets cancelled by other fans.

Conppong: State of mind in which fans, feeling poisoned with or addicted to concerts, never forget their excitement at concerts.

Daepo: A cannon. Also, a nickname for high-tech cameras used by photographer fans.

Deok-mate: Fellow fans who share *deokjil*.

Deok: An abbreviation for *deokhu* or *deokjil*.

Deokeobilchi: A situation in which *deokhu* enter into professions dealing with objects of their interest.

Deokgye: Social media accounts used only for fandom.

Deokhu: Persons who are enthusiastic for a variety of cultural entities ranging from people to classical music and audio equipment to photography and travel.

Deokjil: The performance of fandom.

Deokryeok: The intensity or strength of fannishness or fandom.

Deoksim: Fannishness.

Deoktongsago: The experience of a sudden infatuation with the stars followed by *ipdeok*.

Eolppa: *Ppasuni* enthusiastic about K-pop musicians’ good-looking faces.

Eungwonbong: A stick used for cheering.

Eungwonbongyeondae: Group of fans with *eungwonbong*.

Fanjin: The performance of fandom.

Fansim: Fannishness.

Formlympic: The competitive process of a form submission in time to order K-pop fan merchandise on a first-come, first-served basis.

Gayo: Songs.

Geumson: Skillful fan art creators.

Gongka: Official fan cafes (online fan communities).

Gongsuni: Female factory workers.

Gyeomdeok: Fans who conduct *deokjin* for multiple K-pop musicians at the same time.

Halmeoni: Grandmother.

Hwaryeok: Firepower. Also, it means power of fandom.

Ilko: Pretense of being outsiders to fandom.

Imo-fan: Middle-aged female fans.

Ipdeok: Become a fan or enter fandom.

Jjikdeok: Fans specializing in photography.

Jogong: Fan tributes.

Kkappa: Fans doing *fanjin* to criticize stars.

Kkoenggari: Traditional Korean small gong.

Kkotgil: Flowery way or path.

Mamang: Mom or mother of K-pop star dolls.

Meta-deokjin: Critical *deokjin*.

Minjufandomyeondae: Democratic fandoms' union that consists of K-pop fan protesters.

Minjung gayo: People's songs or grassroots songs.

Nanum: K-pop fans' sharing and exchanging practice.

Olbie: Longtime fans.

Oppa: An elder brother. *Oppa* is specifically used by women to address or refer to older men in both a kinship relationship and in general.

Oppabudae: Group of fangirls who call their favorite male stars *oppa*.

Piketing: Stiff competition for ticket reservations for concerts.

Ppadori: Male fans.

Ppasuni: Female fans.

Saeujeot: Collective fans likened to a swarm of tiny shrimps.

Samchon-fan: Middle-aged male fans.

Sasaeng: Stalker fans.

Sero-cam: Fancam that spotlights one member of K-pop groups in portrait screen orientation.

Sseol: Story.

Su: Feminine characters in male homoerotic fanfic.

Taldeok: To leave fandom.

Teufemi: Feminists on Twitter.

Ttechang: Fan chanting and singing during musicians' live performances.

Yangdo: Resale of concert tickets within fandom.

Yeondae: Union.

Yeongeop: Promotional activity to draw others to fandom.

Yeonseong: Practice of producing fanfic-related goods.

Yongbyeong: Fans who help other fans succeed in *piketing*.

Appendix B: List of K-Pop or Korean Popular Musicians Mentioned throughout the Text

015B: Korean pop producers' group consisting of Seokwon Jung and Hoil Jang since 1990. As Jung and Jang focus on composing and arranging music, playing instruments, and producing albums, 015B has recruited guest singers for their songs (Jong Shin Yoon and Hae-chul Shin, for example).

2AM: K-pop boy band formed and promoted by JYP Entertainment (later promoted by BigHit Entertainment), active from 2008 to 2017. The group consisted of four members: Jo Kwon, Changmin, Seulong, and Jinwoon.

2PM: K-pop boy band formed and promoted by JYP Entertainment since 2008. 2PM originally consisted of seven members, Jaebum (also known as Jay, Korean American), Jun.K (formerly known as Junsu), Nichkhun (Thai American), Taecyeon, Wooyoung, Junho, and Chansung. As Jaebum left the group in 2010, 2PM is currently a six-member group.

Ahn, Jae-wook (b. 1971): Actor (since 1994), popular singer (since 1997), and musical actor (since 1995).

Apink: K-pop girl group formed and promoted by Plan A Entertainment since 2011, consisting of six members: Chorong Park, Bomi Yoon, Eunji Jung, Na-eun Son, Namju Kim, and Hayeong Oh. Among the group members, Eunji Jung became popular after starring in the Korean drama *Reply 1997*. Na-eun Son is famous for her acting in dramas.

APRIL: K-pop girl group formed and promoted by DSP Media since 2015, consisting of six members: Chae Kyung, Chae Won, Na Eun, Ye Na, Rachel, and Jin Sol.

B1A4: Five-member K-pop boy band since 2011 (originally formed and promoted by WM Entertainment from 2011 to 2015, and currently promoted by LOEN since 2015), consisting of Jinyoung, CNU, Sandeul, Baro, and Gongchan. The group also has been promoted by Japanese, Taiwanese, and Brazilian labels for their overseas concert tours.

Baby V.O.X.: Five-member K-pop girl group active from 1997 to 2006.

Beast (currently Highlight): K-pop boy band since 2006. As Beast or B2ST, the group, consisting of six members (Dujun Yoon, Junhyung Yong, Yoseop Yang, Gikwang Lee, Dongwoon Son, and Hyun Seung Jang), was originally formed and promoted by CUBE Entertainment from 2009 to 2016. As Hyun Seung Jang left the group in 2016, Beast was re-organized as the five-member K-pop boy band Highlight, and the group separated from CUBE Entertainment. Since 2017, the group has been promoted by Around US Entertainment, which Highlight members founded themselves.

Big Bang: K-pop boy band formed and promoted by YG Entertainment since 2006. Big Bang consists of five members (G-Dragon, T.O.P., Taeyang, Daesung, and Seungri). Since their debut, G-Dragon has written almost all the songs and produced the group's albums, pursuing hip-hop-inspired music.

Black Beat: Six-member K-pop boy band formed and promoted by SM Entertainment, active from 2002 to 2006.

Block B: Seven-member K-pop boy band since 2011, consisting of ZICO, B-Bomb, Park Kyung, Taeil, P.O, and U-Kwon. The group was originally formed and promoted by Stardom. Since 2013, KQ Entertainment has managed and promoted Block B. Among the group members, ZICO, working as a solo rapper and hip-hop producer, is the most popular.

Boyfriend: K-pop boy band formed and promoted by Starship Entertainment since 2011, consisting of six members: Donghyun, Hyunseong, Jeongmin, Youngmin, Kwangmin, and Minwoo.

BtoB: Seven-member K-pop boy band formed and promoted by CUBE Entertainment since 2012, consisting of Eunkwang, Minhyuk, Changsub, Hyunsik, Peniel, Ilhoon, and Sungjae.

BTS (Bangtan Boys or Bulletproof Boys): Seven-member K-pop boy band formed and promoted by BigHit Entertainment since 2013, consisting of RM (Rap Monster), Jin, Suga, J-Hope, Jimin, V, and Jungkook.²²³

Cho, Yong Pil (b. 1950): Male popular singer, nicknamed the king of vocalists in the Korean popular music scene.

CLON: Male popular duo, consisting of Wonrae Kang and Junyeop Koo, active since 1996.

CNBLUE: Four-member Korean pop-rock band formed and promoted by FNC Entertainment since 2009, consisting of Yong Hwa Jung (vocal and guitar), Jong Hyun Lee (vocal and guitar), Min Hyuk Kang (drum), and Jung Shin Lee (bass). In addition to their musical activities, each member has starred in several Korean TV dramas.

DEUX: Korean popular male duo from 1993 to 1995. The group, consisting of Hyundo Lee and Sungjae Kim, introduced American hip-hop-inspired dance music to the Korean popular music scene. In addition to this musical style, DEUX generated a boom of hip-hop fashion styles among young people in the early and middle 1990s.

²²³ Rap Monster recently changed his stage name into RM.

EXID (Exceed In Dreaming): Five-member K-pop girl group since 2012. The group, composed of six members, was originally formed by AB Entertainment. After three members left the group, they changed their label into Banana Entertainment and three new members joined the group. EXID currently consists of five members: Solji, LE, Hani, Hyelin, and Jeonghwa.

EXO: K-pop boy band formed and promoted by SM Entertainment since 2012. The group originally consisted of twelve members from Korea and China: Suho, Kai, Chen, D.O., Chanyeol, Baekhyun, Xiumin, and Sehun (all Koreans), as well as Cris, Tao, Luhan, and Lay (all Chinese members). However, as three Chinese members (Cris, Tao, and Luhan) left the group in 2014 through 2016, the current EXO has nine members – eight Koreans and one Chinese.

f(X): K-pop girl group formed and promoted by SM Entertainment since 2009. The group originally consisted five members: Victoria, Amber, Luna, Krystal, and Sulli. As Sulli left the group to focus on her career as an actress in 2015, f(X) is currently a five-member group.

Fin.K.L. (Fin Killing Liberty): Four-member K-pop girl group formed and promoted by DSP Entertainment, active from 1998 to 2002 (also in 2005 and 2008 temporarily). The group consisted of Hyori Lee, Joo Hyun Oak, Jin Lee, and Yuri Sung. After their disbanding in 2002, Hyori Lee has worked as a solo singer and an emcee for TV shows; Joo Hyun Oak has been a musical actress; and Yuri Sung has worked as an actress and an emcee for TV shows.

g.o.d.: Five-member K-pop boy band formed and promoted by Jin Young Park, also known as JYP (founder of JYP Entertainment) since 1999, consisting of Joon Park, Danny Ahn, Kye Sang Yoon, Hoyoung Son, and Tae Woo Kim. Among these members, Kye Sang Yoon left the group in 2004 and has worked as an actor.

GFriend: K-pop girl group formed and promoted by Source Music since 2015, consisting of six members: Sowon, Yerin, Eunha, Yuju, SinB, and Umji.

Girls' Generation: K-pop girl group formed and promoted by SM Entertainment since 2007. The group originally consisted of nine members: Taeyeon, Sunny, Jessica, Tiffany, Hyoyeon, Yuri, Sooyoung, Yoona, and Seohyun. As Jessica left the group in 2014, eight members have been active since then. However, among these members, three (Tiffany, Sooyoung, and Seohyun) terminated their contracts with the label in 2017.

GOT7: Seven-member K-pop boy band formed and promoted by JYP Entertainment since 2014, consisting of multinational and multiethnic members: JB (Korean), Mark (Chinese American), Jackson (Chinese born in Hong Kong), Jinyoung (Korean), Young Jae (Korean), Bambam (Thai), and Yugyeom (Korean).

H.O.T. (Hi-five of Teenager): The first K-pop idol boy band formed and promoted by SM Entertainment, active from 1996 to 2001. The group consisted of five members: Hee-jun Moon, Kangta, Tony Ahn, Woo Hyuk Jang, and Jaewon Lee.

Hwayobi (b. 1982): Female popular singer specializing in R&B since 2000.

Infinite: K-pop boy band formed and promoted by Woollim Entertainment since 2010. The group originally consisted of seven members: Sung Kyu, Dong Woo, Woo Hyun, Hoya, Sung Yeol, L, and Sung Jong. However, as Hoya left the group in 2017, Infinite is currently a six-member group.

IU (b. 1993): K-pop female singer-songwriter promoted by LOEN since 2008. In addition to musical activities, she also works as an actress starring in several Korean dramas.

Jaurim: Alternative rock band since 1997. The band consists of Yuna Kim (vocal), Sunkyoo Lee (guitar), and Jinman Kim (bass).

JYJ: K-pop boy band promoted by C-JeS Entertainment since 2010, consisting of three members: Jae Joong, Yu Chun, and Junsu. They were members of TVQX from 2005 to 2010.

Kang, Daniel (b. 1996): Member of Wanna One since 2017.

Kim, Dongryul (b. 1974): Male popular singer-songwriter specializing in Korean ballads since 1993. Kim made his debut as the winner of the MBC Campus Song Festival in 1993.

KNK: Six-member K-pop boy band formed and promoted by YNB Entertainment since 2016, consisting of Seung Jun Park, You Jin Kim, Ji Hun Kim, In Seong Jeong, and Hee Jun Oh. KNK is an acronym for the Korean word *keunakeun*, literally meaning “so big” or “very large.”

Ko, Boksu (1911-1972): Male popular singer from 1934 to 1972.

Lee Tzsche (b. 1970): Female popular singer-songwriter specializing in folk and rock since 1988. Her original name is Sang-eun Lee.

Lee, Juck (b. 1974): Male popular singer-songwriter since 1995. He was a member of Panic, a male popular duo from 1995 to 2005.

Lee, Mun-se (b. 1957): Male popular singer specializing in Korean ballads since 1978.

Lee, Sun-hee (b. 1964): Female popular singer specializing in Korean ballads since 1984.

Lovelyz: Eight-member K-pop girl group formed and promoted by Woollim Entertainment since 2014, consisting of Baby Soul, Ji-Ae Yoo, Ji-Soo Seo, Mi-Joo Lee, Kei, Jin, Su-Jeong Ryu, and Ye-In Jeong. The group has been produced by Sang Yoon.

NCT (Neo Culture Technology): K-pop boy band formed and promoted by SM Entertainment since 2016. Although the group consists of fifteen members (Taeyong, Taeil, Doyoung, Jaehyun, Ten, Mark, Johnny, Yuta, Winwin, Haechan, Renjun, Jeno, Jaemin, Chenre, and Jisung), the members have worked as units – NCT U, NCT 127, and NCT Dream. Thus, as occasion demands, the label has picked up members, organized units, produced music fit for these units, and promoted them and their music.

No Reply: Korean indie band since 2008, consisting of two members: Soonkwan Kwon (vocal and keyboard) and Wookjae Jung (guitar).

NRG (New Radiance Group): K-pop boy band since 1997, originally consisting of five members. The group disbanded in 2006 and reunited in 2016. Currently, NRG consists of Sungjin Lee, Myunghoon Chun, and Yoomin Noh (all original members).

Panic: Male popular duo from 1995 to 2005. Panic consisted of Juck Lee (vocal, keyboard, guitar, and songwriting) and Jinpyo Kim (rap and saxophone).

Park, Hyo-shin (b. 1981): Male popular singer (since 1999) and musical actor (since 2015).

PSY (b. 1977): Male popular singer-songwriter since 2001, specializing in rap-influenced dance music and well-known for his mega hit, “Gangnam Style.” Since 2010, he has been promoted by YG Entertainment.

Red Velvet: Five-member K-pop girl group formed and promoted by SM Entertainment since 2015, consisting of Irene, Seulgi, Wendy, Joy, and Yeri.

S.E.S. (Sea, Eugene, Shoo): The first K-pop girl group formed and promoted by SM Entertainment from 1997 to 2002, consisting of three members: Bada (meaning sea), Eugene, and Shoo. After the group disbanded in 2002, Bada has pursued her career as a musical actress and Eugene has worked as an actress. However, the group reunited in 2016 and resumed their musical activities.

Sechskies: K-pop boy band since 1997, originally consisting of six members: Jiwon Eun, Jae Jin Lee, Jae Duk Kim, Sung Hoon Kang, Ji Yong Ko, and Suwon Jang. The group disbanded in 2002 and reunited in 2016 (except Ji Yong Ko). Following their reunion, Sechskies is promoted by YG Entertainment.

Seo, In-guk (b. 1987): Male popular singer (since 2009) and actor (since 2012).

Seven (b. 1984): K-pop male singer since 2003. He was initially promoted by YG Entertainment.

Seventeen: Thirteen-member K-pop boy band formed and promoted by Pledis Entertainment since 2015, consisting of S. Coups, Woozi, Hoshi, Minkyu, Wonwoo, Vernon, Seungkwan, Dino, Jun, DK, Joshua, Jeonghan, and The8.

Shin, Hae-chul (1968-2014): Male singer, songwriter, and producer from 1988 to 2014. Shin made his debut as the winner (as a student band leader of Infinite Track) of the MBC Campus Song Festival. In 1990, he started working as a solo singer specializing in Korean ballads and rock. He also organized the rock band N.E.X.T. in 1992. In addition to ballad and rock genres, Shin engaged in techno and electronica.

Shinee: Five-member K-pop boy band formed and promoted by SM Entertainment since 2008, consisting of Onew, Jonghyun, Key, Minho, and Taemin. Among these members, Key has worked as a musical actor, and Onew and Minho have starred in several Korean dramas. Jonghyun and Taemin have released their own solo albums.

Shinhwa: Six-member K-pop boy band since 1998, consisting of Eric, Hyesung, Dongwan, Minwoo, Jun Jin, and Andy. The group was originally formed and promoted by SM Entertainment from 1998 to 2003. In 2011, the group members founded their own label, Shinhwa Company.

Sung, Si Kyung (b. 1979): Male singer-songwriter since 2000. He made his debut as an online Korean popular music contest winner. He is currently managed and promoted by Jellyfish Entertainment. In addition to his musical activities, he starred in a Korean drama and has worked as a radio DJ and an emcee for television music shows and entertainment shows.

Super Junior: K-pop boy band formed and promoted by SM Entertainment since 2005, consisting of eleven members: Lee Teuk, Hee Chul, Ye Sung, Kang In, Shin Dong, Sung Min, Eun Hyuk, Dong Hae, Siwon, Rye Wook, and Kyu Hyun. The group originally started with thirteen members but two members left the group in 2009 and 2015 respectively.

T-ara: Four-member K-pop girl group promoted by MBK Entertainment since 2009, consisting of Q-ri, Hyo Min, Ji Yeon, and Eun Jung.

Taiji Boys: Male popular trio from 1992 to 1996. The members were Taiji Seo (vocal, rap, and songwriting), Juno Lee (rap, backup vocal, and choreography), and Hyunsuk Yang (rap, backup vocal, and choreography). After their disbandment, Seo has worked as a solo singer and a leader of his own rock band. Lee and Yang also continued their musical careers as solo singers. Yang then founded YG Entertainment and has trained, produced, and promoted K-pop musicians, including Big Bang, Seven, and WINNER.

TVXQ: K-pop boy band formed and promoted by SM Entertainment since 2005, originally consisting of five members: U-Know Yunho, Hero Jae Joong, Micky Yu Chun, Xia Junsu, and Max Changmin. However, as three members (Hero Jae Joong, Micky Yu Chun, and Xia Junsu) left the group in 2010, TVXQ is currently working as a male duo of U-Know and Max.

TWICE: Nine-member K-pop girl group formed and promoted by JYP Entertainment since 2015, consisting of multinational and multiethnic members: Nayeon (Korean), Jeongyeon (Korean), Momo (Japanese), Sana (Japanese), Jihyo (Korean), Mina (Japanese), Dahyun (Korean), Chaeyoung (Korean), and Tzuyu (Taiwanese).

VIXX: K-pop boy band formed and promoted by Jellyfish Entertainment since 2012, consisting of six members: N, Leo, Ken, Ravi, Hongbin, Hyuk, and Rovix.

Wanna One: Eleven-member K-pop project boy band since 2017. The group made their debut through the television audition program *Produce 101*. Thus, the eleven members were chosen via viewers' votes. Each member signed a contract with CJ Entertainment through December 31, 2018. After this contract expires, the group will disband.

WINNER: K-pop boy band formed and promoted by YG Entertainment since 2014. The group was originally composed of five members: Seungyeon Kang, Seunghoon Lee, Mino Song, Jinwoo Kim, and Taehyun Nam. As Taehyun Nam left the group in 2017, WINNER consists of four members currently.

Wonder Girls: K-pop girl group formed and promoted by JYP Entertainment from 2007 to 2017, consisting of four to five members: Sunye (2007-2015), Sunmi (2007-2010, 2015-2017), Yeeun (2007-2017), Yubin (2007-2017), Sohee (2007-2015), Hyerim (2010-2017), and Hyuna (2007).

Yoon, Jong Shin (b. 1969): Male popular singer, songwriter, lyricist, and producer, specializing in Korean ballads and folk, since 1990.

Yoon, Sang (b. 1968): Male popular singer, songwriter, and producer, specializing in techno and electronica, since 1991. Before his debut, Yoon also wrote many songs for other musicians.

Appendix C: List of Korean Female K-pop Fans Participating in This Dissertation Research

A1 (b. 1975): Sechskies and Daniel Kang (member of Wanna One) fandoms

B1 (b. 1983): Sechskies fandom

C1 (b. 1982): Si Kyung Sung fandom

D1 (b. 1998): EXO fandom

E1 (b. 1992): Light fan of NCT (former fan of BTS)

F1 (b. 1984): Sechskies fandom

G1 (b. 1977): JYJ fandom

H1 (b. 1998): Sechskies fandom

I (b. 1990): EXO fandom

J (b. 1976): Taiji Seo (Taiji Boys) fandom

K (b. 1995): Shinhwa fandom

L (b. 1979): Si Kyung Sung fandom

M (b. 1986): Hyo-shin Park, Si Kyung Sung, and Sechskies fandoms

N (b. 1969): Sechskies fandom

O (b. 1994): JYJ fandom

P (b. 1984): Jong Shin Yoon fandom

Q (b. 1971): Big Bang fandom

R (b. 1984): Infinite and Sang Yoon fandoms

S (b. 1999): Sechskies fandom

T (b. 1980): Korean musical fandom (former fan of H.O.T., Shinhwa, Black Beat, TVXQ, and Shinee)

U (b. 1979): JYJ and Sechskies fandoms

V (b. 1997): IU fandom

W (b. 1987): Jong Shin Yoon fandom

X (b. 1983): Sechskies fandom (fan of NU'EAST and JBJ recently)²²⁴

Y (b. 1998): EXO fandom

Z (b. 1996): IU fan (light fan of TWICE and GFriend)

A2 (b. 1986): Dongryul Kim fandom

B2 (b. 1979): Jong Shin Yoon fandom

C2 (b. 1995): K-pop idol fandom (fan of EXO, BTS, Seventeen, Shinee, and Red Velvet)

D2 (b. 1984): Sechskies fandom (TVXQ fandom during Sechskies' breakup and hiatus)

E2 (b. 1989): Shinhwa fandom

F2 (b. 1994): BTS and KNK fandoms

G2 (b. 1984): BTS fandom

H2 (b. 1989): JYJ fandom

²²⁴ After passing the oral defense of this dissertation, I texted X to share my news, and she told me about her *ipdeok* for new K-pop boy bands NU'EAST and JBJ.

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