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To Make a Dream Circle: Searching for Subculture Within the Korean Wave

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

by

Corey Scott Howard

Committee in charge:

Professor Joseph D. Hankins, Chair
Professor Byung Chu Kang
Professor Nancy Grey Postero

2019

The Thesis of Corey Scott Howard is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California San Diego

2019

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the Seoul and Busan hardcore scenes, without whose unwavering friendship and hospitality this thesis would not be possible.

Thank you for your patience; for your unconditional loyalty; and for showing me how a small group of people can truly change the world.

EPIGRAPH

"Be as proud of Sogang
as Sogang is proud of you."

-Sogang University motto

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PREFACE

In the summer of 2018, I participated in Sogang University's Korean Immersion Program (KIP; hereafter KIP) in Seoul, South Korea (hereafter Korea). Anxious to observe the methodological tradition of my discipline – ethnography – appreciating both the variety of expression unique to spoken language (Boas 1940), and the value of spoken language as a privileged interface into social phenomena (Moerman 1988), I made it my priority to improve my Korean language skills over the summer. At the suggestion of my advisor, I decided that enrolling in an intensive language program would be optimal, as these types of programs are designed to advance students' speaking skills in a short amount of time.

I found the KIP pamphlet pinned up in the Korean Literature department at my home university. The pamphlet read as follows: "The Korean Immersion Program is a four week long program designed to help students improve their Korean language skills and learn more about Korean culture" (Sogang University 2018). When I asked the director of Korean Literature if this program was worthwhile, she replied by saying that "this is the one we recommend." I spent some time researching Korean language programs on the internet and most reviews concurred that Sogang offered the best language program for foreigners looking for intensive language training. Of the other possible Korean universities to choose from, places like Seoul National University and Yonsei University had poor online reviews and were furthermore notorious for being party spots for foreigners. Reviews written for Sogang on the other hand emphasized the centrality of classroom time and speaking practice. Certainly, on the first day of the program, my expectations in this regard were on their way to being met.

When I checked into my dorm, I saw that one of my roommates had already arrived. Andrew was a 25-year-old office worker from Malaysia who was in Korea on vacation. Having

already developed an appreciable interest in K-pop music (Korea's export-driven pop music genre), Andrew believed that enrolling in KIP and saturating himself in Korean language and culture was the natural next step in his commitment to his hobby. We introduced ourselves, began talking, and quickly hit it off. After chatting for a few minutes, Bradley, the third roommate, entered the room. Bradley was a 19-year old Korean-American from San Diego, California, who had recently graduated high school. Bradley's parents had enrolled him in KIP with the goal of bringing him up to fluency before he moved away to college. Bradley's parents, both native-born Koreans, chose Sogang since it was their own alma matter and was where they first met. Bradley's father, who followed close behind with a video camera, tried to capture every second of his son's first moments at the university, including his reaction to his new dorm and new roommates, which were lackluster at best. The three of us roommates posed for a picture taken by Bradley's father, after which Bradley hastily departed, leaving his father to follow closely behind, and thereby concluding Bradley's embarrassing ordeal.

My two roommates, Andrew and Bradley, represent two common demographics of students that I observed at KIP. It quickly became apparent to me that many of my colleagues at KIP shared a common enthusiasm for *Hallyu* (an umbrella term for a range of Korean cultural exports that typically includes K-pop, dramas, and movies), while another much smaller selection of students were foreign-born ethnic Koreans, sent to Sogang by their parents, to which they unenthusiastically acceded. Interspersed amongst the K-pop fans and pilgrims were also a few professionals seeking Korean language skills as a way to gain a competitive edge in their careers. In addition, there were some foreigners whom, because they had Korean spouses, were looking to improve their Korean language skills as a way to make favorable impressions on their spouses' families. Then there was myself.

Though it might be impossible to address all the reasons why I found myself at KIP this summer in 2018, it would be safe to say that a large part of it had to do with a musical practice called hardcore. Hardcore, a worldwide underground music scene that I have been involved in for most of my life, is a chronological derivative of British punk; a genre that had historically been evoked in the first sociological discussions of "youth culture" and "subculture" (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979; Brake 1985). After earning my undergraduate degree in 2011 and finding employment as an English teacher in Korea, I quickly fell into Korea's thriving hardcore scenes. And although professional interests are what originally brought me to Korea, it was the lasting connections and friendships that I had made in Korea's hardcore scenes that motivated me to learn Korean, that inspired my current academic interests, and that kept me in Korea for three years.

Then in 2015, after returning to California, Korea seemed to reach out to me once again through yet another subcultural link: fixed gear cycling. Fixed gear bicycles have been a mainstay of city bicycle couriers in cities such as New York, Boston, Portland, and San Francisco since the profession began in the 1800s (Singel 2005; Weyland 2007; Buckheit 2009). In recent years however, fixed gear bikes have become a niche youth hobby all around the world, inspiring new creative fixed gear-related activities and races, one of them being street criterium races. Having moved back to my home town of Long Beach, California, I took a part time job as a local bicycle courier. As it turned out, the owners of this local courier business were members of a fixed gear race team, whose founder was a Korean-American. As such, the team participated in annual and semi-annual events in Seoul. Through my friends and co-workers in Long Beach, I was able to meet other cycling enthusiasts from Korea. My casual connection to this other underground culture begot new friendships in Korea, some of which were renewed when I

returned in 2018. Again, the professional interests that had initially brought me to Korea seemed to take on new meaning as they converged with my other niche interests. The friendships and connections that I had made in Korea's hardcore and cycling scenes have fostered my continued interest in Korea, and would eventually inspire my current academic interests. And although these other subcultural interests only appear in passing throughout this thesis, it was my experiences in these communities that inevitably brought me to Sogang, inspired my research interest in popular culture and subculture, and I believe, ultimately allowed me to recognize subcultural activity at Sogang. Furthermore, the fact that I, along with my colleagues at Sogang, all found ourselves funneled into the KIP program despite our divergent interests and various entry points into Korea, is demonstrative of a dynamic that lays at the heart of this thesis.

Where applicable, this thesis will follow the McCune-Reischaur system for Korean romanization. Korean-origin terms that already have widely recognized standard romanized forms such as "Sogang" and "Hallyu" will appear as is in their popular forms, or as they have appeared in my sources. All proper interviews herein were conducted primarily in English, recorded with a voice recorder, and later transcribed. Some intermittent Korean language appears in selected interviews. Where respondents have used Korean interspersed in otherwise primarily English interviews, I have provided a romanized form of their Korean utterances followed by a bracketed English translation. In instances where no formal interview was conducted, but Korean was used, such as in casual conversations or one-off questions, translations and/or paraphrases have been provided entirely by myself, transcribed from hand-written notes and memory. In several of my English interviews, English was not the first language of the interviewee. In the case of Andrew, English was near-fluent, and so was chosen out of convenience. However, in the

case of Lucia, English was rudimentary, but was preferred by the interviewee – a dynamic that receives analysis later in this thesis.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

To Make a Dream Circle: Searching for Subculture Within the Korean Wave

by

Corey Scott Howard

Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California San Diego, 2019

Professor Joseph D. Hankins, Chair

“*Hallyu,”* a term meaning “Korean Wave,” refers to the ever-expanding cache of export-driven Korean cultural products that, since the 1990s, has primarily included dramas, pop music, film, and animation (Yong 2016, 3). As an industry that generated 6 billion USD in 2016 (Korea.net 2019), and that commands roughly 35 million fans worldwide (The Korea Herald 2016), Hallyu has become a formidable economic force that other domestic industries have found lucrative alliances with (Choi 2015, 37-38). Further, the substantial direct support that Hallyu has received from the South Korean government since 2008 and that which has led to the broadening of the Hallyu repertoire to include new forms such as games, food, electronics, and language (Yong 2016, 5; Choi 2015, 44) makes South Korea and its cultural industry a

compelling case study for observing how cultural forms become naturalized as they converge with economics and government agendas. This thesis is an investigation into the categories of "popular culture" and "subculture" as viable sociological frameworks for understanding the mechanics of how particular cultural forms become privileged while others become neglected. Utilizing interviews and observations that I collected during my one month stay at a Korean language university in Seoul, I demonstrate how Hallyu has been able to achieve hegemonic status as Korea's granted cultural expression, and how this achievement has occasioned other Korean cultural industries to align themselves with Hallyu. I also explore the possibilities for marginalized actors within this hegemonic arrangement to manipulate elements of the dominant culture in order to meet their own need

Introduction

The inspiration for this thesis, and that which has comprised most of my ethnographic content, has been the daunting omnipresence of Korean popular culture, or "*Hallyu,*" throughout my time at KIP. *Hallyu*, a term meaning "Korean wave," to put it succinctly is "meant to signify the tidal wave of Korean popular cultures generated outside Korea" (Choi 2015, 31). Traditionally, Hallyu has encompassed such formats as television dramas, film, and Korean pop music (hereafter K-pop) (Yong 2016, 3). But more recently, Hallyu has come to encompass more categories such as food, language, fashion, beauty products, and more (Choi 2015, 32). Commanding roughly 35 million fans worldwide (Korea Herald 2016), and cultivated by the multinational, localization marketing strategies of Korean entertainment companies (Kim 2017, 2371), this wave of Korean popular culture seems to be a stark contrast from the areas of interest that had originally fostered my relationship with Korea. The saturation of Hallyu fans at KIP, juxtaposed against myself, someone who had come to Korea for academic reasons, was a source of perplexity for me.

This thesis is an investigation into precisely this perplexity: how had KIP become a beacon for international fans of K-pop and dramas, and why was I one of the few who had been excluded from this circle? How did my KIP colleagues and I, despite our different entry points into Korea, find ourselves at KIP together? Prompted by our program's curriculum, which curiously portioned almost half of our day to what were deemed "Korean cultural activities," of which Hallyu was implicitly included, I paid close attention to how "Korean culture" was presented, and observed how my colleagues reacted to this presentation. I noted the specific things, images, art, people, and places that KIP chose to show to students, asked instructors how such representations were chosen, asked students how they felt about these representations, and

asked the activity subjects themselves how they believed they fit into Hallyu culture. I listened closely to the narratives of Korean culture and history that were being privileged throughout our program and contemplated which narratives were being neglected.

This pervasiveness of "Korean culture" and/or Hallyu at KIP, championed by both our curriculum and by my colleagues, has led me to consider popular culture as a formidable sociological and economic force. Giving consideration to canonical debates on the sociological significance of popular culture (Benjamin 1969; Adorno 1998), and putting these in conversation with more contemporary ones (Frith 1989; Garofalo 1992), I weigh the hegemonic and/or revolutionary potential that popular culture holds in influencing mass audiences. Then, by considering the viability of the sociological framework of "subculture" (Hall and Jefferson 1976), I ask what room there is for alternative constructions of Korean culture and maps of meaning within the parameters of a dominant ideological hegemon.

Situated in the context of Korea, based off my observations at KIP and my interactions with students and instructors, I hope to arrive at a more generalizable understanding of how forms of popular culture are made visible to foreign audiences, how and why they appear attractive to audiences, and how these audiences play a feedback role in the production of these cultural forms. By observing the inner workings of Sogang University and reviewing the literature on Korean entertainment companies, I hope to offer a qualification to the power that these institutions have in defining Korean culture. Furthermore, I hope that the results of this thesis can tell us something about how the marginalized actors within this arrangement (i.e. consumers and those whose likenesses are co-opted by dominant narratives) might be able to use and transform elements of popular culture in order to create new and alternative meanings.

1. The Parameters and Possibilities of Popular Culture

In order to interpret my experiences at Sogang, I evoke some of the canonical literature regarding popular culture and subculture. Also, as a base, I elicit Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony, assuming both the plausibility of dominant groups to rule ideologically through the consent of the dominated, and the tendency of dominant groups to elaborate their ideology through the institutions, actors, and "feelings" of their respective societies (Gramsci 1971). While the barrage of activities and representations labeled as "Korean culture" at KIP initially struck me as an obvious attempt to naturalize a particular ideology, the juxtaposition of this ideological form against my own prior understanding of Korea (and later juxtaposed against one of my interlocutor's experience as a Korean), prompted me to think about the possibility for contention within this arrangement. Thus, the popular culture debate, because it considers popular culture as a formidable superstructural apparatus (Adorno 1998), while also recognizing the slippage in strict capitalist relations inevitable in the mass reproduction media (Benjamin 1969), is an ideal framework through which to highlight the nuance and complexity of my experiences at KIP, and of Hallyu culture writ large.

1.1 Popular Music

In his work *On Popular Music*, Frankfurt School theorist Theodor Adorno attempts to tease out the socioeconomic distinctions between what he perceives as the "two spheres of music": popular music and serious music (1998, 197). Implicated in Adorno's distinctions are the degree to which each sphere elicits particular reactions, naturalizes a feeling of pseudo-individualization, and adjusts listeners to the "reality" of life (203). Fundamental to popular music, claims Adorno, is its tendency towards "standardization" – inevitable conformity to a set of conventions like song structure (the arrangement of song parts like chorus, verse, bridge, intro,

and outro, etc.), the reoccurrence of a predictable set of song types (like dance) and thematic elements (mother songs, home songs, laments for a lost girl, etc.) borrowed from a limited repertoire, and its formulaic adherence to uncomplicated harmonies (197-8).

This standardization, according to Adorno, is due to popular music's inextricable connection to the industrial operation of mass production (1998, 201). In a mundane cycle of supply and demand, popular music takes a predictable shape dictated by the current state of musical "tastes" leaving negligible room for creative inflection by composers (203). In this scheme, there exists a base set of parameters, which, through a series of hit songs that guide and shape, has come to represent the acceptable limits of what popular music can sound like. "As a result, innovations by rugged individualists have been outlawed" (202). Popular music is thus frozen into a set of standards and becomes "naturalized" as "official music culture" (202).

The only room for individual artistry in this process, says Adorno, is at the hands of those individuals who produce the hit song in the "handicraft level" (1998, 203). The "demands" of the industry eventually standardize the structure of music, which "the composer, harmonizer, and arranger" then stylize (201). This limited stylization of a standardized framework creates for the consumer "ideological categories such as taste and free choice," the naturalization of which must be hidden least they incite a challenge to this system (203). Adorno calls this dance between the "stimulatory and natural" the "desideratum" (203).

The ability that popular music has to remain rooted in a predictable standard yet provide just enough stimulation so as to appear novel and elicit fetishization, according to Adorno, plays an important function in its continued commoditization. The limited parameters within which the music must operate demands no attention from the listener. Likewise, the minimal stylization

requires little effort from listeners since it is, by design, of an easily digestible formula. Adorno explains:

> Distraction is bound to the present mode of production, to the rationalized and mechanized process of labor to which, directly or indirectly, masses are subject. This mode of production, which engenders fears and anxiety about unemployment, loss of income, war, has its "nonproductive" correlate in entertainment; that is, relaxation which does not involve the effort of concentration at all. People want to have fun. A fully concentrated and conscious experience of art is possible only to those whose lives do not put such a strain on them in that in their spare time they want relief from both boredom and effort simultaneously. The whole sphere of cheap commercial entertainment reflects this dual desire. (Adorno 1998, 205)

Thus, from this bleak picture, it seems that for Adorno, popular music precludes any possibility for a "conscious experience of art." The desideratum keeps the listening audience phobic of any "individualizations – counter-accents and other 'differentiations'"; they become conditioned to obey the naturalized formula. This obedience is not just to the formula of the music however, but to everyday life in general. Popular music, and the limited scope of acceptable stimulation it conditions, helps listeners "achieve some psychical adjustment to the mechanisms of present-day life" so that they can continue contributing to the current mode of production. And just as the music must remain structurally "natural," it must also necessarily remain "aloof from political partisanship." That is, listeners must maintain unconscious alignment and preference for the "natural" – what Adorno calls "crowd mindedness." The psychology of crowd-mindedness keeps the masses susceptible to the authoritarian aspects of the political parties generally, but not to the particularities of any political leaning. Thus, popular music is a medium that cannot contain any social significance and is thus "repressive per se" (Adorno 1998, 207).

In several ways, the nature of K-pop music and the production process of Hallyu do seem to ring true with Adorno's theory of standardization. As others explain, K-pop as a genre, is a

lucrative industry whose content and production are driven primarily by what are called entertainment houses (Yong 2016, 115; Kim 2017, 2374). Popular idols and groups are all "systematically produced by the audition processes and in-house training systems of major entertainment companies" (Yong 2016, 115). The goal of this audition and training system is to foster an arsenal of young and talented entertainers targeted at teenage and overseas audiences (113-116). In total, Yong argues that, "(t)he Korean Wave phenomenon is nothing but a result of how Korea's export-driven industrial system and the manufacturing sector has extended into the popular cultural sector" (Cho Han Hye-Jeong, as cited in Yong 2016, 116).

Further, in terms of song arrangements, others have noted how Korean popular music[1], and later K-pop, have developed their musical formulae in observation of historical trends. *Ppongjjak* music for example, is a genre of Korean music originating from the Japanese colonial period, whose very name is an onomatopoeia for the predictable and standardized beat that pervades the genre (Lee 2006; Maliangkay 2006; Son 2006). Then, in the domestic types of Korean popular music of the 1980s, Howard (2002) notes that lyrics traditionally "conformed to standard romantic themes" and "avoid(ed) sexual connotations, concentrating on sentiments similar to the songs of earlier generations" (83). Later, with the government lifting the ban on foreign imports in the 1990s, musical standardization was adapted to match the newly introduced Euro dance styles of music, giving K-pop music a new standard "three verse" structure (Jin and Ryoo as cited in Yong 2016, 113). Eventually, as market demands changed and other styles became incorporated into Korea's musical repertoire, K-pop's structure shifted to one that "emphasizes choruses instead of verses" (Jin and Ryoo as cited in Yong 2016, 113).

[1] Korean popular music refers to music generally consumed by domestic audiences.

These examples show us that, in K-pop music specifically, we can identify some of the criteria outlined by Adorno, thus offering some plausibility to Adorno's framework. The production process of K-pop has "adapted industrial methods for the technique of its promotion" which includes a "division of labor among the composer, harmonizer, and arranger" (Adorno 1998, 201). That is, entertainment companies rely on a systematic method of recruiting performers and engineering products aimed at maximizing the marketability of their products. This "competitive process," which we can observe in the different periods of Korean popular music, Adorno would tell us, naturally results in standardization (201-202). In the continuous and gradual flux of domestic and international market demands, the expression of popular music thus becomes standardized in terms of structure, theme, and beat; an alleged signification of the music's repressive character.

1.2 Mass Reproduction

Whereas Adorno looks at popular music with suspicion precisely because of its industrialization, Adorno's Frankfurt colleague Walter Benjamin explores this interface between art and the masses with a bit more optimism. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin gives an historic overview of art's transformation from a practice restricted to a singular time and place, into a form designed to reach mass audiences. Benjamin notes how with each new technological innovation in the quantitative reproduction of art, there also coincided new qualitative dynamics in the form of the work of art and in the way art could be received. By focusing on the possibilities that industrialization enables rather than limits, Benjamin's view on art reproduction will offer a way of thinking about music and popular culture that may allow for more change and flexibility.

As Benjamin sees it, the central consequence to the reproduction of art is art's liberation from its "dependence on ritual" (1969, 6). The earliest works of art, Benjamin explains, were restricted by their rootedness to a process of ritual, for example, a ritual of magic or religion (6). For unrecordable types of art, this meant that one can only receive a piece of art by being physically present at the time and place of its ritual creation. For other types of art like artifacts, replicas could be made, however slowly, to then be shared with others at other times and places. The Greeks, through the invention of founding and stamping, created technological means for reproducing items like bronzes, terra cottas, and coins in quantity (2). The printing press allowed for the relatively rapid reproduction of paper items, and the phonograph allowed for the capturing of sound art to be reproduced and shared. "(F)or the first time in world history," Benjamin explains, "mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from is parasitical dependence on ritual" (6).

One of the implications of this freeing of art from ritual is that art can now be shared widely; there are more opportunities for exhibition and influence (Benjamin 1969, 7). As a demonstration of this effect, musicologist Simon Frith recalls the growth of the rock industry. Frith points out that as the rock industry continued to grow following the popularity of the Beatles in the 1960's, rock music became such a globally popular force among young people, that it eventually became too powerful and influential for institutions like universities to refuse to take seriously beyond its niche sociological studies (Frith 1989, 2). Demands by young people from all over the world prompted the founding of The International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) with sole purpose of getting popular music on the curriculum of academic music studies (1). Clearly, in this instance, music's connectedness to multinational capital and new technological developments in music distribution led popular music to becoming

an international academic interest. “No country in the world,” Frith points out, “is unaffected by the way in which the twentieth-century mass media (the electronic means of musical production, reproduction and transmission) have created a universal pop aesthetic” (2). Recording technology and mass distribution obviate the need to be physically present at the time and place where the Beatles perform – i.e. the place of ritual – nor are the Beatles burdened with performing every track, on every album, every time they want to make a reproduction; their pop aesthetic can have an impact on many people, rather than merely those present during the ritual.

Another important implication of mass reproduction according to Benjamin has been a change in the very design of the work of art. The capacity to reach mass audiences was met by the artist changing the design of the work of art to be *received* by mass audiences; the work of becomes “designed for reproducibility” (Benjamin 1969, 6). Where once art had mainly been conjured for ritual purposes, sometimes not even to be seen by an audience at all, audiences are now at the forefront of the mind of the designer (6). The stage actor does not perform hidden in solitude for religious purposes, nor as a magical rite. Rather, the actor performs to be seen by audiences (11). Likewise, the film actor, without a live audience, is no longer able to make adjustments to their performance based on the perspectives of the live audience, but rather performs in a particular manner consistent with the restrictions of the camera (10-11). The need to appeal to mass audiences necessitates that the performer interface with the audiences in a specific way – i.e. through the camera.

The question still seems to remain however: is popular culture necessarily repressive, no matter how many people it reaches? If the popular music of the world is, as Frith contends, shaped by multinational capital, is it, in all of its forms, repressive as Adorno would suggest?

Like Adorno, Benjamin seems to recognize that the work of art can be designed with mass audiences in mind. For Adorno, a select few (producers, composers, and promoters) craft the musical product into something that the listener has, through this very process of crafting, been conditioned to "want"; an interpretation that assumes nefarious intentions on behalf of the designers, and that negates the possibility for listeners to assert their own agency in this process. Benjamin however, does not see the receiver of the art as a passive consumer, but as a critic (1998, 10). So much influence does mass reproduction impart to the common person, that the line between "reader" and "writer" becomes increasingly indistinguishable (12). Although the film maker for Benjamin may still be "trying hard to spur the interest of the masses" (13), there is a clear paradigm shift where "one (becomes) entitled to ask from a work of art" (14).

Due to this dual nature of popular culture – its potential to act as an ideological apparatus aimed at mass audiences, and to be the subject of the discriminating interests of these mass audiences – Garofalo (1992) suggests that we see popular culture as a "contested terrain." Garofalo explains that before the "politicized" explosion of pop music of the 1960's, there had been a conception that pop music was for the mindless and passive masses, that it was devoid of political significance, and that it was produced only for profit (2). However, Garofalo challenges the rigidity of this polemic by suggesting that mass culture should be treated not merely as being monofunctional, but rather as a "contested terrain": "It is regarded as one arena where ideological struggle – the struggle over the power to define – takes place. While there is no question that in this arena the forces arrayed in support of the existing hegemony are formidable, there are also numerous instances where mass culture – and in particular popular music – issues serious challenges to hegemonic power" (2). Taken in this way, we might be able to think about popular culture not necessarily as repressive, apolitical, and wholeheartedly in service to the

current mode of production, as Adorno would suggest, but rather, as a site where forces of complete repression, mass mindedness, and submission to capitalism, compete with forces of autonomy, agency, and refusal, the mastery of which, determines popular music's expression.

Studies by Lee (2004; 2006) demonstrate how this contesting over terrain might actually look in K-pop specifically. Lee notices the ways in which contemporary K-pop artists use lyrics as a specific site for contesting hegemony. Lee (2004) identifies "dominant representations of authority," "mainstream norms and values," and "older generations' conservatism" as the primary structures against which K-pop artists contend (429). Through the coding of lyrics using "English mixing" in otherwise mostly Korean language song lyrics, artists are able to express subversive sentiments that go undetected by the non-English-speaking older generations and TV censors (429). In this particular situation, artists, from their place within the division of labor (as per Adorno), have been able to use language as a means for contesting the form of popular music (as per Garofalo). Though it may be unclear how these actions have been received, we see the possibility for actors within this arrangement to use their mass visibility and audibility as outlets for expression and for creating new potentials.

Lee also observes how K-pop artists are able to contest standardization by "crossing": "the use of apparently outgroup linguistic styles" (Rampton as cited in Lee 2006, 235). Some artists, Lee points out, are beginning to create special Japanese language versions of their songs in order to "cross" into the Japanese market and reach a wider audience (235). Within the traditionally Korean language (and to a lesser degree, English language mixed) format for K-pop music, Japanese language songs appear to be a break from standardized K-pop song structure. But, by Adorno's definition, is this truly a deviation from the standard or merely a "stylization" within an otherwise "natural" framework? Are K-pop artists contesting the terrain through acts

of agency or merely conforming to market demands? Lee tells us that this sort of crossing should not be conflated with "styling the other" – that is, a cheap attempt to pass as authentic – but rather is a "skillful mixing of linguistic sources…(that) achieves certain indexical and semiotic effects" (236).

It is suggested by Lee that in this context, we should recognize the work that crossing does for Korea and Japan's historically tense cultural dynamics. Due to Korea's colonial history with Japan, Korean public discourse is still rife with animosity toward Japan over territorial disputes, economic competition, and alleged human rights abuses. As such, Lee would have us see crossing as a contestation of this animosity. Performing in Japanese language, for Japanese audiences, and physically appearing alongside Japanese idol peers, Lee argues, acts as a symbolic gesture that might help alter Korean public perception towards their former colonizer (Lee 2006, 236). In this respect, Adorno's criteria for popular music as being fundamentally devoid of political significance is perhaps inadequate here. Whether or not we know the intentions of K-pop idols in their acts of crossing, or whether the content of their lyrics were inscribed with political messages, their actions, due to the sociocultural context, seem to have symbolic political meaning, something that Adorno dismisses. Furthermore, if we conjure Benjamin here, we are able to see value in the fact that this symbolism is displayed for mass audiences – through televised performances and internationally distributed records – thus demonstrating popular music's potential to act as a revolutionary force.

1.3 Sub-culture

The above examples help us to see some of the practical implications of using popular music as a workable term in general, while also letting us see the extent to which Adorno's framework holds up in the popular music realm of K-pop specifically – a significant milepost in

this particular investigation. But, our demystification of the concept of "popular" should also coincide with an examination of the category that supposedly exists as its opposite: "sub-culture."

Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, in their work on British "youth sub-culture," offer a class analysis of how to think about the idea of a sub-culture. As Hall and Jefferson see it, classes are the most fundamental groups in modern society, each of which exists within a major cultural configuration (1976, 13).

These major cultural configurations are structured by their own "maps of meaning":

> A culture includes the 'maps of meaning' which make things intelligible to its members. These 'maps of meaning' are not simply carried around in the head: they are objectivated in the patterns of social organization and relationship through which the individual becomes a 'social individual'. Culture is the way the social relations of a group are structured and shaped: but it is also the way those shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted. (Hall and Jefferson 1976, 10-11)

Thus, individuals and groups within the major cultural configuration must work within the "field of possibles" [sic] historically laid out by this dominant arrangement (11).

However, this dominant culture "is never a homogenous structure" (Hall and Jefferson 1976, 12). We should also recognize that within the dominant culture there are "sub-cultures": "sub-sets – smaller, more localized and differentiated structures" whom also hold their own values, meanings, and experiences (13). "(L)oosely or tightly bounded," sub-cultures are distinguished by their differentiated practices and meanings and by their sub-structural territories (12-14). They necessarily exist within the parameters of their "parent culture," but "(t)hrough dress, activities, leisure pursuits and life-style, they may project a different cultural response or

‘solution’ to the problems posed for them by their material and social class position and experience” (15).

And although not homogenous, the dominant culture, according to Hall and Jefferson, commands “cultural power”: the ability to control “mental production,” setting “(t)he definitions of the world” (1976, 11). Thus, this explanation sees each group as being opposed to one another and placed along a hierarchy where some groups will necessarily dominate, and some will be subordinate in their command of “cultural power” (11). With this power, the dominant groups will be able to have prioritized expression and representation of their particular “maps of meaning” within the society (11).

Sharing this Marxist framework in common with Adorno, Hall and Jefferson’s viewpoint places great emphasis on the determining power of production, recognizing that the classes whom command the means of material production will also command mental production (Marx 1970, 64 as cited in Hall and Jefferson 1976, 11). In Adorno’s figuring, production has an inevitable inclination towards standardization and distraction. Production, in its course for profit, must make “natural” or “standard” the desirability of its products, the consumption of which offers the listener enough distraction and leisure to secure their continued replication of the mode of production. At this point, Hall and Jefferson can supplement Adorno’s framework by adding that a particular class will necessarily be in control of the current mode of production. This dominant class will have monopoly over the “maps of meaning” of a society (11). We might thus be able to draw an analogy between what Adorno calls the “promoters of commercialized entertainment” and the dominate class mentioned by Hall and Jefferson (Adorno 1998, 205). Like the dominant class, Adorno names promoters as the “operative agencies” who shape mass consciousness (205). Promoters aim to cultivate a particular ideology, a “frozen” set of natural

standards, that allows them to continue “selling cultural commodities indiscriminately” (202, 205).

From this analogy, we can see the ways in which Adorno’s analysis is in agreement with Hall and Jefferson’s more general explanation of dominate and subordinate groups. Adorno, and Hall and Jefferson, both seem to show that there are dominant groups who maintain cultural power and seek to have their own maps of meaning elaborated in society. And, in their use of Gramsci’s interpretation of hegemony, Hall and Jefferson corroborate Adorno’s idea of standardization – that dominate maps of meaning become naturalized. Further, Hall and Jefferson’s subcultural analysis, synthesized with Adorno, corroborates our synthesis of Frith and Garofalo: the expression of popular music is given significant shape by the forces of capital, yet is not granted or absolute, but, as suggested by the presence and calculated work of dominate class actors, ought to be seen as a contested terrain; a specific site where we can observe the struggle for hegemony over cultural products and ideologies.

So, if popular music is not repressive per se, as Adorno suggests, but is a contested form, what do we make of his term antipodal to popular music: “serious music”? Unlike popular music, which Adorno characterizes foremost by its standardization, a characterization which I have since problematized, serious music, according to Adorno, does not adhere to a “rigidity of whose pattern is understood” (1998, 198). Rather, in serious music, “(e)very detail derives its musical sense from the concrete totality of the piece which, in turn, consists of the life relationship of the details and never of a mere enforcement of a musical scheme…Only through the whole does it acquire its particular lyrical and expressive quality” (198).

Though cryptic perhaps, Adorno’s definition of serious music rings of a subcultural essence. Whereas popular music, by Adorno’s reasoning, is repressive by nature of its repetitive

structure, serious music does not “supply the ‘framework’ automatically” (1998, 199). Serious music does not rely on the effect of desideratum; that is, it does not appeal to the listener by adding inflections to a natural form, the character of which are of such superficial and predictable quality that they can be appreciated at any isolated moment in the song. Rather, serious music, in order to be appreciated, must be taken with consideration to its entire form. Unlike in popular music, in serious music, each part, theme, or bar “gets its true meaning only from the context” (198). “Taken in isolation (a) theme would be disrobed to insignificance” (198). Therefore, the standardization that becomes naturalized through popular music, both in terms of the song’s structure, and in the habituation that this structure engenders in the listener, is contested. Whereas popular music gives the listener something “pre-digested” to consume, serious music requires contemplation. The structuring effect of the music stimuli is no longer potent because there is no longer a uniform structure to speak of. Instead of cursory inflections juxtaposed against an otherwise unquestioned musical form, there is now a dynamic whole whose pronounced form requires steady attention. The effect is “that of disillusion” (207).

Whereas Adorno stresses the structuring effect of popular music, serious music is not described with the same assertive counter-effect as perhaps the idea of a contested field might. Rather, Adorno’s description of serious music expresses a sense of “disillusion” and “acceptance” to a neutral “raw reality” (1998, 207). Though he does use the descriptor “antiromantic” to characterize performers of serious music, there is less in his words to suggest a contestation than merely an absence of romance. Faced with a recognition of the bleak reality of the “machine age” that popular music naturalizes, composers of serious music aim to adapt themselves to this reality (207). “Listeners are ready to replace dreaming by adjustment to raw reality” (207). Rather bleakly, Adorno describes this adjustment as a coming to terms with the

fact that “they (the audience and composers of serious music) actually have no part in happiness” (208). “The actual function of sentimental music lies rather in the temporary release given to the awareness that one has missed fulfillment” (208). But, alas, Adorno does not see this release as a contestation to the standardization of the “machine age.” For Adorno, “(o)ne who weeps does not resist any more than one who marches” (208).

However, in regard to Adorno’s explanation of serious music’s functionality, we should first take issue with his assumption of a “raw reality.” Granted, based on Gramsci’s definition of hegemony, we can concede that actors all come onto the same “terrain” of economic production. But, as Gramsci also tells us, “it is not possible to separate what is known as ‘scientific’ philosophy from the common and popular philosophy which is only a fragmentary collection of ideas and opinions” (1971, 328). That is, there is no objective “raw reality” that Adorno’s antiromantics are able to perceive. Rather, there are any number of competing definitions of reality that hegemony attempts to subsume within its range thus maintaining the unity of the social bloc (Gramsci 1971, 328; Hall and Jefferson 1976, 39; Williams 1977, 122-123). Thus, perhaps unintentionally, Adorno’s explanation actually reinforces our running concept of a contested field. It is not that the practitioners and listeners of serious music have discovered some “truth,” but that they have arrived at an alternative interpretation, or “fragmentary collection of ideas and opinions” (Gramsci 1971, 328). Whereas we might think of Adorno’s version of popular music as attempting to structure listeners into an “ideological unity” of taking pleasure from their place in the mode of production, serious music facilitates a feeling of antiromanticism towards this position.

The idea of antiromanticism would certainly corroborate Hall and Jefferson’s understanding of subcultural resistance as well. “The subordinate class,” they tell us, “brings to

this ‘theatre of struggle’ a repertoire of strategies and responses – ways of coping as well as of resisting” (1976, 44). And though these strategies and responses are forms of resistance, we should also remember that they are only contestations of meaning; a grab at cultural power. For as Hall and Jefferson remind us via Marx, the subcultural class is only allotted the same “raw materials” as their parent class (45). Thus, the antiromantics, in their recognition of the mode of production, develop a coping mechanism that draws from the same repertoire of raw materials as do popular musicians, to negotiate the meaning of their existence, thereby collectively creating an alternative set of meaning that sits in contestation to the dominant meaning.

In sum, though the theoretical concepts of “popular music” and “subculture” have been my speculative points of departure, they require some clarifications if they are to serve as workable frameworks for understanding my ethnographic experiences. First, by Adorno’s reasoning, the base structure of popular music, by way of its responsiveness to market demands, has become naturalized and removed from perceivability. The musical inflections added to this natural base, as points of attraction to the listener, periodically offer relief and distraction, and simultaneously condition a frame of mind that seeks this distraction as leisure so that the listener can feel relived and feel justified in continually contributing to the current mode of production. As Yong would suggest, there have been in fact several recognizable standard structural formulae in the history of Korean popular music and in K-pop. Yong also confirms Adorno’s suggestion that there is a clear division of labor to be observed in K-pop between individuals who make up the entertainment companies, and those idols who are the performers. From this synthesis, we can conclude, quite safely, that the structure K-pop conforms to certain market pressures, and, by way of entertainment companies and their recruitment systems, adhere to an industrial pattern that seeks to maximize profits.

But, as Benjamin's analysis would suggest, and Lee's examples demonstrate, the industrialization and mass reproducibility of K-pop music does not necessarily imply an absolute repressive nature. Rather, through covert, individual acts of agency by idols, that entail the appropriation of the very platform given to them by K-pop, idols are able to make structural contestations against the musical form, and likewise, against the ideological structure, of which, the musical structure is a material and social component. Supported by Hall and Jefferson's theorization of subcultures – groups that may appropriate the materials of their parent cultures and imbue them with new meaning – we can think of these instances of "mixing" and "crossing" by K-pop idols as examples of the "struggle over the power to define" (Garofalo 1992). For although the sphere of popular music is no doubt, as Adorno might suggest, repressive, it is, as Garofalo argues, not absolute, and is merely one arena out of presumably many, where hegemony is contested.

Further, as Garofalo would suggest, serious music can perhaps be thought of as another arena where hegemony is contested. For Adorno, the non-standard structural quality of serious music allows listeners to see, unoccluded, the "raw reality" that is the mode of production of which they are a part. However, instead of conceding, as Adorno does, that perceiving this raw reality is the terminus of a struggle that serious music is unfit to partake in, we can instead think of this disillusion as yet another reinterpretation of the maps of meaning that hegemony attempts to naturalize. In this sense, Adorno does not seem to give enough credit to serious music, or other means, to reimage dominant ideology. Taken altogether, popular music appears to have, in its intimacy with industrialization, great repressive potential. But, for this same reason, also has formidable counter-hegemonic potential. Serious music, or subcultures, likewise may have

different relationships to the current mode of production, but nonetheless, are subsumed into dominant hegemonic narratives, and so are also contested terrains.

As I transition into my ethnographic data, I aim to elucidate further the specific strategies adopted by groups we might consider subcultures, to contest cultural power, and assert their own. For acknowledging the privileged access that some subcultures have to degrees of mass reproduction is merely a preliminary articulation of a much more sophisticated dynamic and that which promises many other possibilities.

2. Korean Immersion Program

Though at first it appeared that Sogang was going to provide me with the regimented language instruction that I sought, it soon became clear that language instruction was not KIP's sole priority and that there were alternative agendas undergirding the structure of the program. Likewise, as the days of the program unfolded, it became obvious that my colleagues and I diverged in our purposes for coming to Korea and for enrolling in a Korean language program. On the first day of instruction for example, each student was given a contract to sign where we pledged to speak only Korean for the duration of the program. However, as the days went by, instructors and students began speaking less and less Korean, reverting instead to English. Moments of instruction in English by the teachers seemed to create a precedent for students to use English, which only seemed to reinforce the teachers' passivity, leading then to the eventual bleed over of English into all of our program interactions. And although our language contracts gestured at professionalism, other such inner workings of the program made them increasingly difficult to manage. How then can we understand this failure?

I interpret this discontinuity that I experienced at Sogang University – an institution renowned for its quality language training – as a compromise between an intention to provide language instruction for educational purposes on the one hand, and the necessity to collect on, what media scholar JungBong Choi calls, a "leaky" or "fuzzy" wave of Korean cultural products on the other hand (2015, 33). Grounded in my own ethnographic data and supplemented by current scholarship on the Korean Wave phenomenon, I arrive at my interpretation by noting KIP's strategic appropriation of a plethora of people, places, items, activities, and narratives. As per Adorno, we can understand KIP's selection of these particular elements as a natural expression of a coherent set of standardized entertainment conventions, given direction by

“composers,” and given shape by the “wants” of mass (foreign) audiences. Yet I show that it is by this same mass audience-oriented dynamic, as alluded to by Benjamin, and demonstrated by Lee, that allows subcultural groups and individuals to push back against the rigidity of this arrangement in order to meet their own needs. I note that none of these struggles for cultural power are, in the end, zero-sum games, but are contestations resulting in negotiated cultural forms, representations, narratives, meanings, and uses. Whether it be KIP’s partitioning of “language” and “culture” wedged even further apart by the need to provide cultural instruction in English, K-pop fans negotiating the terms of their engagement with idols, or the artists themselves who resist their own absorption into Hallyu, each contestation that I look at gains some degree of counter-hegemonic ground while also conceding some. However, since it is Hallyu culture that remains economically dominant throughout, like serious music, counter-hegemonic contestations are qualified by the alternative meanings that they bring to subcultures.

2.1 Language and Culture

One particular dynamic of the program that made speaking only Korean difficult to police was the fact that our daily class schedule was divided into two clearly demarcated subjects: “language” and “culture.” Although we did sign contracts for our culture class, and our culture instructor was clearly diligent about upholding Korean-only instruction, these classes, with the exception of a few meetings, were actually not taught by our main instructor, but were relegated to other staff, students, and outside instructors. Further, these deferred classes were almost always in other non-classroom settings, on campus or off campus entirely. This splitting of class subjects into distinct “language” and “culture” classes, along with the inconsistency in instruction, and the blurring of academic settings with more casual, fun settings, I believe, was a reflection of KIP’s entanglement in a dominant cluster of representations of Korea that aims to

capture foreign audiences by giving them what Adorno calls the "stuff" they "want" (1998, 205); "stuff" that becomes attractive through what Jean and John Comaroof have described as the construction of ethno-national "brands" that more and more nations are attempting to assert into the world marketplace in search for economic "empowerment" and global-political "self-construction" (2009, 1-7).

For four hours in the morning, beginning at 9 A.M., my KIP colleagues and I attended our language courses – one for speaking and listening, and one for reading and writing. Then, after an hour lunch break, we would all reconvene at the place where our two-hour culture class would be held that day. Generally, each culture class was focused on showing students one particular type of art, craft, food, music, or dance that students were required to partake in. These activities included cooking, calligraphy, a traditional scarf dance, stamp making, a field trip to the Korean War Memorial Museum, traditional mask dancing, taekwondo, a field trip to a Japanese colonial-era prison, and a traditional paper game. In addition to these class-specific activities, during our third week, culture class was divided into three activities, of which, students could choose one that they would participate in for three days. These included a K-pop dance routine, a Korean traditional musical instrument concert, and a visit to a Buddhist temple. Then, every Friday, there was a program-wide optional field trip organized by the program director, which students were encouraged to attend. These cultural field trips included a baseball game, an amusement park, a musical comedy show, and a semi-private K-pop concert.

The peculiar partitioning of "language" and "culture" by KIP in this way makes these two categories fascinating objects of ethnographic inquiry; fascinating because some classic anthropological understandings of language and culture would find redundant the task of studying the two apart from one another (Salzmann 2004, 3). That is because by such definitions,

culture is understood to be a collection of behavioral innovations that humans have adapted in response to their biological restrictions, language being merely an elaboration of this cultural innovation (3). For example, as pointed out by Salzmann (2004), early 19th century linguist Edward Sapir saw language as “a guide to ‘social reality’,” something that “powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes” (44). Similarly, Benjamin Lee Whorf also laid out a hypothesis that presumed that humans “dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages” (45). Thus, for these theorists, it is implied that understanding one’s language is integral to understanding one’s culture. The KIP brochure that I saw pinned-up in my home university’s Korean language department seemed to echo this common understanding: “Students spend the afternoons taking interactive culture classes. In addition, students take outings into the city with their instructors or teaching assistants to complete assignments that help them practice their Korean language skills in a real world setting. Destinations included historical sites and other local points of interest. Students will also participate in culture-related group projects with Korean college students” (Sogang University 2018). The emphasis that the brochure places on using language in “real world settings” including “historical sites” suggests a recognition of language as something at least partially connected to a corresponding social world.

However, regardless of the practical reasons for observing such a theoretical distinction – reasons that KIP may or may not have recognized themselves – I find KIP’s separation of language and culture classes to be a phenomenon better understood as an historic ideological distinction. Drawing on Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, I think of language and culture as two expressions of “nation-ness,” “the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” (2006, 3). Anderson argues that in ancient proto-national communities,

language, in the form of a written script, was once the primary means for empires to distinguish one another (13-14). But, with the decline of this primary conception of community, arose the primacy of visual and aural representations as embodiments of community (22). Citing the presence of particular types of dress, stained glass windows, reliefs, oral sermons, plays, and relics in mediaeval Christendom, Anderson demonstrates how these new visual and aural representations were able to signal the conception of their sacred community to the illiterate masses (23). Though both of these categories – language and culture – have historically been separate and have only been arbitrarily brought together, they exist now as two sub-categories of the larger umbrella category of "nation." Thus, highlighting the distinction between language and culture as KIP does, while also placing them alongside one another in our academic day, is an indication of the shared purpose of these categories to "immerse" students in the multiple expressions of "most legitimate" category of nation. Much in the same way that Benjamin explains how mass reproduction releases the art form from its ritual origin, Anderson shows how visual and aural representations became a way to signal the idea of "community" to a greater number of people. But how and why has community come to be the object of commodification in this way?

In addition to recognizing the historic precedent for separable categories of "language" and "culture" and their relation to an essence of "community," we can also understand Korea – the community and/or the nation – as an identity which has been claimed and made salient due to its economic exploitability (Povinelli 2001; Comaroff 2009; Dávila 2012). Economic empowerment, securing a global market presence for the future, and identifying something unique about one's people in a world where "authenticity" is becoming dependent on both of the former, are just a few of the reasons that John L. and Jean Comaroff have identified as being

reasons why "culture" as an alienable form has increasingly become the object of commoditization (2009, 6-10). In the wake of the growing global popularity of Hallyu, I see the national essence of Korea as a category that has been opportunistically identified and made to include "culture" and "language," among other things.

To this end, Choi (2015) sees the branding of Korea mostly as a convenient means for various sectors in Korea's creative industry to sell cultural products (38). Due to the general tendency for human interest categories to become compartmentalized yet still able to "crisscross" with one another, Choi sees "Korea" as something that has become a grand category for various sub-realms of human interest such as language, culture, and other things; a dynamic that allows fans to seamlessly transition from one realm of interest to the next (35). And although for people like myself, Hallyu was not my entry point into the Korean brand, the relatively greater popularity of Hallyu – the "essential content" – over things like language training – the "Para-Hallyu products/services" – as Choi presents them (34), and that my own data will corroborate, appears to be able to capture masses of foreign audiences where language alone does not. Furthermore, precisely because the historically situated archetypical meaning and use of culture as a concept may differ from the various ways it is continuously deployed (Williams 1977, 121; Trouillot 2003, 98), Hallyu as an open-ended and supposed "cultural" category may also be deployed to incorporate more realms of human artifact and behavior (Choi 2015, 32), including language. We can observe this process of incorporation at KIP. The fact that Sogang University is first and foremost an institution of higher education, and that KIP belongs specifically to Sogang's Korean Language Education Center (KLEC), yet has still made a substantial partition of our day in order to make room for a culture class that was nearly devoid of any linguistic pedagogical value, is an indication of the substantial weight that "culture" in this context carries

over language in evoking the Korean brand. This point I believe is central to understanding KIP's categorical division between language and culture as a compromise.

2.2 Co-constituting Content

If Anderson can help us understand the historical precedent for the distinction between language and culture as they have been presented by KIP, how then do we make sense of their continued alliance? How is this specific array of cultural representations used by KIP and what work does it do? Rather than invoking some "true," "natural," or "primordial base of the Korean people," as Korean historian Clark Sorensen has warned against (1999, 288), I argue that the representations that KIP presented to us are expressions of a hegemonic and constantly fluctuating narrative of what constitutes Korea and Korean culture. This dominant narrative of Korean culture I believe is intimately connected to a mode of production that depends on, to a degree, the ability to sell Korean cultural products "indiscriminately" as Adorno would suggest; an arrangement that Marx calls commanding "mental production" (Marx as cited in Hall and Jefferson 1976, 11). This codependency between the naturalization of a particular, yet an expanding, set of Korean cultural images, and the ability to sell these images to foreign audiences, was further demonstrated by interviews that I collected from my culture teacher and the KIP program director. What these conversations demonstrate are both the existence of a dominant and natural understanding of what Korean culture is, and the presence of an ideology that finds it necessary to give foreign audiences the "stuff they want."

As is pointed out by many scholars of Korean Wave (Choi, 2015; Yong, 2016; Yoon, 2017), since the 1990s, the Korean government has had a heavy hand in the development of Hallyu, stimulating creativity in the culture industry by sponsoring entertainment companies and entrepreneurs. In this hunt for new avenues of developing Korea's soft power and "symbolic

capital," other non-Hallyu sectors have been prone to becoming co-opted and subsumed into Hallyu's porous boundaries (Choi 2015, 44). A notable high-profile example of this was seen in 2009 when the wife of Korean president Lee Myung Bak spearheaded the establishment of the Korean Cuisine Globalization Committee (46). The president's wife was explicit about the intentions of the committee, commenting publicly that their goal was to elevate Korean cuisine as a globally recognizable category of food to support the continued global prosperity of the Hallyu brand (46). International publicity events welcoming in this new committee even utilized *hanbok*, Korean traditional clothing, to add further cultural decoration to this purpose (46). What this example demonstrates is the tendency of Hallyu, in part driven by government intervention, to suck up other cultural forms that have originally sat outside of Hallyu. Furthermore, as the symbolic capital of these cultural realms grows more powerful, and as they become more lucrative, their authority as proper Korean representations become the national template to which other sectors must align (45). What we get as a result is an intensifying blurriness between categories like K-pop, food, technology, language, and dress.

As such, we can observe the selection of cultural activities at KIP as an expression of the tendency to render certain forms, practices, ideas, and images as natural expressions of Korean culture; expressions that help to push the global prosperity of Hallyu. Perhaps most obvious of this was the placement of a "K-pop dance" culture class. Indeed, many of my colleagues had come to Korea to study Korean language explicitly because they were interested first in K-pop music. And although there is arguably very little about K-pop in its form and style that is unique or indigenous to Korea, it has nonetheless, since the 1990s, become ubiquitous as a hallmark of Korean culture due to the Korean government's harnessing of its commercial viability (Kim 2017).

Part of this commercial viability, as Choi points out, is its ability to segue foreign audiences into other points of interest in ever expanding field of interlocking Hallyu categories (2015, 38). A conversation that I had with my roommate Andrew captured the dynamics of this arrangement quite concisely. When I asked him why he came to KIP to study, Andrew responded with the following:

> Ya, K-pop would play a big reason to this. Because I started listening to K-pop and obviously to understand Korean things…I mean not only use everything else, you need to know how to read Korean or listen to Korean. So I studied for a bit now and then I decided to just…I mean to practice to the language I usually come to learn (to the) original country and so I guess that's why I'm here. To immerse myself in the Korean and see…because I've been into this [inaudible] for a while I will probably find something new here.

As Andrew's comments demonstrate, his point of entry into Korea and Korean language was indeed K-pop music. One interest segued into another as Andrew began to perceive the interlocking nature of each new category: in order to understand K-pop better, he needed to understand Korean "things." In order to understand Korean things, he found himself needing to learn how to read and understand spoken Korean. During his time in Korea at KIP, Andrew expects that he will continue discovering yet more points of interest in a trajectory that seems to align perfectly with the Korean government's objective to naturalize a growing field of Hallyu.

Even those who came to KIP having only a minimal interest in something like K-pop, after having been subjected to the barrage of KIP's culture classes, may find themselves broadening their interests to include other categories of Hallyu. Another one of my colleagues Trang, for example, a 27-year-old woman from the Netherlands, stated that her reasons for coming to KIP were "to study Korean and later start (her) working Holiday in Korea." When I asked Trang about her relationship to K-pop, she said that she was "not a crazy fan at least, but K-pop has some attractive points." "I prefer K-pop in drama or so-called OST," she said. "I love

K-drama and just so you know OST is an important aspect for movie. That's how I start listening to K-pop." Then, commenting on her feelings about Korea after leaving KIP, Trang said, "I still love Korean cultures. Maybe even more after this KIP course. Feel no longer foreigner but more like local now and of course it supports my motivation to work in Korea for the next few years."

Similarly, the experience of my colleague Brian seemed to reflect this common tendency to transition seamlessly into new avenues of cultural and professional interest related to Korea. Brian, a 35-year-old professional from the United States, attended college in Korea, then after graduating in 2012, stayed for a few years to work as an English teacher. After moving back to the United States for a few years, Brian decided to spend the summer at KIP as a way to pursue his hobby of learning Korean language. Although Brian's point of entry into Korea was not through K-pop, he ended up developing an interest in K-pop and dance along the way. Motivated by his colleagues, Brian enrolled in the K-pop dance culture class that KIP offered. By the end of the program when it came time for students to each give a short presentation of our experiences in culture class, Brian conceded that he had developed an interest in K-pop and even shared with everyone some of his new favorite groups – 2NE1, Big Bang, and SHINee.

Both Trang's and Brian's experiences show how the many points of interest related to Korea all seem to feed one another. Based on what Trang told me, her interest in Korea first began with drama OSTs, or "original soundtracks."[2] As Trang mentions, K-pop groups sometimes even provide the music for the OSTs themselves, making this transitional discovery process all the more seamless. Subsequently, Trang's hobby interests led to her professional interest in Korea which as we know simultaneously necessitated her acquisition of Korean language. Likewise, although Brian's entry point into Korea was initially educational, and later

[2] Dramas are often considered the original driving force of the first wave of Korean cultural exports in the 1990s, which pioneered the terrain for K-pop (Choi, 2015; Oh, 2015; Yong, 2016).

professional, these interests eventually led him to return to Korea to pursue another related interest: language. Then, through the strategic placement of language alongside other categories of Hallyu, Brian was eventually turned on to K-pop. From Brian's trajectory we can note the ways in which Korea as a site of educational interest, flowed organically into Korea as a professional interest. Both of these points of interest then fed into KIP, which then exposed Brian to yet another Korean cultural interest, thus successfully fostering the co-prosperity between all of these interest points.

2.3 Miracle on the Han

Two of our culture classes – our trip to the Korean War Memorial museum, and our trip Seodaemun Prison – were expressly concerned with providing students with particular historical narratives. Although I do not see these two field trips as necessarily representing two intentioned categories of Hallyu, the historical narratives they provided to students I do believe are expressions of a dominant order of knowledge that legitimizes and praises the South Korean nation, which thereby enhances Hallyu as a unique category of cultural products.

When we arrived at the Korean War Memorial museum, my class was provided with an in-house tour guide, pre-arranged by KIP, who showed us all the exhibits and explained to us their meanings and significances. The content and structure of the exhibits were set up in a way that highlighted particular details of the Korean War and represented the parties involved in specific ways. Throughout our tour, I took note of the places in the museum where the tour guide stopped us, which details he emphasized, and which images he pointed to.

Several times during our tour, I noted how our guide seemed to imply an unfairness inherent in the conditions of the Korean War. At one point he stopped to show us some statistics.

> Look at this number. At the beginning of the Korean War, Soviet Union provided North Korea more than 200 tanks and more than 200 [inaudible] aircraft. South Korean leader [inaudible] we had only 22 light aircraft. Toy! Toy!

In a different room, our guide stopped to show us an exhibit that displayed a particular battle of the Korean War.

> Look at this map. Only one month later, war outbreak. The situation on this map. We lost almost our nation. So the United Nations and South Korean soldiers have to fight with convictions or die. And that day, 29 deployed from the Guam island, a lot of ammunitions on this area. We call it "carpet bombing." 5 kilometers wide and 12 kilometers long. From the 100 feet, 29 bomber dropped a bomb on that area. So they…we kept up this line, 45 days. During that time General MacArthur prepared the Incheon operation.

As we approached the exhibits that represented the chronological end of the war, our guide gave us one more anecdote before leading us into the next room.

> So look in front of us. North Korea killed the innocent people. And when they escaped from the captured city, they kidnapped more than 100 thousand scientists, artists, and scholars. Why they selected the scholars, scientists, artists? As you know, just after the liberation from Japan from 1945 to 1948 when we established the government, the movement between south and north was free. So at that time, most of the scholars, scientists, artists, in North Korea moved to the south for freedom and peace.

Then pointing to one last placard of war statistics, our guide left us with a rhetorical question.

> At that time just before the war broke out, population of North Korea 10 million. On the other hand, South Korea 20 million population. Two times more than North Korea. Can you imagine why they moved to the south?

The specific elements emphasized by the exhibits in the Korean War Memorial museum and that were interpreted to us by our tour guide are reflective of a nationalist narrative that hinges on the savagery and illegitimacy of the (communist) North, and the innocence and unique steadfast character of the (capitalist) South. In the aftermath of the Korean War, while the government of the North was able to quickly and effectively establish a national ideology to

command its people, the government of the South did not have a clear national ideology at first (Kim 2017, 1-2). In order to swiftly command hegemony over this first republic of South Korea, President Syngman Rhee worked toward constructing a national identity that was predicated on anti-communism. By seizing the press, utilizing the institution of primary education, and constructing a National Police, Rhee sought to physically and ideologically weed out communist sentiment and create an overall red-scare political climate (Robinson 2007; Kim 2017). Although the 1960s brought changes in the structure of government in South Korea to cull some of these presidential powers exhibited by Rhee, this trend of anti-communist Cold War authoritarianism endured in later regimes. Under the leadership of Park Chung Hee for example, president Park brought rapid economic growth to South Korea during the 1960s and 1970s under a similar anti-communist authoritarianism; a political and economic climate that set the stage for Korea's continued economic expansion into the 1990s and 2000s (Robinson 2007, 129). This expansion, which was sparked by Park's export-led economic plan, and that brought South Korea from being one of the poorest countries in the world to one of the most formidable world exporters, became coined by observers and nationalists alike as the "Miracle on the Han"[3] (129-130).

This "Miracle on the Han" myth, which was explicitly alluded to during our tour, along with the other elements highlighted by our guide, can be seen as expressions of a brand of nationalism that praises the national character of South Korea as resilient and culturally unique. As shown in the transcripts above, several stops of our tour were made to highlight the South's "zero to hero" redemption story. According to our guide, the South was able to endure even the most disheartening odds, "fighting with conviction" despite their lack of resources – equipped

[3] "Han" in this phrase refers to the Han River – a major river that runs through the capital city Seoul.

with mere “toys” – and the presence of a cruel and ruthless enemy who engaged in intense carpet bombing.

Then, by provoking our group with the image of the artists, scientists, and scholars, whom fled from north to south, we were encouraged to contemplate not only the excellence of South Korean freedom and democracy, but also the exceptionality of its base of personnel. In our guide’s story of the conclusion of the Korean War, it is implied that all of Korea’s “best” – artists, scientists, and scholars – exited North Korea and became the foundation of South Korea’s intellectual and creative workforce, painting the South as talented and free, and the North as devoid of creativity and undesirable. Although not explicitly implicating Hallyu or Korean cultural products, these constituting narratives – of the “Miracle on the Han” and of the South as a bastion of creativity and innovation – contribute to an overall understanding of South Korea as a brand to be desired. KIP and the Korean War Memorial are, as Althusser (2001) might suggest, “relatively autonomous” institutions, yet are unified by their embeddedness in “the ruling ideology” (100). Whether appealing to internal nationalist sentiment, to outsiders considering conducting business in Korea, or other foreigners seeking Korean cultural products, the “Miracle on the Han” myth espoused by our tour guide contributes to the overall prosperity of Korea and Korean cultural products, including language training.

2.4 Stuff They Want

Antonio Gramsci argues that “intellectuals,” whose function is to elaborate the conditions favorable to their respective social group and that group’s mode of production, are also legitimized through the instrument of school (1971, 8-13). However, not only by schools and intellectuals, the entire “world of production” is “‘mediated’ by the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures, of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the ‘functionaries’”

(12). Thus, we should take seriously KIP's ability to elaborate its own interests (i.e. selling Korean language) by disseminating the information that legitimizes the current mode of production upon which KIP also relies (i.e. privileging certain things and activities as authentic Korean culture and privileging particular narratives as granted). But we should also keep in mind that the information privileged throughout KIP is not necessarily manufactured by KIP itself. Rather, KIP is merely a "functionary"; a mediator through which this information, already naturalized throughout an entire "world of production," is rapidly deployed (12).

For instance, when I asked my culture teacher, Sung Min, how cultural activities were chosen, he replied by saying that they were selected personally by him based on what he thought foreign students might find interesting and on what he felt to be accurate representations of Korean culture. But, after attending each culture class, it was also clear that our activities, for the most part, were already a part of an established repertoire. That is, many of our culture activities were deployed by tourist-oriented businesses hired by KIP. These activities seemed to come neatly-packaged, ready to be streamlined to small or large tour groups in two-hour sessions. After our classes, I would linger around, waiting for the rest of my classmates to shuffle out so that I could secure an interview with whomever was leading the class that day. On several occasions, such as after our stamp-making class, I noticed the teacher-for-hire whip out her portable credit card machine, whereupon Sung Min produced payment for our day's session. In other instances, such as when we met for cooking class and for our traditional book-making class, the place of instruction was in a store front of a business which faced high foot traffic areas in popular tourist areas. Likewise, the activities which took place on campus were merely extended demonstrations by departments already existing within the university – for example the *p'ungmulp'ae* club (traditional Korean drums).

Sung Min thus chose our cultural activities, but he did so from a cache of pre-existing forms that made the choice mostly obvious. Although Sung Min commands a degree of authority in disseminating Korean culture; representations that I have continued to argue reap benefits for KIP, since "(t)he relationship between the intellectuals and the world of production is not as direct as it is with the fundamental social groups" (Gramsci 1971, 12), Sung Min is not elaborating the interests of a nation, state, or class directly. Rather, Sung Min's choice of Korean cultural activities might be thought of as the "natural" choice within a hegemonic and well-established repertoire.

But whereas Sung Min's selective process demonstrates KIP's role as a mediator of a repertoire of lucrative cultural forms, the program director's comments regarding the selection of field trip activities captures another side of this relationship: the "wants" of the masses. By Adorno's figuring, the present mode of production is not mediated only by the innovation of the handicraft, but also by the audiences who are seeking fun and distraction. Thus "promoters of commercialized entertainment exonerate themselves by referring to the fact that they are giving the masses what they want" (Adorno 1998, 205). The program director of KIP likewise seemed to echo this exact sentiment. Yet this narrative, Adorno warns, is still not innocent. The logic encased in this exoneration "is an ideology appropriate to commercial purposes: the less the mass discriminates, the greater the possibility of selling cultural commodities indiscriminately" (205). Although we can indeed note the formidable power of these commercial purposes as noted by the influence of government and industry, we should regard leisure activities as yet another field of contestation.

The divided attention I was expected to give to culture classes certainly made me question the intentions of KIP at times. "They just try to sell you K-pop" my friend Jeff, a local

university teacher in Seoul, told me, perhaps a bit too late. "They have a great language department, just not in the summer." Jeff explained to me that Sogang also held language courses during the regular school year, and that the teaching staff were excellent. As such, Jeff suggested the best thing to do would be to explain my situation to them and see about transferring into another class. During the second week of instruction, I approached the program director in the classroom halls. I expressed to her that I was feeling dissatisfied with the way cultural classes were going since they facilitated very little speaking practice. Trying to reach a solution to my dilemma, I requested to substitute culture classes for perhaps another language course being held somewhere else on campus. Quite defensively, she denied my request and suggested that I instead take advantage of the TAs and course instructors by practicing my speaking skills with them during class time. So, on our field trip to a Korean professional league baseball game, an activity organized by the program director herself, I did just that.

As all the KIP students filed into the stadium and took their seats in the bleachers, I found a seat next to the director. On and off throughout the duration of the game, I made attempts to strike up conversations with her. Not particularly thrilled at the prospect of talking to me for the entire game, she nonetheless conceded to my questions intermittently, albeit somewhat standoffishly. When I asked her how field trips were selected, she became a bit defensive, perhaps presuming that there was a criticism undergirding my question. "We ask the foreigners what they want to do," she justified with a tint of defense in her voice. She explained that every year, students are surveyed about which things they would like to do or see in Korea, and KIP tries to arrange those things. As mentioned, these requested things amounted into field trips to a baseball game, an amusement park, NANTA (a musical comedy show), and a K-pop performance.

The director's denial of my request to transfer classes, I believe is further demonstrative of KIP as a contested arena between language and culture. But more specifically, our conversation at the baseball game reveals the tension between what Adorno calls "an ideology appropriate to commercial purposes" and the "stuff" that audiences "want." Granted, there was no way for me to know if any other substitute class would actually have accommodated my schedule, nor should I necessarily expect that the director is obligated to bend the program rules to accommodate me. Nonetheless, the director's reluctance to talk to me, even at her own suggestion, shows an unconcern for the quality of language instruction, namely at the indulgence of cultural activities and cultural field trips. Although Sogang University, as per Jeff's comment, has a reputation first and foremost as providing quality language instruction, the director's response to my dilemma, both in her comments and in her actions, makes clear that there is a threshold governing how much language instruction can be tolerated. By trying to make advances into the times designated for cultural activities – the two-hour cultural activity time block and the cultural field trip – I was made aware of the boundaries past which language was not permitted to advance.

Then, in the director's defensive posturing, we are able to see what Adorno argues is an attempt to exonerate oneself from the more discrete intentions of giving audiences the "stuff" the "want": that is, selling cultural commodities indiscriminately. Adorno sees the "notion of distraction" as an inseparable element from the mode of production – masses, in order to attain the respite they need to continue contributing their labor power to production, seek leisure time and/or distraction (1998, 205).

Adorno's shining example of a leisure activity – popular music – indeed appeared as one of our field trips. The K-pop concert, since it was a semi-exclusive dress rehearsal performance,

had a limited number of spots open to students. On the day sign-ups were made available to KIP students, I showed up to the 11th floor of the KIP office only to discover that a long line of students had already been formed. I ultimately decided against waiting in line, opting instead to let the true K-pop enthusiasts take my place. Regardless, it was clear that many students in the program were eager to attend and had arrived early to secure their spot.

The other cultural activities requested by students, though not popular music, were by Adorno's definition certainly analogous. An amusement park and a sporting event – things that many foreigners would likely be familiar with in their home countries – to be sure, were given extra "cultural" inflection. The paper handout that was compiled for us by KIP for our baseball field trip for example read: "While baseball may not be a traditional Korean sport, it is a great example of REAL KOREAN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE!" (emphasis theirs). Leisure activities like these that were "standard" enough to be accessible to most foreign students were made all the more commodifiable by demanding their authenticity; a move of self-assertion that others have noted is common among ethnic and national communities whom seek legitimation through the containment and insertion of an authentic cultural character into market relations (Taylor 1993; Comaroff 2009; Dávilla 2012). These not-so-uncommon leisure activities are made more commercially viable precisely because they are branded as representing something authentically Korean.

The smattering of leisure entertainment throughout the weeks of our program make more sense also when we consider the seasonal placement of KIP: early summer. Just as my friend Jeff brought to stark realization, the regular school year, by his figuring, is more strictly focused on quality language instruction, whereas the summer program is trying to "sell you K-pop." The summer certainly seems to play into the leisure time of foreign audiences, catching those out of

school for the summer or those enjoying their summer work vacation days. My dormitory roommates where two such examples of this, as was I. It was no wonder then why foreigners chose leisure activities like baseball games and amusement parks for the types of field trips they wished to do.

And although we don't know the precise innerworkings of Sogang and their KLEC in regard to how summer versus winter courses are devised bureaucratically – whether teachers themselves might be unmotivated to teach during their own potential vacation period and/or whether culture classes have merely become something to fill the gap in an understaffed, ill-conceived program – I have interpreted KIPs nominal distinction between language and culture as proof of, at the very least, a practical distinction. For as Marxist theorist Louis Althusser suggests, even though there might be ideological disunity amongst the various ideological state apparatuses (i.e. schools, churches, media, etc.), they are unified nonetheless by their subordination to the dominant ideology (2001, 100). KIP's mere recognition of "culture" as something that could exist apart from "language," would not only suggest that such a recognition is already a possible choice to make within the dominant ideological framework, but would also, whether accompanied by ideological investment or not, as I have continued to show, be a "natural," lucrative, and accessible choice to make. The repertoire of Korean cultural activities that pervade the tourism circuit, KIP's brochure that declares baseball as "REAL KOREAN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE," and the "Miracle on the Han" narrative that seems to declare a unique South Korean essence, all seem to suggest that "Korean culture" has already become something alienable and salient.

2.5 Communicating Hallyu

The importance of the information contained in our culture classes to the continued prosperity of Hallyu was also made clear by our instructors' frequent reversions to English. Although our KIP program brochure assured that cultural activities were meant to "help (students) practice their Korean language skills in a real world setting" (Sogang University 2018), this idea was wishful thinking at best. For a number of compounded reasons, the priority to uphold our Korean language contracts throughout the program, especially in culture class, seemed to fall to the wayside. And although there were a variety of identifiable factors contributing to this failure, each reason ultimately seems to point to an unspoken understanding that indispensable to our activities and program more generally was for students to understand the "culture" that was being taught, and that this "culture" could be digested apart from "language."

One major impediment to the consistency in Korean language instruction was that each culture class was taught by a different instructor. In a few instances, for example in our traditional instrument, mask dance, and traditional scarf dance classes, instruction was relegated to instructors from other departments on campus. When I learned how to play the *pok*, a traditional Korean drum, I joined a class led by the students from the campus music club. Likewise, when we learned a traditional Korean scarf dance, we were taught by an instructor from the dance department. However, most of our classes were not affiliated with Sogang at all, but were independent professionals or institutions hired by KIP to lead us in an activity. Sometimes, as in the case of the Korean War Memorial, these were public museums where a guide was hired to provide us with a personal tour. For other activities such as the stamp making, booking making, and cooking classes, our class was held at a private studio or store front.

Because there was no particular cohesive relation or line of communication between all of our culture instructors, there was a clear lack of pedagogical consistency throughout. Some instructors, assuming that our class was merely a group of tourists, spoke English to us right away. Others, after becoming frustrated with our varying levels of Korean comprehension, also eventually reverted to English. For some classes, like our museum tours, English tour guides were selected specifically so that students could more easily follow along on worksheets provided to us by KIP.

As a result of this inconsistent instruction, students eventually became comfortable using English themselves, both to speak to instructors and to talk amongst themselves. Hailing from a range of national and linguistic backgrounds, students found it easier in many cases to speak to each other in English – a language that most had a stronger command over than Korean. As students became more acquainted with one another and excited by each other's company, in-between-class chat became more frequent. Before our teachers entered the classroom or during pauses in instruction – even during our language classes – the room would be full of English side conversations. As students tested the limits of how far we could push our language contracts, instructors sometimes also conceded. By our third and fourth weeks of instruction, the contracts that we had signed on the first day of class seemed to have faded from our memories. The general bonhomie of the program, combined with inconsistent instruction, overpowered the seriousness of upholding the integrity of our contracts.

The inconsistency in Korean language instruction is, I believe, once again demonstrative of the compromise KIP has made in the face of an ideological and economic climate that upholds the celebration of Hallyu to be of absolute consequence. KIP's decision to hire outside instructors whom are likely unaware of, or unconcerned with, our language contracts and/or the

pedagogical purpose of culture classes as stated on your program brochure, is an indication that KIP has deemed this "cultural" component to our education of considerable importance. Students' complete comprehension of the specific information contained in such classes as our Korean War Memorial tour was also proven to outweigh the importance of maintaining Korean language instruction. Furthermore, in classes like cooking and dancing, less important did the instructors find in maintaining Korean instruction than they did in making sure that students were enjoying their cultural experience; a dynamic that ultimately works to the advantage of KIP by ensuring favorable impressions of Korean culture broadly.

2.6 Participating in Hallyu

On the one hand, as Adorno would suggest, we could argue that my evidence points to the fact that KIP has clearly facilitated a path that allows them to sell cultural products to foreign audiences more easily. That is, the program clearly surveys foreigners about what "stuff" they "want" in a way that funnels their answers towards choosing leisure activities – setting up the entire program during a peak summer vacation season, and then scheduling the activities on the weekends. Then, by emphasizing the "Koreanness" of these activities, KIP does double work by ensuring that students are both refreshed enough to consume more cultural activities during the week and by adding them to the repertoire of "real Korean contemporary culture."

Yet, on the other hand, as I have continued to argue, Adorno's model, though helpful in understanding the formidable socioeconomic forces involved in the generation of Korean cultural products, and likewise, the generation of representations of Korea, problematically paints this arrangement as a zero-sum game. We should first keep in mind that this socioeconomic arrangement between foreign consumers and Korean cultural products, due to its situatedness within a global context where cultural interactions are becoming all the more fluid,

Adorno's framework, and the Marxist framework upon which Adorno's relies, are prone to what Appadurai (1996) calls "disjuncture," or unpredictability (35). And, more central to my purpose here, we should recognize this arrangement as an ongoing contestation for the power to define; to define what might count as culture, to define what relationship there should be between something called "culture" and something called "language," and also to define the terms of one's participation in the mode of production. I see the consumer as not merely at the receiving end of products wholly spelled out for them already, nor do I see their "wants" as wholly predetermined. Rather, consumers should actually, according to Choi, be considered "craftsmen" (2015, 41). That is, "the Hallyu *culture* has been shaped and altered by fans themselves" (emphasis author's) (43). Even the reversions to English by instructors could be read, as Gal (1987) would suggest, as an indication of our instructors' "historic position and identity within regional economic systems structured around dependency and unequal development"; economic systems that rely on the recognition and validation of foreign, namely English-speaking, audiences (637). Using English thus allows instructors to harness this power of a global audience (Hill 1999, 542).

Based on ethnographic interviews that I collected from a few of my colleagues at KIP, and on the general observations that I made throughout the program, it became clear that KIP students, though they were certainly attracted to specific textual aspects of Hallyu, they also, to an extent, took control of their own Hallyu experience. My roommate Andrew explained to me some of his own points of attraction to K-pop, and also, explained some of the innerworkings of K-pop fandom. In a conversation we had about some of the other genres of pop music that segued him into K-pop, Andrew said something profound about the demands of fans.

> **Andrew**: I think what K-pop differs itself is really the performance. Because you can see that a lot of Chinese pop, Japanese pop, has started to go to the dance

route, that involve all the choreography in their performance. But K-pop in general just appear more synchronized and better well thought. And there's this sentence like that I came across when I was watching this new show that they had this Japanese trainee and Korean trainee. So, the trainee themselves for Korea, "we are," how you say, "we are trained to perform."

Corey: Trained to perform…Ok ya.

Andrew: Ya so like you have to be good in singing, good in dancing, everything and synchronized. But Japanese, the trainees themselves say that "we are trained to entertain."

Corey: What's the difference to you?

Andrew: So it's something like, "I don't need to perform very well as long as you like me and you're happy." That's Japanese.

Corey: That's Japanese?

Andrew: Yes.

Corey: And so then what's performance?

Andrew: Its like…your…how do you say? Your performance must be good. You should sing well, you should dance well, you shouldn't make any mistake. For Japanese I guess that's fine.

Corey: And so you value that?

Andrew: I mean if to entertain you need to be on the stage. You can just be an artist like a model. I will still like you. But if you are performing, of course I will expect the performance to be good.

Andrew expresses something perhaps not uncommon among fans of K-pop, which is that, for fans, K-pop means more than just good singing – it has to do with the quality of an overall performance that includes dancing and synchronicity (Lee 2015; Yoon 2017). However, what is revealing in Andrew's explanation is the discriminatory nature of his preferences: he expects perfection. Although Andrew seems to think other types of pop music like Japanese pop are fine for what they are, he is not satisfied with what he deems as merely "entertainment." Instead,

Andrew weighs the different qualities of Japanese pop and K-pop and makes a choice based on the qualities he values.

Later in our conversation, Andrew makes further distinction about what he sees as the difference between K-pop and other types of pop music.

> If we are talking about K-pop, actually it's the whole package I would say. Ya the song, the song of course is definitely important but K-pop performance including the dance in general is attractive in a sense. And another thing that draws people to go into K-pop artists is because of the personality. Because they sort of branded the whole artist appearance and stuff to make you… something like you have (to) fall into this person and you know about them so the next time they release a new song you would be interested to know what the next song is. Otherwise I wouldn't care like, unless your song is really really good, otherwise I wouldn't care who are you.

Again, Andrew makes it clear that K-pop fans are not merely passive consumers, but that they take into account the multiple talents of the artists – what he calls the "whole package." Although Andrew does mention branding, a distinction that would imply the artificial crafting of artists by entertainment companies, he also continues to express the discerning processes of fans. Implied by Andrew is that if at some point a fan does not feel that they know enough about an artist, that their personality is not attractive enough, or that their song is not "really really good," then fans are prone not to care. Further, Andrew also brings up another qualitative dimension of K-pop – that of "personality."

> I guess because we are international fans right, so we don't interact with artists so its mostly through variety shows, and also their own show – their own video content. Especially now in Korea now there is *V live*. So a lot of artist go to *V live* just like other Koreans how they video cam themselves, and then they talk to the camera. That's how I guess international fans relate to them. They read your comments. Ya the comments are real life so they can actually read, of course the comments are really fast, so if you're lucky enough they spot a comment and just answer a question. That's the live portion. But other than variety, like when you see them on to other variety shows then you feel like you understand this person more, this person is interesting. Korean call these people "artists." There is one show that say that an artist and a singer are different. Singer just sing. You just

> release album, people listen to your song. But artist is a whole package. They like about you, your dance, your personality.

As Andrew explains more about the dynamics of the fan/idol relationship, we see that artists respond to fans in ways that seem to meet the needs of fans beyond providing them with mere entertainment. Certainly, some have asserted that nearly every single element of K-pop, including fan outreach by artists, is carefully engineered to extract maximum profit from fans (Kim, 2011; Galbraith and Karlin, 2012; Kim, 2017). Much in the same way that I have suggested that we think of "language" and "culture" as abstracted categories whose discursive distinctions frame consumption practices in a particular way, the variety shows that Andrew and other fans watch seem to also frame how K-pop ought to be evaluated.

Regardless, we should keep in mind that "where there is consumption there is pleasure, and where there is pleasure there is agency (Appadurai 1996, 7). Whether the distinction between "artist" and "performer" has been perpetuated by the industry itself, or whether it has developed more organically based on how artists have chosen to present themselves (Dávila 2001, 2-3) and likewise on what fans have demanded, is again, I suggest, an issue better understood as a contestation. As others have demonstrated, the affective dynamic of K-pop fandom and the unique ways that fans interface with idols and each other has made fandom a potentially formidable force in making waves in industry standards (Choi 2015; Lee, 2015; Maliangkay, 2015; Oh, 2015; Yoon, 2017). *V live*, a mobile app that allows fans to enter into live streams with their favorite idols and celebrities, as Andrew points out, is a way for foreign audiences to maintain the interpersonal and affective attachments that fans feel for their favorite idols. This app, which is specifically geared towards international fans, is a prime example of what Choi argues is a way for "the fan (to be) a vital force *interior* to the workings of Hallyu as a cultural process, though *exterior* to the productive site of Hallyu content both geographically and

physically” (emphasis author’s) (2015, 42). The unique nature of being an international fan – being geographically distant from Korea, and thus feeling emotionally distant from idols – has come to influence and shape the very structure and content of Hallyu. As demonstrated by the live Q&A sessions that Andrew mentions, international fans are able to provide feedback to artists in real time, via a format shaped by the particular needs of international fans, to which artists try to respond also in real time.

Furthermore, as the above example of *V Live* demonstrates, and as Choi emphasizes, “Korea is not in possession of Hallyu” (2015, 41). Although it may be tempting to dismiss the Hallyu phenomenon, and the ever-expanding array of Korean cultural products that Hallyu is growing to include, as entirely the result of corporate calculations as Adorno might suggest, it is also important to recognize that the fans of Hallyu are not homogenous. As shown by the demographic makeup of my KIP cohort – a cohort that included individuals from Russia, Malaysia, Canada, the U.K., Australia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Germany, the U.S., Italy, Turkey, and the Netherlands – enthusiasts for K-pop and Korean culture are from diverse national, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. As such, these international fans are subject to receiving and interacting with Hallyu in divergent ways, thus constantly negotiating its forms and meanings. And, just as Benjamin reminds us that mass reproduction can free art from its ritual origin, so too can we think of the 35 million consumers of Hallyu worldwide as freeing Hallyu production from a single ritualized arrangement.

By the time KIP 2018 was coming to end, I was able to assess with some hindsight how my colleagues were negotiating their own Korean experience all along. As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, I was cognizant throughout my time at KIP that my purpose for coming to Korea diverged in some ways from my colleagues. Often there were times when I felt

that my commitment to strictly adhering to our language contracts made me a bit of an outsider. Whereas I was interested in extracting the most academic value I could from my time at KIP, my colleagues preferred to speak in English with one another. During culture classes, at field trip outings, and all times in between, it was clear that speaking Korean was not necessarily a part of their Korean experience. Though it was fun for students to engage in small talk in between class about peoples' favorite idols and which Korean actors people found most attractive, most did not feel the need to do so in Korean. Nonetheless, they continued to explore Korea together in their own way. My colleagues communicated in a group chat via *KakaoTalk*, a Korean SMS app, about their plans to go to the *noraebang* (Korean Karaoke bar), famous shopping districts, or barbeque restaurants over the weekend. Students, it seemed, found much more enjoyment from Korea and KIP activities in their ability to share their experiences with one another in the ways that were comfortable for them. That is, students seemed to find solidarity in their shared experience as outsiders.

And although this sort of outsider experience – vacationing in Korea over the summer, haphazardly touring through a plethora of "cultural activities" and "cultural field trips" with other foreigners like oneself, while remaining safe and comfortable within one's own linguistic cohort – may still seem to reinforce Adorno's cynicism that these consumers are merely looking for fun (and to a large extent they were), we must also recognize that this new meaning and way of interfacing with Korea in turn influences the way these activities are presented to us. That is, the flow of media and ideas, precisely because they are differently available to different global actors, are subject to situational possibilities and constraints (Appadurai 1996, 34-35); the work of art becomes reproduced with the audience in mind (Benjamin 1969, 11).

Choi argues that through a process of "creative cultural participation" such as this, Hallyu, and the extended sphere of things labeled as "Korean culture" that were presented to us at Sogang, are not merely "received and consumed," but rather are "handled and reprocessed" by the fans themselves (2015, 44). This "act of caring and engaging these products," Choi argues,

> is generative of the cultural climates under which the next stage production of Hallyu content is envisioned and conditioned, if not determined. Hence, the myopic and monistic view of production, products and producers has to be renegotiated, or better yet, replaced with a multifocal perspective Hallyu as a fluid cultural ecology in which nominal distinctions across producers, distributors, and users of Hallyu content dissolve into a larger system of *creative cultural participation.* (emphasis author's) (Choi 2015, 44)

Choi, in this tone that seems to explicitly warn against Adorno's cynicism, helps us make sense of my and my colleagues' experiences at Sogang as a process of participation rather than a process of repression. Not unlike Garofalo's idea of a contested space, Choi would see the many actors involved in our KIP experience – the director, the teachers, the students, and all of the culture class instructors – as participants in a process whose end result is a negotiated representation of Korea and "Korean culture."

2.7 To Make a Dream Circle

The original intention of this thesis, inspired by my fascination with what I have considered for the better part of my life to be "underground" and "subcultural" music genres, was to put Adorno's concepts of popular and serious music to the test in order to find what, if any, potential music and art actually have in challenging a dominant hegemon. I had planned on doing this through a comparison of K-pop – a nominally "popular" type of music – with hardcore – a nominally "serious," "fringe," or "niche" type of music. Much in the same way as I have described above, and as demonstrated by the stories of my colleagues, my interest in Korea began through a narrow entry point and has since blossomed into much more. After earning my

undergraduate degree, I set out to find a job teaching English as a foreign language. After applying unsuccessfully for a job in Japan, I was recommended to try applying for a job in Korea. I did eventually find a job in Korea, and despite Korea being a place I knew very little about at the time, I ended up staying for three years. Already having a considerable interest in underground hardcore music, I quickly fell into the thriving hardcore scenes in Seoul and Busan. Then, motivated to be able to speak fluently in Korean with my friends, I began studying Korean language in my free time. With the significant amount of time I had spent in Korea participating in its fringe music scene, I focused my experiences into my current academic interests. Just as Choi has described, and as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis via my KIP colleagues, I too had wondered rather seamlessly from interest to interest. Each transition was made possible by my recognition of the Korean brand and inevitably guided me to a career choice that might one day implicate me in enhancing that brand.

However, after spending a summer in Korea now with "the spy-glass of Anthropology to look through," as Zora Neale Hurston so eloquently coined it (1990, 3), I found the most striking expression of subculture in a place that I did not expect to. I had collected data from my interlocutors in the Korean hardcore scene in search for subculture, but the most fascinating individual that I met over the summer, and the most pertinent to this conversation I believe, was lurking within the interior of KIP itself. Her name was Lucia. Lucia, a 51-year-old Korean woman, was hired by KIP to teach our traditional Korean calligraphy culture class. Lucia's class was certainly a student favorite. With short, salt and pepper hair, thick rimmed black glasses, and a loose-fitting white smock that seemed to perfectly accommodate her flowy movements, Lucia captivated students as she flamboyantly bounced around the classroom barefoot, tearing off huge slabs of butcher paper from a roll, placing them in the middle of the room and painting on them

elegant *hangeul* letters with black ink. Lucia would demonstrate a pattern or particular brush stroke, and students would follow along. After each pattern we practiced in this way, Lucia, with playful abandon, prompted us to crumble up our papers into balls and throw them to the center of the classroom, to which students confusedly complied. Her style was mad yet balanced, frenzied yet calculated, chaotic yet orderly. To observe Lucia performing her art was inspiring to say the least.

After class I sat down with Lucia to have a few words. Using my best Korean language skills, I began asking Lucia my standard questions that I had prepared in the form of a questionnaire. “What is your age and occupation?” “What do you call what you do?” “What does your brush mean to you?” After politely responding to some of my questions in Korean, Lucia peeked ahead on my list of questions and noticed the phrase “underground music.” Seeing a topic that caught her interest, Lucia co-opted the interview and began asking me questions, including asking me why I was interested in her if my questions are about music. I told her I was interested in artists in general, creativity, and why hardcore musicians come together to make music despite earning no money, at which point Lucia chimed in in English.

> **Lucia**: This is I’m not sure, but I have an answer. Because I went to many place. I went to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Osaka, Brisbane, Indonesia. Actually, calligraphy is really important for me. Really same question. So, I really want to draw the calligraphy, I want to meet many person.
>
> **Corey**: And you can communicate with other people doing calligraphy maybe?
>
> **Lucia**: Of course. But the other person say, “Lucia, this is not commercial. This is not earn the money. It’s difficult for you.” Of course, I know. But my life want get just to meet a person. And I want to make happiness through the calligraphy. So sometimes my mind is sad. Sometimes really disappointed by myself because artist really difficult make a money and earn the money. So I’m…today I introduced my work (in class). Very famous soju brand, (to which the students responded,) “Oh Lucia rich!” But I’m not rich. Just a really poor artist. But my mind is really happy. And I’m satisfied with my life. Sometimes really difficult. But many time I went to the other place, I make many performance. Last year I

> went to Taiwan. Just, I make a "*Meet Lucia Festival*" in Taiwan. The others say, "Lucia, wow Lucia you make a Taiwan festival!" My idea is, I meet just one person, we can make a festival.

Lucia, and the images she produces, like the people and images that appeared in our other culture classes, are co-opted by KIP and other institutions, and subsumed into to an ever-growing repertoire of things, people, and media that become constituted as authentic Korean culture. However, of particular note in Lucia's situation, is that Lucia remains, to a degree, marginalized in this arrangement. As Lucia alluded to in our interview, she had even been hired by a popular Korean soju company, *Ch'ohŭn Dei Soju* (GoodDay Soju), to design their bottle label. Carried far and wide on the label of this soju bottle, Lucia's calligraphy can be seen on advertisements nationwide and on supermarket shelves of foreign countries, the latter of which offers many onlookers their first glimpse of what "Korean culture" looks like, and the former offering cultural instructions of gendered propriety (Harkness 2013). Students were surprised to see that the iconized Korean text that appeared on the widely recognizable soju brand was designed by her. Part of this surprise, as Lucia points out, is that students expected Lucia to be "rich" as a result of such mainstream success. To be sure, Lucia's art has become naturalized as a quintessential iconographic representation of Korea, which as subsequently made her the target of appropriation by other institutions like KIP. Yet, Lucia feels herself to be "just a really poor artist" struggling to make ends meet.

But, what I find most admirable about Lucia – that which is most pertinent to this thesis – is her ability to find meaning within this inflexible arrangement despite her marginalization. It is precisely Lucia's marginalization that I believe sets her apart from popular culture as described by Adorno. Whereas Sogang University, as an example, has compromised the integrity of its language instruction by committing a large portion of its daily instruction to cultural activities

and field trips in order to reap the benefits of, and contribute to, the coprosperity of Hallyu culture, Lucia appears to be much less committed to capitalizing off of Hallyu in this same way. Lucia takes work where she can – selling a logo to a company here, or teaching a calligraphy class there, both of which provide her with the minimal amount of income to leave her struggling financially and emotionally. But these gigs appear merely to provide the sustenance necessary for Lucia to continue doing what truly makes her happy, which is sharing her calligraphy with others.

In fact, most of what Lucia does with her art seems to be carried along not by mainstream markets at all, but via an underground network of international artists. Lucia described to me a dancer that she met in Taiwan who helped her organize a festival, to which she reciprocated by hosting an event for her in Seoul.

> So I went to Taiwan. Everyday I moved to place, I met many person. That time I met one dancer. Taiwanese dancer. She really want…I met dancer…just "come to Seoul!" Really she came to Seoul! This time she come to Seoul during one month. Just I made a program: three programs. One program is talk – talk together. Second program is workshop and performance. Talk together is really good. But workshop, Lucia body condition is really bad so I cancel the workshop, but we make a performance. At that time…*chintcha* (really) really happy. *Chamkkanmanyo* (one moment please)…like this (shows me pictures on her phone). I make a performance during one hour. This time, Lucia have lend to stage. I have to pay the money, but just thinking…actually I met one person, they invited their house, they have very good place. I want to person this place. They just, "really ok!" So we make a performance that place. So, just my idea is just think and see the other place. I want to make a performance.

Meeting another low-profile artist like herself in Taiwan, Lucia invited this new dancer friend to Seoul with the intention of organizing a show where both Lucia's calligraphy and her friend's dancing could be showcased. However, the plan was not without its hiccups. On the day of the performance, Lucia tells how she fell ill. Sick and without a venue to hold her performance, Lucia searched for a place that would be within her modest budget. Then, at the

last minute, Lucia met another artist – a singer – who came through and opened up their home to Lucia and her friend as in impromptu venue. In the end, this improvised house concert drew an audience of 40 people according to Lucia. But for Lucia, even this humble number of people has the potential to sustain this underground economy.

> I guess in the world, in the musician, and the artist, really difficult. So I have one idea. Just I met many artists. I said to many artists, "one artist is really weak. But I know you, you know me. So we…I want to make a connection." So, I met many person, just I want to make a *Facebook* friend, they see my *Facebook*. Sometimes I went to Taiwan. Taiwan friend see my *Facebook* (and they say), "oh Lucia came to Taiwan! Make an event and make something!" So one artist very weak, but connection…make a connection, we have a very strong power. So sometimes I know top level person, sometimes they think, they know Lucia, they really know Lucia don't have money, just Lucia have a mind. "How Lucia very pleasure? Everyday happiness? How can you do? Just Lucia smiling." So, in the world, circle is just an economist's circle; money circle. I want to make a dream circle. So, at first I met the other person, just wonder what is your dream. Just Lucia listen. Sometimes, "oh maybe you come to Seoul, I will help you." I have no money but I have idea, so sometimes I want to introduce my friend to place. So we can make an event and something.

From this last blurb, we see further into the mechanics that make possible this underground art community, and the meaning that it creates for Lucia. As opposed to a mode of production that thrives on the indiscriminate selling of cultural products – an arrangement augmented by a base of consumers who chase "the whole package," and by a chain of producers and intermediaries whose collective goal is to elaborate and naturalize a repertoire of Hallyu products; an arrangement Lucia might call "an economist's circle" – the system that Lucia describes seems to find its legitimacy within an underground network of artists and potential audiences, who share a mutual and genuine appreciation of making art happen. Strewn across an international constellation of cities and people, kept in constant contact via social media, and fortified through face-to-face interactions, this "dream circle" finds its power in reaching out to feel for the needs of its community, making events, and meeting new friends, all for their own

sake. Regardless of whether Lucia finds financial success in this process, and arguably, precisely *because* money has a minimal bearing on this process, Lucia continues to find “pleasure,” “happiness,” and “power.”

3. Conclusion

My particular relationship to Korea, fostered by my past professional and personal interests, made my academic experience at Sogang University especially fascinating. As someone confined to a particular set of experiences, made possible by my relegation to certain places and spaces in Korea, and reinforced by a specific network of people and images, I seemed to have almost completely avoided an entire collection of representations that many of my KIP colleagues had assumed as natural. Then, by witnessing how KIP was apparently reinforcing this collection of images that was unfamiliar to me, I began to seriously inquire into the potentially powerful structuring effect that an over saturation of popular culture could achieve; an effect that seemed to render all competing ways of being inoperable.

The classic Frankfurt debate over the meaning of popular culture, because of its uncanny attention to both the economic machinations of popular culture that can give structure, and to the revolutionary potential of mass reproduction, seemed to be the most viable framework through which to interpret my experiences. Adorno's idea of standardization seemed applicable since it, through the relationship between producer and consumer and capitalism's tendency towards profitability, promised to account for our arrival at a particular set of mainstream conventions. In a mode of production where a few have the power to craft a set of standards and disseminate standardized products to mass audiences who seek the relief that these products offer, Adorno explains the process of popular culture production and the cultural forms that it produces as the inevitable conclusion to capitalist relations.

However, as this debate unfolds, I have shown that there is more room for flexibility in this arrangement than Adorno's framework would suggest. Benjamin contends that art, precisely because of its mass reproduction, implicates those who consume it. No longer confined to a 1:1

arrangement of a single product confined to a single place of presentation, the piece of art – as a musical composition, an image, a story, or an item – is, in its quantity, imbued with a new dynamic. Mass audiences, predisposed to their particular demands, seemingly have a say in the form that cultural products take. And, as Shinhee Lee (2006) has shown in her work on the linguistic crossing and code switching of K-pop idols, idols, in their unique position within the division of labor of K-pop, have the ability to push back against the ideological parameters of Korean society through language – a gesture that finds its potential in its ability to reach mass audiences. Combined, Benjamin and Lee allow us to see how consumers and laborers alike also have a place in the formation of popular culture.

Counter to Adorno's original theorization, I have instead adopted a framework that sees popular culture not as a wholly repressive phenomenon, but as what musicologist Reebee Garofalo has called a "contested field." The cultural products that we encounter, and the meaning imbued in them, whether they be music, art, or language, are not merely the result of the craft of a privileged few, but are the negotiated results of a contestation between a field of presumable actors and agendas.

Then, by keeping in mind that subcultures, wherever they may be found, must still work within the parameters of their parent cultures, I have contended that dominant groups seem to mostly retain the power to define the terms of their societies. Thus, even in Adorno's idea of serious music, those who have supposedly become disillusioned by their marginalization are unable to imagine terms outside of their parent culture, nor are they able to procure materials outside of it. Still, based on ethnographic findings, subcultures do appear to be able to maintain, however negligible, capsulized and/or parallel maps of meaning which they use to cope with their positions.

Indeed, most everywhere I looked at Sogang and at KIP, I found reason to believe that individuals and entities were acting on behalf of a dominant class or culture. I argued, via Choi and others, that nearly every Korean industry enjoys a collective benefit by aligning with Hallyu, a dynamic so dauntingly omnipresent at KIP that it could be observed in many of our cultural activities and even by the presence of cultural activities themselves. KIP's very curriculum, which divided our day into "language" and "culture" classes and neglected our language instruction at the privilege of cultural instruction, was the first indication to me that KIP had compromised its pedagogical integrity in the face of Hallyu. KIP, acting has a hub for foreign audiences, through its partitioning of our day into language and culture was able to both segue fans of K-pop and dramas into other cultural interests like language, art, history, and sports, while also introducing those with business and academic interests to idols and dancing. Each of these individual cultural activities, presented as "authentic Korean culture," therefore worked to build a co-constitutive Korean brand that contributes to the lucrative viability of Hallyu and Korean culture.

Still, even within this arrangement, I found people asserting their agency and/or thriving within the disjuncture and slippage of strict capitalist relations. My roommate Andrew showed me that even as a fan of K-pop – an industry constantly innovating in order to attract foreign audiences – he asserted his own discriminating tastes when deciding what he sought from artists and performers. He described how fan/idol interfaces like *Vlive* allow international fans to provide feedback to idols in real time while also gaining the emotional attention that they seek from their favorite idols. This collective power of international audiences, just as predicted by Benjamin, allows the fans themselves to significantly shape the K-pop industry. I observed this dynamic at KIP amongst my colleagues, whom through their own collective choice to converge

with each other via English – a fact owed to their unique positions as international students – shaped the very the nature of our program and likewise the shape and potency of Hallyu.

But, perhaps the most striking example of a thriving subculture that I found – one that existed within the constricting boundaries of Hallyu, yet fostered an alternative economy and system of meaning within these boundaries – was through Lucia.

Even my initial frustration with KIP's inconsistent adherence to our language contracts began to make sense after chewing over my interaction with Lucia. Just as many of our culture classes reverted to English, seemingly to better convey their own messages, Lucia too reverted to English when speaking to me. She answered some of my simpler and more straight forward questions in Korean, perhaps conceding that there was little at stake. However, when sparked by a topic that interested her, and burdened by the urgency to convey her feelings to me, Lucia reverted to English. From a subcultural perspective, Lucia's use of English, with me and with the others she meets abroad, can be seen as an appropriation of the tools of the parent culture for a subcultural purpose. English, as the granted universal language, coupled with technological platforms like Facebook, can be used by Lucia to reach larger audiences, expose her art to more people, and facilitate her underground network in subversion to the dominant global culture that English belongs to.

Similar to the other culture classes that KIP presented us to, Lucia serves an important function for the branding of Korean and/or Hallyu culture. Her calligraphy provides a unique visual representation of Korean culture that has been co-opted by an internationally recognized Korean soju company, and by KIP, who strategically places Lucia alongside other "authentic" Korean cultural representations. And though Lucia's art may help to fortify the Korean brand in this way, her refusal to fully commit to the naturalized supremacy of Hallyu renders her

economically marginalized within this arrangement. When necessary, she sells her services and likeness to companies and institutions like KIP. But, Lucia's participation in Korea's culture industry is merely a springboard for her true source of happiness: sharing her art. Coming to terms with her relationship to what she calls the "economist's circle," Lucia searches for happiness not in following the lucrative pathway set out before her by Hallyu, but through the connections she makes abroad. Through a series of spontaneous friendships and connections, Lucia travels the world, organizing art shows for whomever will come. Along the way, Lucia opens her ears to the people she meets, listening to their dreams and often returning their hospitality by inviting them to Seoul.

In Lucia's final story, when she invited a dancer from Taiwan to perform in Seoul, we see the power that her underground network can sustain. When Lucia fell ill at the last minute, her planned collaborative performance, for a moment, seemed lost. Without the money to pay for a proper venue, nor the ability for Lucia to perform herself, it seemed like the event would have to be cancelled. But, through a happenstance invitation by a local singer, Lucia and the visiting dancer were able to secure their performance location at the singer's house and uphold the event. Through a seemingly shared goal to fulfill each other's dreams; to make art happen; Lucia and these low-profile artists seemed unconcerned with profiting from their art. To the contrary, this network of underground artists seem to risk it all, living on the economic margins for their trade, taking risks by travelling abroad to organize shows with nothing but the support and promotion of Facebook and word of mouth, pulling together makeshift venues, and drawing only small audiences – all seemingly for the sake of seeing their friends' dreams fulfilled, their art to be seen, and to share a cup of tea together. It is this dream circle, which thrives in the face of standardization, that I find to be the most admirable example of subcultural existence.

Epilogue

As I hope this thesis has shown, KIP serves as a unique window through which we are able to observe some of the dynamics that enable particular forms, practices, images, and people to stand in as granted expressions of Korean culture, and how Hallyu in particular is able to reach far into realms of interest outside of music, television, and entertainment. Korean language education, as an area of interest that has traditionally stood outside the realm of Hallyu, makes for an interesting case study as it reveals the processes by which Hallyu opens up new fronts for interfacing with the global market. The short duration of the program, in a way, may have exaggeratedly highlighted these processes since cultural representations must be condensed in a way that allows them to be quickly and effectively delivered to foreign audiences. However, precisely because KIP occupies such a short temporal space in the ongoing processes of Hallyu, I wonder still about what the larger implications and long-term effects of Hallyuization might be.

Benjamin asserted that in the process of removing the work of art from its ritual origin, it would also lose its "aura" – its unique magical quality that gave it "authenticity" (1969, 6). Following Benjamin's line of reasoning, John and Jean Comaroff speculate about what this might mean for the number of nations, ethnic groups, and indigenous communities worldwide whom also face decisions regarding the marketability of their communities (2009, 24-28). Will the mass reproduction of an alienable essence, lead to the loss of a community's "mystique," thereby tokenizing them (26)? Will the mystique become transformed? Might the "consumer as producer" dynamic that Benjamin alludes to, mean that ethnic and national identities necessarily depend on (international) consumers for their mystique (27)? If so, does this dependency eventually lead to communities as producers reimagining themselves in the terms of their consumers (27)? Furthermore, will there remain a distinction between an "identity-as-self-

possession" (27), and an identity that has merely met the demands of the market by branding itself in "universally recognizable terms" (24)? Although my time at KIP has given us an exclusive view into how this "consumer as producer" dynamic can play out in terms of how certain cultural forms become privileged and how the shape of these forms are negotiated, revealing in the process, something about how Hallyu operates, I recognize its limits and hope that it may inspire other avenues of inquiry such as the processes of identity formation and of global feedback loops. Such inquiries I believe will benefit from sustained and long-term investigations.

As I write this in the winter of 2019, nearly a year after I first registered for KIP 2018, new clues are beginning to emerge that might allow us to speculate about the trajectory and long-term implications of my findings. Via their official Facebook page, KIP recently announced the opening of registration for KIP 2019.

> Dear our students, Hello! This is Sogang KIP from Sogang University. The registration for 2019 KIP program will begin from now on. Recommendations from our KIP students have been great motive for our program. We are honored to be spread by word-of-mouth to students who are very interested in Korean Culture, K-POP, and Korean Language. Thank you so much for your participation and efforts made in Sogang University. Thank you

The post seemed to both reaffirm some of my own conclusions and offer room for new interpretation. Just as I had observed how my KIP colleagues seemed to prefer a comfortable interface with Korea as a cohort of outsiders whom could maintain their loquaciousness via English, so too does this post suggest that "word-of-mouth" communication has been an effective means by which foreigners may reaffirm their Korean experience. The flexibility of our culture classes to permit the use of English seems to have allowed students to enjoy all of the offered activities in a way that was most comfortable to them; an effective means of deploying "Korean culture" that in turn may have informed the recommendations of my colleagues.

Further, I am once again intrigued by KIP's ambiguous use of the terms "Korean Culture" and "Korean Language"; this time teased apart quite unambiguously from the term "K-POP." Juxtaposed against previous years' promotional materials, which emphasized first and foremost KIP as a program for people interested in Korean language, this promotion, for the first time, unapologetically places Korean Culture and K-pop antecedent to Korean Language. Certainly, there could be several ways of interpreting this. KIP might be consciously beginning to place "Korean Culture" and K-pop at the fore of the program rather than as secondary supporters for language. The ordinal placement may have been a kind of Freudian slip, representing the unconscious recognition of a natural order that values Hallyu above the rest. Or, the choice of terms might be arbitrary, their ordinal placement owed merely to chance.

However, what does strike me as significant about this promotion is the seemingly updated distance that Korean culture and Korean language have both taken next to K-pop. No longer conflated with culture, K-pop now appears as its own category. In thinking about the future of Hallyu and what its presumable growing commodification might mean for how Koreans think of themselves, this nominal separation that has been made between K-pop, Korean language, and Korean culture gives me reason to believe that there are some realms into which K-pop will not be permitted to enter.

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