Master's Thesis of Sociology

Who Can Be "Real" K-Pop Idol?
− The Construction of Neoliberal Subjectivity of "Hard Work" −

누가 '진정한' 케이팝 아이돌이 될 수 있을까?
− '노력'이라는 신자유주의적 주체성의 형성 −

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Abstract

K-Pop, a music genre originally developed in Korea, was a culture long considered inauthentic by many cultural critics and scholars. Recently, the K-Pop community faced the need to grow a sense of authenticity of the culture as a response to the potential threats of assimilation from an outside culture which was characterized by the join of Foreigner K-Pop. Against the backdrop of the neoliberal environment in the industry that was marked by globalization, commercialization of idols' everyday life, and the increasing importance of fandom in the making of K-Pop idols, this research argued that the (in)authentication process of Foreigner K-Pop was a collaborative work between fans, idols, industrial sectors, and K-Pop professionals. Focusing on the English-speaking K-Pop fans, this thesis adopted online ethnographic research and text analysis, studied seven K-Pop groups with non-Asian performers, and demonstrated how elements of Korea and elements that were cited as Korean were maneuvered in the construction of (in)authenticity of Foreigner K-Pop. This thesis concluded that the recurrent theme of perseverance, genuineness, dedication, and hardworking in the discourse about authenticity, often cited through the necessitated process of trainee system, served to satisfy the cultural need of international fans, whose taste and identity remained peripheral in most Western countries, for a discourse akin to neoliberalism that advocates equal opportunity and indiscriminate competition, while allowing K-Pop culture to maintain a tight community and esoteric taste.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

1. Research Background and Research Question

K－Pop, a music genre that originated in South Korea (hereinafter, Korea), had a significant growth in terms of its influence as a global cultural phenomenon in the past two decades. It went from pop music made specifically for the Korean audiences, to shared popular culture of Asia, and then to a world sensation①. K－Pop has earned renowned reputation and enormous profits for Korea to the extent that it was heralded to be a national pride (Jeongmee, 2007).

Irrespective of its indisputable global popularity, K－Pop was considered lacking authenticity by many cultural critics②. The assertion that K－Pop lacks authenticity was partially from the prejudice of K－Pop's all intents and purposes replication to the music and aesthetic style of Western pop music and Japanese pop music in the 1980s③. It was also partially from the criticism of the giant entertainment agencies behind every successful K－Pop that controls its artists in all aspects, which refrained them from revealing the true artistic creation④. Even in essays that attempted to

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① An example could be BTS, a Korean boy band, which was phrased by British newspaper the Guardian in 2018, "BTS … changed the face of pop, as the first Korean group to reach the upper echelons of the western music industry."
② For example, Janice Min, a top U.S. entertainment media executive, said in an interview with The Korea Times in 2014 that "K－Pop needs authenticity."
③ This opinion can be found in an article published by The New Yorker in 2012, titled Factory Girls: Cultural technology and the making of K－Pop by John Seabrook.
④ David Bevan's Seoul Trained: Insider Korea's Pop Factory on SPIN in

celebrate K-Pop, authenticity was rendered as secondary, while pleasure was prioritized as the purpose of popular music⑤.

This thesis is based on an objection to the claim of the absence of authenticity in K-Pop. The reason authenticity was absent from previous discourses about K-Pop was perhaps only that there was no need. However, I argue that the situation has changed as what was deemed inauthentic K-Pop emerged, which created the need for culture members to define what should be called authentic K-Pop. In so doing, this thesis traced the idea of authentic K-Pop to the anecdote of "The World's Most Controversial K-Pop group."

On July 20, 2018, VICE uploaded a video titled "The World's Most Controversial K-Pop group" to its YouTube account. This video talks about the story of EXP Edition, a K-Pop boy band consisting of four white men from the USA⑥. They were initially formed in New York as an art project directed by Bora Kim, Karin Kuroda, and Samantha Shao⑦ in 2015, but they relocated to Seoul in 2016 and have had most of their professional activities in Korea since. They first song LUV/Wrong was released in 2015, second song FEEL LIKE THIS in 2017, and third song Stress in 2018. Their journey as a K-Pop group has received a lot of criticism. According to their producer

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2012 documents how K-Pop artists are "highly controlled."
⑤ For such accounts, see for example, Trevor Link, 2012, We Need to Talk About K-pop. https://occupiedterritories.tumblr.com/post/16010722069/pop-utopianism-a-manifesto-we-need-to-talk
⑥ They are Frankie, Hunter, Sime, and Koki. Sime is an immigrant from Croatia, and Koki is half-Japanese.
⑦ Bora Kim, Karin Kuroda, and Samantha Shao were then students in Columbia University, and EXP Edition was part of their graduation thesis project.

Bora Kim, the criticism that EXP Edition received was about "ownership of K-Pop," which usually surrounded the members' white or American identity. VICE casted some of the most bizarre comments that have been made about EXP Edition. For example, one YouTube account uploaded a YouTube video reacting to EXP Edition's music video and commented "I don't want white people in my fucking K-Pop." Another YouTube account shared a similar statement, "White dude trying to break into Korean pop music … is fucking bullshit⑧."

This was interesting when considering foreign nationals have never really been void of K-Pop scene since perhaps the very beginning it. Non-Korean K-Pop performers have been in K-Pop for at least more than 10 years, and Korean entertainment companies that produce K-Pop have also never really closed the door of foreign performers. In 1990s, Korean entertainment companies have recruited Japanese idols and Korean American idols to cater an image of foreign culture which was in need in the then post-authoritarian market of cultural consumption (Lee, 2007). Later, Korean entertainment companies have become even more active in recruiting foreign idols as a "localization strategy" to facilitate global sales (최서원 & 임성준, 2019). By the end of 2017, which is before the release of the VICE video mentioned in the beginning of this theses, there had been K-Pop idols from Japan, China, Taiwan, Thailand,

⑧ The full sentence is "White dude trying to break into Korean pop music to appeal to a Korean audience as a social experiment is fucking bullshit." The sentence was disintegrated and reassembled by the video editor as written in the article. Although the researcher recognized the reassemble neglected an important message of the original quote, the researcher preserved the form in the video as quoiting the message that the video tried to deliver.

Indonesia, the USA, and Australia, and more. In other words, foreign K-Pop performers were not just part of K-Pop but also helped contribute to the promotion of K-Pop.

To investigate deeper into this phenomenon that has been specifically targeting the performers' ethnicity, I went to YouTube and did a preliminary analysis of comments from ten debut music videos of different K-Pop groups with non-Korean members. I selected six that are EXP-Edition-like K-Pop groups with non-Asian members and four are K-Pop groups with only Asian members⑨. I collected 7185 English comments in total and did an unsupervised sentiment analysis using python module VADER⑩. The result shows that 24.6% of the comments collected from the debut music videos of K-Pop groups with non-Asian members revealed negative sentiment while only 10.1% of the comments collected from the debut music videos of ordinary K-Pop groups reveal negative sentiment. Interestingly, while "K-Pop" and "Korean" were two of the most used words among comments with negative sentiment about non-Asian K-Pop, these two words were completely absent from the comments with negative sentiment about other K-Pop with only Asian members. The preliminary analysis result suggests that K-Pop groups with

⑨ EXP-Edition-like groups include EXP Edition, UHSN, KAACHI, BLACKSWAN, Prisma, and 5HIGH. K-Pop groups with Asian members include VERIVERY, Cherry Bullet, Fanatics, and Woo!Ah!. The sampling of K-Pop groups with Asian members was arbitrary. I tried to sample groups debuting between 2019 and 2020, which are the years of the appearance of most non-Asian K-Pop idols, and sample groups who do not have top-notch popularity. The demarcation of Asian was also arbitrary. In this case, Asian may more refer to, but not limit to, East Asian, whose major population exists in countries such as Korea, Japan, and China.
⑩ The data sampling took place on April 27, 2021. VADER is a lexicon and rule-based sentiment analysis tool that is specifically attuned to sentiments expressed in social media **Invalid source specified.**.

non-Asian members is more likely to engender audiences' negative sentiment⑪, that revolved around an idea of "K-Pop" and "Korean". With the preliminary analysis, this thesis confirmed the controversy that surrounded EXP Edition while arguing that the controversy was more applicable to other K-Pop groups with non-Asian members and less applicable to K-Pop groups with only Asian members.

In tandem with the anger targeting the non-Asian identity of EXP Edition was a doubt that has been cast upon EXP Edition's authenticity. In a news report published on BBC News in 2018 that also titled EXP Edition for being "The world's most controversial," a question that about whether they are K-Pop was raised because EXP Edition have been called out by many, fans and cultural critics alike, for being "fake K-Pop," including a music lecturer at Liverpool University saying that "they (EXP Edition) are created outside the South Korean music industry that produces 'authentic' K-Pop⑫."

This appeal for a real/authentic K-Pop resonated the political cultural economy that K-Pop was facing in what can be called Hallyu 4.0 (Korean Wave 4.0) (Kim B.-R. , 2015). In Hallyu 4.0, the popularity of Korean popular culture has reached all over the world and the fans' affection to Korean popular culture has transformed to an affection to everything Korean. This political cultural economy

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⑪ The difference is significant (p-value ＜ 0.0001). The complete frequency table is in Appendix Table 1.
⑫ For more complete discussion, see Yvette Tan, 2018, K-Pop's EXP Edition: The World's Most Controversial 'Korean' Band. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46381997

created two challenges to the contemporary development of Hallyu. First, the emergence of non-Asian K-Pop idols had something to do with the recent expansion of popularity of K-Pop to places outside of Asia and to customers of non-Asian ethnicity. As a result, the extent to which localization strategy would be applied became a question, considering the gear of Hallyu 4.0 was an affection to "everything Korean." Second, the heavy reliance on social media for cultural dissemination has also provided the de-centralized cultural production that lays within the convergence culture brought about by the advancement of information technology (Jenkins & Deuze, Editorial, 2008). The advancement of information technology has dramatically reduced the cost of cultural dissemination, and it allows many to produce and sell their own "culture" at a low cost. This is surely the case of EXP Edition that at least in its very beginning, it was just a student project produced in a school studio. It is against this backdrop that K-Pop met with its authenticity crisis, an unstable situation in which a definitive idea of authenticity is impending, and this thesis asked its research question: What is the authenticity of K-Pop (What is real K-Pop)?

To answer the research question, this thesis draws attention to the postmodern re-position of culture (Lash, 1990), arguing authenticity not as a fixed concept, but as cultural practices made by members of the same culture through which cultures are authenticated. This thesis also intended to see the K-Pop authenticity crisis as the similar one that happened to Hip-Hop culture in around 1990s, in which the culture that has hitherto had a homogenous cultural face underwent the threat of assimilation from an outside culture, which

prompted the cultural producers to claim a sense of authenticity to the culture (McLeod, 1999).

Therefore, considering that the authenticity crisis of K-Pop surrounded the non-Asian identity of the K-Pop performers, the research question was reshaped into three more concrete questions. First, how did non-Asian K-Pop performers speak to other members in the culture to include themselves in the culture? Second, what were the ways these newly joined non-Asian K-Pop performers were made included in the culture by major players in the industry, and how were non-Korean performers evaluated? Third, what were the arguments fans held to claim that authenticity is important to the culture?

  i.   How did non-Asian K-Pop performers speak to other members in the culture to include themselves in the culture?

  ii.   What were the ways these newly joined non-Asian K-Pop performers were made included in the culture and how were non-Korean performers evaluated?

 iii.   What were the arguments fans held to claim that authenticity is important to the culture?

By shedding lights on the members of culture, this thesis also sees itself as the continuation of the sociological interest in fan culture that proceeds the tradition of Birmingham cultural studies (Jenkins, 1992). In so doing, this thesis attempted to propound cultural studies to broader sociological concerns about cultural assimilation, appropriation and diffusion, and social identities within multicultural globalized contexts.

Before the research starts, a few words that will be used the frequently in the following discussion should be explained in advance. The first and foremost is the differentiation between K-Pop and Korean pop music. K-Pop, as a genre, will be used generically in this thesis. The empirical answer to it is the music type that is categorized as "K-Pop" in various music streaming platform such as YouTube and Spotify. On the other hand, Korean pop music will be used to refer to all music that is popular in Korean domestic music market, which is the music sold the most or streamed the most times in Korea. Korean popular culture will be used in the same vein. The three are surely related to each other, but they will be used in different context to connote the differentiations stated above. Second, this thesis introduces the term Foreigner K-Pop which will be used to describe K-Pop performed by non-Korean ethnics and non-Korean nationals⑬. One example of Foreigner K-Pop is EXP Edition. One question raised about Foreigner K-Pop is the border of the term. The research will focus on Foreigner K-Pop consisting of at least one non-Asian idol, after considering this was the type of Foreigner K-Pop that engendered the most controversy as shown in the preliminary analysis.

2. Literature Review: Previous Research on K-Pop (What is K-Pop?)

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⑬ Although the researcher is of non-Korean nationality, the researcher still decided to use the term Foreigner as 외국인is the term that I saw the most often in my process of exploring Korean opinions of it.

1) K-Pop as Re-invented Korea

If I attempt to properly justify or criticize someone's claim that "I don't want white people in my fucking K-Pop," a question must be answered first, what is K-Pop? It seems to be a simple question, but it might be difficult to answer even for people who have had many experiences with K-Pop. Many scholars had tried to answer this question. To not omit any important research, there are surely scholars who approach K-Pop solely as a good to trade and make a profit (김은영, 김정덕, 장상식, 박현덕, 2015). This research is surely not about this approach. Because even in such a business report, it still needs to recognize the cultural political economy behind K-Pop (Jessop, 2012). In another word, it needs to consider the culture, which concerns a viewpoint of meaning-making, behind K-Pop. In this stance, we are invited to see the cultural aspect of K-Pop.

The first, and perhaps the most intuitive, answer is that K-Pop is Korean culture. This perspective is described as (Korean) cultural nationalist perspective, which takes the popularity of K-Pop, and Korean popular culture in general, a manifestation of "500 years of pent-up energy" of Korean history (Cho, 2005). It is linked to notions of cultural essentialism which asserts Korean popular culture stems from "family values and a Confucian sensibility" which are assumed to be traditionally Korean (Cho, 2005). The cultural nationalist reaction to the controversy of EXP Edition might be a simple rejection of EXP Edition, as the ethnocentric perspective was replaced by nationalist analysis that forecloses the possibility of different meanings of the K in K-Pop (that is other than Korean).

The cultural nationalist perspective is often criticized in academia because it neglects the "demotic aspects" of K-Pop, in which it is the "new and different" that appeals to "the younger generations" (Cho, 2005). An example of a critical view of the cultural nationalist perspective of K-Pop is Lie, who rejects any association that K-Pop is traditionally Korean (Lie,

2012). Lie's analysis consisted of three dimensions in which the traditional Korean has been completely absent in K-Pop. These three dimensions are music, value, and embodiment. According to Lie's analysis, the absence of traditional Korea in K-Pop is the result of music industrialism in which production logic is obsessed with economic profits. For example, he argued that the K-Pop value has been devoid of the Confucian worldview, in which music is a means for a philosophy of gentlemanly life rather than a means for an economically rewarding career.

Lie's research demonstrated that what makes K-Pop successful is what in fact "denude and destroy whatever exists of received (South) Korean culture and tradition" (Lie, 2012, p. 361) His abundant historical analysis and persuasive comparison have indeed helped this research escape the overly simplified assumption cultural nationalist has hold, but he overlooked that many traditions were somehow invented based on modern cultural practices re-discovered or re-interpreted in a historical context. In this case, the tradition in K-Pop could be an "invented tradition" which Hobsbawm coined to be "a set of practices··· which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm, 1983).

In regard to "invented tradition", there is what I shall call the new cultural nationalist perspective, which is reflected in 김기독's attempt to construct a theory that links elements of K-Pop to traditional Korean culture so K-Pop can be a real "completion of national culture," that includes both "a nation's contemporary culture and traditional culture" (김기덕, 2014). For example, he proposed a cultural gene of "multi" which manifests in K-Pop in that "dancing together" and "singing together," and he argued that this "clearly lies with us (Korean)." Notions of invented tradition are indeed part of the implications of the new cultural nationalist perspective. As 김기독 argued, the contribution of his research is to provide a theoretical base of "the universal characteristics and values of Korean culture" on

which K-Pop can be developed in the future (김기덕, 2014).

The idea of re-discovered and re-invented Korean national tradition in K-Pop surely has a great contribution for this research to transform a simple rejection of EXP Edition made by cultural nationalists into an examination of the constructive aspect of making K-Pop Korean. But it might be an overly optimistic attitude of cultural scholars have of the assumed patriotism of the actual cultural producers. For example, Kim used a case study of the debut of SNSD[14] in the USA to argue an unequal global cultural order that is based on an unequal global consumption power (Kim G.-Y. , 2017). Kim argued that the debut strategy of SNSD in the USA was made to cater to the oriental image Western male gaze have of East Asian female, and which, Kim argued, is a sell off "pseudo-Korean-ness", which Korean entertainment industry inevitably needs to produce in the global market of culture (Kim G.-Y. , 2017, p. 2375).

I argue that what is implied in Kim's research is that study of K-Pop cannot solely focus on a critic of how the culture is produced. Indeed, while Lie stated that K-Pop is not Korean, 김기독 might just reply that it does not mean one cannot "discover" Korean in K-Pop, but just as 김기독 made such a statement, Kim countered that such "discovery" might just not happen to the dominant orientalist Western male gaze. If one solely focuses on the content and production level, a dialogue proposed between these theories might just lead to a series of disagreements. Besides, although the theory that they introduce might help describe K-Pop on a macro scale, adopting any perspective of them to the study of a micro-scale cultural event such as the controversy of EXP Edition might lead to a simple criticism that audiences are irrational. For example, Lie might criticize the controversy of EXP Edition as being the result of fans irrationally take K-

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[14] SNSD, also known as Girls' Generation, is a K-Pop female idol group. Their debut in the USA was in 2013 with the song "I Got a Boy".

Pop as traditionally Korean[15]. In either case, the opinion of the fans and performers, who are the real actors participating and shaping the culture, is absent.

The idea of K−Pop as re−invented Korea is a robust idea that demonstrates the production aspect behind K−Pop. Its argument is especially vigorous after considering the strong Korean state interest and Korean nationalism behind K−Pop (Jeongmee, 2007). Nevertheless, this point of view, which is usually made by cultural critics, often fails to consider the thought of the actual producers of the culture and real receptive experience of K−Pop. Hence, I argue that studies at the production level and experiential level are needed.

2) K−Pop as Culture of Hybridity

Regarding the limitation of research mentioned above, an alternative approach, and indeed a compromise and combination, is a theory of hybridity. The theory of hybridity investigates power relations between periphery and center from the perspective of postcolonial criticism (Shim, 2006). Hybridity is proposed to describe the idea of that in−between space of not entirely local but not entirely imported as well. It manifests in Asian countries' "embracing and utilizing the new glocal economic situation" (Shim, 2006, p. 27). An example of K−Pop being hybrid is Korean boy band Seo Taiji and Boys whose music form is argued to be of Western and content be of Korean (Shim, 2006, p. 36). The strength of the theory of hybridity is that it is supported empirically with research about audiences' experiences conducted in many different locations (Chua, 2008) (Jung, 2010) (Jang & Song, 2017).

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[15] 김기독 might criticize the controversy of EXP Edition as fan irrationally focusing on the ethnicity of the performers rather than the Korean culture behind K−Pop, and Kim might criticize the orientalism which emerged in the controversy.

K-Pop as culture of hybridity seems to be a valid perspective when one considers the business strategy of the K-Pop industry that is so ambitious that it wants to sell its idols to all over the world. Since the very beginning of Hallyu's initial development, an advocacy that K-Pop content does not necessarily need to make its audience associate it with Korea by the industrial sector has been a strong counterpart to the nationalistic camp who arbitrarily thinks K-Pop is Korean, so it needs to represent Korea (Cho, 2005). To produce K-Pop that does not feel "Korean", the production K-Pop actively recruits non-Korean song writers, choreographers, and performers (Howard, 2014). Or it is that the production adds more English lines to the songs or that K-Pop idols speak local languages when doing promotion in different countries. Therefore, K-Pop is described as "stateless" or "odorless," which allows it to disseminate across culture more easily (Jung, 2010).

While it seems appropriate to argue hybridity to be the quality of K-Pop, I nevertheless argue the inappropriateness of seeing hybridity as the identity of K-Pop in this research. First, if we ought to recognize hybridity as the identity of K-Pop, then we should accept that K-Pop could be just "a very strange hybrid of everything or anything[16]", which could lead us to a rather nihilistic conclusion that K-Pop is not K-Pop. Second, hybridity is also unable to explain the case of EXP Edition, an epitome of hybridization which was not celebrated by the consumers of hybrid culture. It must because there is something more important to K-Pop fan culture than being solely hybridity. As a result, I once again propose that a unique identity of K-Pop has been developed within the fan culture that causes them to reject something similar to EXP Edition.

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[16] This sentence is quoted from a speech Bora Kim, producer of EXP Edition, gave in a penal presentation in GW Institute for Korean Studies (housed in the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University) in 2019. She used this sentence to describe K-Pop and modern Korean culture in general.

The idea that K－Pop as culture of hybridity is robust to explain why K－Pop has disseminated worldwide so easily. It might also explain the principle of the K－Pop industries in the K－Pop production. However, as argued above, even though K－Pop is a culture of hybridity, it does not mean everything hybrid in the culture will be welcomed. Hence, I argue that the K－Pop culture needs to be considered as well. In this case, this research is closer to the type of research that sees K－Pop as a genre and K－Pop culture as a fan culture to the genre. One example could be 이규탁's book which covers a wide range of issues that surround K－Pop genre music including its origin, its evolvement, its industrial strategy, and more (이규탁, 2016).

In his book, 이규탁 argues K－Pop to be a type of music that evolved from "New Generation Dance Music", music that is composed in a "standard pop" song structure[17], adopting melodies from other dance genres such as House and Techno, and is performed with group choreography but is different in that K－Pop is more American－influenced, less Japanese－influenced, more systematically produced, and performed more by artists from different national backgrounds (이규탁, 2016). This research will continue 이규탁's definition, but it more systematically studies actors within the K－Pop fan culture which 이규탁 were unable to provide with his book.

3) K－Pop as K－Pop Fandom Culture

Research about K－Pop fandom culture has become the focus of interest of many scholars who studied K－Pop. Research that focuses on the Korean K－Pop fandom has covered a wide variety of topics. There was research

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[17] 이규탁 did not explain the "standard pop" song structure in his book. He used the term to differentiate with trot structure. Supposedly, a standard pop song is formatted in the following structure: intro, verse, pre－chorus, chorus, verse, pre－chorus, chorus, bridge, verse, chorus, and outro.

about fanfic, fan-made fiction stories about their idols, in K-Pop (김훈순 & 김민정, 2004). There was also research that examined the intersection between feminism and K-Pop fandom (김수정, 2018). Recently, researches about fandoms of a specific demographic population also received much attention in the academia (김수아, 2010) (조해인, 2021). On the contrary, the interest of research about international K-Pop fandom seemed to be rather limited. They mostly concern two questions. One is that who are the K-Pop fans, and the other what helps K-Pop spread.

The development of international K-Pop fandom can be traced back to the late 1990s when some famous Korean pop boy bands such as H.O.T started to have events and concerts in areas outside of Korea such as China and Taiwan. One news article has reported there were many organized fan clubs and fan activities in Taiwan in 2001[18]. K-Pop culture has developed since and reached many different locations in the world today.

Previous research about international K-Pop fandom usually concerned who are the local K-Pop fans. Previous research has shown that K-Pop culture tends to have different fandom profiles in different locations. It usually regards the local popularity of K-Pop, the ethnic composition of local society, and local economic development. In countries such as Taiwan where K-Pop is considered "mainstream", a single event within the K-Pop community might be easily elevated to a national issue (Ahn & Lin, 2018), while in countries such as Sweden where "knowledge of Korea is so minimal", K-Pop community can be confined to only a fringe of the population, which is often associated with the marginal group (Hubinette, 2012). The marginality of K-Pop culture is more evident in the case of ethnic minority and teenager subcultures. In countries such as the USA and Canada where there is a history of Asian immigration, K-Pop culture commonly works as an alternative form of culture to the dominant Western

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[18] See the news report on 연합뉴스. 최승현, 2001, <연합인터뷰> 대만 HOT팬 클럽회장 우이징씨. https://m.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20010815000600041

culture and allows Asian audiences to explore and feel a pan-Asian identity in a tangible form (Yoon & Jin, 2015). Meanwhile, in countries where economic development is considered less advanced than Korea, K-Pop culture is often pointed out to be composed of teenagers who project their desire for upward mobility unto the consumption of rich, dreamy, and fashionable images of K-Pop (Regatieri, 2017).

Other research usually focused on answering a question that what makes K-Pop spread so fast and easily through boundaries and cultures. They usually suggested it is owing to K-Pop culture's prosperous digital and offline participation. K-Pop fans have a flourishing digital culture. K-Pop fans often said online interaction is their primary means to interact with other K-Pop fans. K-Pop fans often share related content with other fans to build a connection with each other (Jin & Yoon, 2016). They also like to participate in online discussions where they actively share their opinion about concerning topics (Kim G. , 2019). It is also common to see K-Pop fans produce "reaction video" to K-Pop music videos and upload them to online platforms to collectively celebrate their passion for the culture (Swan, 2018). Recently, offline activities of K-Pop culture have become more and more prosperous. K-Pop fans like to join local Korean language classes and participate in local Korean cultural events (Otmazgin & Lyan, 2014). They also like to do K-Pop cover dance and form K-Pop cover dance groups to learn and have performances together (Nahm & Song, 2016). Some more enthusiastic fans might even start a K-Pop organization with other K-Pop fans to collectively promote K-Pop culture and demand more concerts or events from the K-Pop industry (Jang & Song, 2017).

If someone wants to answer what K-Pop is, there seems to be no way more suitable than letting K-Pop fans themselves answering this question. Previous scholarships on international K-Pop fandom have demonstrated a robust international K-Pop culture. Many previous scholarships saw fandom communities to be developed out of some sorts of pre-existing community,

for example, the Asian community in the USA or the youth in a middle-class family in Brazil, but they have greatly ignored the fans' identity developed purely out from the participation of various fan activities. Such assumption that focuses on the pre-existing community of K-Pop fandom might give research about the authentic crisis within the culture a biased analysis result. Therefore, this thesis argues to put focus on the crisis event itself and examine different cultural actors' responses. In this regard, this thesis decided to approach from a theory of authenticity in the studies of culture.

3. Theoretical Framework

1) Authenticity as Authentication in Postmodern Culture

In the traditional sense, authenticity in art stood in that spiritualized, real, and actual essence of the artist who speaks the truth of his or her situation. It sat closely with the traditional notion of an art piece that was assumed with a spiritual connection to the artists who created it that made the art piece unreproducible, irreplaceable, and thus, valuable. While authenticity was deemed to be the unique quality of an art piece, authenticity was in a time used by art critics to differentiate between arts that belonged to that of high culture and that of low/popular culture because high culture artists had the autonomy that was set apart "from commercial imperatives and influences, and thus authentic and good (Pickering, 1986)."

While authenticity continued to be celebrated as being salient in art and culture, its fundamental meaning and the way in which people perceive authenticity have changed entirely as the mechanical reproduction of culture caused the demise of "aura" in art, which led to a failure of culture to establish its unique status and differentiate itself from other cultures (Benjamin, 1935). Against this backdrop, an idea of innate authenticity that is fixed within the art and culture was abandoned. Instead, the idea of

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authenticity became an idea not as a given but as cultural practices made by agents in a cultural field who by doing so authenticate the given culture. It is in this regard that Lash described a re−position of culture that went from the modern, which differentiated the audiences from the art and its creator, to the postmodern, which de−differentiated the audiences and the art and its creator (Lash, 1990).

In Lash's postmodern de−differentiation stance, authenticity became not a concern about the art and the culture itself but a concern about the various practices and the actioners who authenticate the culture that they are part of. As a result, the question of authenticity in postmodern culture was reshaped into a discussion about who the actioners are and what they did to authenticate. In other words, the authenticity of culture is the enculturation of actions of different actors in the culture field (Thornton, 1996).

Concerning enculturation, authenticity works as a source, understood as capital, of social prestige inside the culture (Ibid.). Borrowing concepts from Bourdieu[19], Thornton argued that authenticity in the cultural field has been discussed as an alternative to a status hierarchy. Being authentic to the culture is honored by members of that given culture, and consequently, authentication is a process of enculturating oneself (and the opinion/value that one represents) in the culture. In her study of how club−goers' discussion about which club is "cooler" based on which club plays the music authentic to the dance culture, Thornton demonstrates authenticity as a cultural resource based on which culture members learn about what is cool and what is not. While being cool equals being established or being esteemed, authenticity reproduces itself through the process of enculturation and becomes inseparable from the very development of the culture.

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[19] Bourdieu found people with different social background tend to have a different perception of art in his study of Parisians' cultural life and concluded with an idea of cultural capital that is the accumulation of knowledge, behaviors, and skills that a person can master to demonstrate one's cultural competence and social status **Invalid source specified.**.

Extended from Thornton's theory of authenticity, McLeod's theory of authenticity reframed the idea of being "cool" in the culture into an identity of being "in" the culture. McLeod argued that the reproductivity of authenticity makes authenticity claim a powerful way to secure a culture that is under conditions where it is in some way threatened. He studied authenticity claim made by Hip-Hop singers and argued that Hip-Hop authenticity connects the artists and the audiences and excludes outsiders who did not share the same cultural experience and values of the culture (McLeod, 1999). In so doing, McLeod recognized the discursive nature of all authenticity claims and posited an approach to authenticity that is a communication process that works as a liaison between culture members.

As authenticity was recognized as a communication process, the process in which someone who was previously assumed to be not in the culture tried to authenticate oneself becomes an interest of many cultural scholars. In the case of Hip Hop authenticity, white hip hoppers who try to break in the culture that was assumed to be black must take action to persuade other culture members that he or she has the same authenticity as other established (black) artists. A common way of doing it is to take the discourse of authenticity that has been established as resources, tailoring that to fit the situation of one's own while avoiding using the part that one does not meet. For example, Eminem, a white rapper, took the Hip Hop authenticity of "staying true to yourself" by promoting his white identity that would otherwise be a negative point for him in the culture (Armstrong, 2004).

When the authenticity claim was put under a cross-cultural or transnational context in that both the artists and the audiences may not be native to the culture, the situation became different. In such situation, the authenticity claims often either took the exogenous approach or the endogenous approach (Bennett, 2001). In the case of Hip Hop, the exogenous approach

sees hip hop as black music and seeks affinities with the black experience through styles of dress, knowledge of music, and local experiences with prejudice, while the endogenous one which views hip hop as a versatile cultural medium that can be legitimately engaged through personal participation.

This thesis' approach to K-Pop authenticity is in debt to this theory of authenticity stated above in three instances. First, this thesis rejects the idea of a fixed K-Pop authenticity and sees K-Pop authenticity as cultural practices made by members who concern K-Pop. Second, this thesis argues the various discourses developed in response to the emergence of Foreigner K-Pop, be it rejection or acceptance, as an authentication process that tries to secure K-Pop culture from the threatening of assimilation by other cultures. Third, this thesis intended to equate the emergence of Foreigner K-Pop in (Korean) K-Pop with that of white hip hoppers in (Black) Hip Hop. The strategies that non-Korean K-Pop idols took and the reactions in the culture will provide the analysis result a fruitful comparison with Hip Hop culture. With that, this thesis argues for a new perspective to see the controversy that EXP Edition (Foreigner K-Pop) brought about as an authenticity crisis of K-Pop culture to the international K-Pop fandom.

2) K-Pop Idol, K-Pop fandom, and Neoliberalism in K-Pop

Traditionally, people who sing along with a music would be called singer. If the process involves some other kind of performance such as dancing or playing instrument, they would also be called performers. If their performance was bestowed with some sorts of artistic value, they might be called artist. While in the context of K-Pop, being an artist is usually equivalent to being an idol. The dominant use of idol to describe K-Pop performers is not to undervalue their artistry, as some people attempted to

differentiate the two[20], but instead, K－Pop idol is called idol to emphasize their great popularity and enormous admiration, love, and enthusiasm that they enjoy from their fandom.

The idolization of K－Pop performers was a process of adaptation to the cultural economic change in the music industry and popular culture that was brought about by the digitalization revolution. In the 1990s, K－Pop industry lived mostly with disk and concert ticket sales, but in the 2000s, digitalization of music has made the cost of music consumption dropped to virtually zero, which makes it more difficult for music business to solely rely on music sale (최서원 & 임성준, 2019, 페이지: 64－65). It forced music companies to come up with different strategies to monetize their song production, and one dominant way was to make their singers idols. K－Pop performers were required to have more exposure, such as being out on various TV programs, doing commercial shootings, or featuring a fashion magazine, to just name a few. The reason that K－Pop performers now needed to do so many things, besides singing and dancing, was that they need to be idols to stimulate more consumptions and generates enough profits. In fact, because the production of K－Pop is so much tailored to idolize the performers, it has made some assert that K－Pop as a genre should be called Idol Pop (이동연, 2010).

To successfully produce a lucrative K－Pop idol, K－Pop music companies evolved into what can be called "total management company" (이규탁, 2016, 페이지: 121). Total management companies abandoned the traditional business model that focused on only music production and sales. They instead managed all aspects of an idol. This includes planning, marketing, public relations, fandom management, and even the idol's private life. The most salient about "total management company" was the establishment

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[20] Some people might assert being idol does not necessarily give one the title of being artist, but I hold the opinion that in K－Pop the two can usually not be separated.

of "trainee system," The trainee system refers to the process of idol production that includes the systematic selection and training potential idols. The trainee system provides K-Pop industry a competitive business model as it allows the mass production of idol at a low cost (김명수, 2015), but it also means the process of idol making even more fully controlled by the management companies, which makes "slavery contract" became the norm (Howard, 2014).

What comes hand in hand with this new idol-making system is three factors that together contribute to the contemporary K-Pop that we see today. The first one is the globalization of K-Pop. Since the last 1990s, partly due to the strong support from the Korean state government that sees cultural industry as the country's economic power house after the IMF, K-Pop industry has been actively trying to break into the global market (김명수, 2015). One groundbreaking way that K-Pop industry adopted was what to be called "localization strategy," that K-Pop companies recruit trainees directly from the country of target market, train them, group them together with other idols, and sell them back to their country of origin (최서원 & 임성준, 2019). This has been proved to an effective global marketing strategy that almost all contemporary K-Pop groups have at least one or two non-Korean members.

The second one is the commercialization of the everyday life of K-Pop idol. Idols cannot exist without its fandom, and K-Pop fandom can no longer be satisfied with their idols' on-stage performance. The K-Pop fandom's desire for more from their idols has protruded to the off-stage everyday life of their idols. This has best manifested in the popularity of the K-Pop idols' reality shows which feature scenes of idols' everyday life such as practicing for performance, hanging out with friends, or just small talks during commuting. These are indeed just staged reality of an idol that itself is also a deliberate performance to stimulate consumption, but the unique setting has created a special intimacy between an idol and its fandom (김보

년, 2010). With the maturation of information technology in the 2010s, the commercialization of idols' everyday life has further upgraded. More about the idols can be now uploaded to the internet, and the consumption of everything about idols has become much easier as well. This has made it easier for the management companies to build a persona for the idol (김수정 & 김수아, 2013).

The third factor that contributes to the contemporary K-Pop is the increasing importance of fandom in the making of K-Pop idols. Fandoms are essential to the very existence of idols, and their consumption is what the idols mostly rely on thriving. Idols usually secure their fandom by incorporating the ideal image that attracts their fans, be it the successful image, outstanding appearance, unique lifestyle, or sexual attraction (이수안, 2011). With that, it is to say a successful idol can usually attract a strong and loyal attachment of its fandom with his or her personal charisma.

However, the relation between idols and fandoms that was previously like the one of server-client has transformed into the one of mutualism in which fandoms are no longer only understood as "the customers of the idol" but also "the managers of the idol" (정민우 & 이나영, 2009). This "second-generation fandom" is characteristic of the transformation of consumption of fans that went from an action simply out of craze and desire to the one of support and value-identification. This transformation has manifested in the contemporary K-Pop fandom culture that championed the most supportive and contributive fans in the fandom and coveted their idols to become the best idol, which consequently leads to the policing and management of the behavior of idols and the behind entertainment agencies (김수아, 2020).

The increasing importance of fandom in the making of K-Pop idol turns out to lead to a dynamic self-management of idols (and the entertainment agencies behind) who need to act accordingly in response to the demand of their fandoms so they can win the support from the very basis of their

survival in the industry. In this context, the subjectivity of idols become what Foucault has termed "entrepreneur of the self" that needs to constantly "take care" of oneself so as to become successful and is fully responsible for personal survival or failure in this capitalist society (문강형준, 2010, 페이지: 287). This is palpable in the production of most contemporary K-Pop idols where a narrative explaining all the successful qualities that these K-pop idols have and why they deserve to be admired by the many becomes a necessity (류웅재 & 박진우, 2012) (김수아, 2013). As a result, talents and outstanding appearance has become no more the one and only qualification that an idol needs to meet. To be fully self-responsible for one's survival as a K-Pop idol, one needs to have more.

Various discourses have been constructed based on the appeal made by fans whose "affective participation" structure the production of idols (윤태진, 2011). For example, in a case of a female artist who was accused of gaining popularity through "unjustified use of female sexuality," the female idol became the target of the society's misogynist sentiment which attempts to administer females' behavior in the society (김현경, 2016). In another case where idols were expected to possess a traditional Confucius value amidst competition, it was argued to be the public loath against opportunist who achieve things in a devious way, that cries for a society with justice (홍지아 & 정윤정, 2018). Nevertheless, previous research has been primarily focusing on the Korean context. As K-Pop has become a global culture, a transnational and transcultural perspective is surely in lack.

What was brough to the fore is the controversy with EXP Edition. Undoubtedly, the enthusiastic use of the non-Korean K-Pop idol with the localization strategy has led to culture from the very first beginning whose identity has been unsure. The commercialization of the idols' everyday life has made the consumption of K-Pop idol extend beyond a simple consumption of talent and outstanding appearance. Finally, in the entertainment business environment where fandom's opinion has become

salient in the making of K-Pop idol, the controversy can be seen as fandoms once again trying to define who can be the real K-Pop idols. This thesis sheds lights on such an event and attempts to argue for a unique cultural identity constructed through an inquiry about authentic K-Pop in the context of a transnational cultural consumption.

4. Subject of Research and Methods

1) Who is Foreigner K-Pop? (Subject of Study)

This thesis focuses on the case of Foreigner K-Pop, which is defined as any K-Pop act with at least one non-Asian performer. It is defined in this way to limit the subject of research as close to the case of EXP Edition as possible while maintaining a certain degree of generalization. The concern in this definition is the use of "at least one non-Asian performer" rather than non-Korean. The first reason is that this research adopts a single conditional syllogism to define non-Korean, that is either non-Korean citizens or non-Korean ethnics would be all counted as non-Korean[21]. In this regard, the use of non-Asian will automatically cover all non-Korean. The second reason is that the use of non-Asian helps to differentiate Foreigner K-Pop with some other K-Pop groups with non-Korean member that have been existed for a long time. One of the most notable and earlier examples of this is Super Junior, with a Chinese member Hangeng, which debuted in 2005. While the preliminary analysis presented in the research background has suggested that the controversy is less about Super-Junior-like K-Pop but more about K-Pop with non-Asian performer[22], this

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[21] For example, 차유미from Baby V.O.X who is Korean American will be counted as non-Korean because of her American citizenship, but she will not fit the requirement of being non-Asian.

[22] In the preliminary analysis, in "ordinary" K-Pop groups Fanatics and Woo!Ah!, there are members from China, Taiwan, and Japan, but the sentiment analysis result did not show the same trait as the result for EXP

definition with the use non－Asian is suitable for this thesis design. The last worth－mentioning part of this definition is the research's arbitrary decision to exclude Indian from Asian, but it is arguably suitable according to the preliminary analysis result[23].

This thesis categorizes three types of Foreigner K－Pop based on a given Foreigner K－Pop groups' member composition and location of promotional activities. These three categories are Adjunction Foreigner K－Pop, Korea－based Foreigner K－Pop, and Oversea Foreigner K－Pop. The categorization is made to help readers with no prior experience with K－Pop understand ideas such as "base", "Korean entertainment company", or "Korean members" that will be mentioned in the analysis.

Adjunction Foreigner K－Pop is Foreigner K－Pop with the number of Korean members still proportionately important to the group. Adjunction Foreigner K－Pop also needs to have activities mostly in Korea. The birth of Adjunction Foreigner K－Pop has something to do with "localization strategy" which consider putting non－Korean member in a K－Pop group can be helpful to boost the international sales. Two Adjunction Foreigner K－Pop groups will be included. BLACKSWAN debuted in October 2020[24] with three Korean members and two non－Korean members, of whom one is Fatou who is a Senegalese who migrated to Belgium and the other is Leia who is half－Japanese and half－Brazilian. Prisma debuted in October 2020 with two Korean members and three non－Korean members. The non－Korean members are Sally, Asian American, Nia, Spanish, and Miriam, Italian.

Korean－based Foreigner K－Pop is Foreigner K－Pop in which the number of non－Korean members greatly outnumber the number of Korean members.

Edition.

[23] 5 High, consisting of 5 Indian members, showed a similar sentiment analysis result to EXP Edition.

[24] Hyeme left the group one month after the debut.

Korean-based Foreigner K-Pop can even have zero Korean member. One requirement is that it should have its activities primarily in Korea. There will be two Korean-based Foreigner K-Pop included in the research. The first one is UHSN, a special project K-Pop group promoted with the Korean TV variety show of the same name. UHSN consist of ten girls from ten different countries, including Asian countries such as Japan and Thailand, European countries such as Sweden and Poland, and Egypt. The other one is EXP Edition after 2016. EXP Edition was initially formed in the USA in 2015. When they released their first song, there were 6 members. But they have relocated to Korea and had most of their promotional activities in Korea since 2016. The group consists of four American members in 2020, who are Frankie, Hunter, Sime, and Loki.

Lastly, Oversea Foreigner K-Pop is Foreigner K-Pop which does not have its activities based in Korea. It also does not need to have any Korean members. It can be made up solely with non-Korean members. Therefore, the idea of Oversea Foreigner K-Pop can be very broad. EXP Edition before 2016, when they were based in the USA, was Oversea Foreigner K-Pop. Apart from EXP Edition, this research also includes three other Oversea Foreigner K-Pop groups. SB19, which debuted in October 2018, is a boy group consisting of 5 Filipinos[25]. KAACHI, titled the UK's first K-Pop group, is a girl group consisting of 3 British and 1 Korean. 5 High, promoted as the Indian's first K-Pop group, is a girl group consisting of 5 Indians.

2) Materials and Collection Process

The analysis material is composed of three sets of data. They were designed based on Moore's tripartition of authenticity. The first set of data is made up of YouTube videos of Foreigner K-Pop's interview in which they

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[25] Although SB19 officially labeling themselves as P-Pop, they are included in the research for being called Filipino K-Pop in many media outlets.

authenticate their expression. The second set of data concerns the K−Pop authenticity of execution, which were made into two parts, of which one is about the performative aspect of Foreigner K−Pop and the other is about the evaluation of the performance of Foreigner K−Pop. The third set of data comprises YouTube comments about Foreigner K−Pop, which were treated as reflecting the experience of authenticity. The collection process will be explained in detail as follows.

The whole research project started on March 1, 2020. In the beginning, I started by studying UHSN as the only material to approach issues about Foreigner K−Pop. But I soon realized that it was not enough to cover all aspects of it, so I decided to include other Foreigner K−Pop into the analysis. I finalized the current structure of analysis using Moore's theory of authenticity in December 2020. After that, I started to systematically classify my material of analysis as stated above. The whole process ended on April 2, 2021, after I scrapped comments for analysis. The way that I found proper subjects to study is through internet surfing. After I started my internet exploration of Foreigner K−Pop, Google soon started "recommending" me materials of the like type with its amazing algorism. For example, YouTube recommended me Stage K while I am watching YouTube videos about UHSN, and I checked and find out its content and audiences' reaction are similar to what I had been collecting about UHSN, so I decided to include Stage K in the study. Most of the materials were included because of this "recommendation process". For example, SB19 was included because of Google recommendation. SB19 did not officially claim they are K−Pop. They instead marketized themselves as P−Pop most of the time. I chose to include SB19 because they are mentioned in many of the materials that I selected for the analysis. I suggested it is because there is a big part of the discussion about SB19 is overlapped with discussions about Foreigner K−Pop, so I argue the inclusion of SB19 is adequate.

The first set of data deals with authenticity of expression. I have tried to

contact members of UHSN and ask for an interview chance, but I was either ignored or rejected by all. I soon realized that it is very difficult for me to get the chance to interview K－Pop idols, so I shifted my attention to existing interviews publicly available online that they have done with other parties. I recognized that these interviews available online were not done specifically for a research purpose but indeed for commercial purposes so the accountability of these interviews in a research setting is contestable. Nevertheless, it is the best available material that I can get, so I accept the use of them. I focused on interviews that are available in the video form rather than textual form for two reasons. First, video releases are usually longer and cover more topics because they are usually made as a whole broadcast section or show, and the length usually reaches 30 minutes long. Second, videos are more complete in a sense as they recorded subtle physical and verbal behaviors and indistinct sentences, which are usually omitted in a news article or other types of article. In the end, I selected 4 interview videos, which are with EXP Edition, with KAACHI, with Prisma, and with BLACKSWAN. The detailed information about each interview video will be provided in Table 1.

Table 1.				
Video Title	Posted date	Posted by	Interviewer's background	Address
[#daily K] Exp Edition Interview	2017－09－01	ARIRANG K－POP	Korean state－fund broadcasting company dedicating to produce content for English－speaking audiences	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SbHhN0qsno
[Super K－Pop] BLACKSW	2020－10－	ARIRANG Radio	Korean state－fund broadcasting company dedicating to produce	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v

AN (블랙스완)'s Full Episode on Arirang Radio!	19	K－Pop	content for English－speaking audiences	=s5l1K8jhEl8
"KAACHI is KPOP" － Interview with KAACHI (All 4 Members)	2020－05－16	DKDKTV	YouTuber who mostly made videos about Korea and K－Pop. Their account has had more than 100 million views.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFQu4bvv7lw
Interview With PRISMA | K－Pop Girl Group From UnionWave Entertainment	2020－10－19	PopMachine Media	Small YouTube account mostly cover news about K－Pop.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuzJ1YAwLlA

The second set of data comprises two parts, which are used for the analysis of authenticity of execution. The first part contains two Korean TV programs, UHSN and Stage K. The two TV program were analyzed based on the way non－Asian K－Pop performers were made included in the culture by major actors in K－Pop industry. UHSN is a reality TV show released on Mnet's entertainment and aired from May 23, 2019, to July 11, 2019. Comprising 7 episodes, the program is based on giving a group of international girls from different nationalities a K－pop experience. UHSN is the acronym of the spelling of U－Hak So Nyeo meaning Study Abroad Girl, ten girls from ten different countries who come to Korea and study everything about K－pop. According to the media release, the producer made

this program "based on the fact that there are many foreigners who love and enjoy K-pop and want to learn from it." The plots of the episodes featured how they went through dancing, singing, and various K-pop training, but not exclusive to these. There were also many plots with them having Korean foods and traveling in Korea. In the end, they together published a song and released a music video of it under the group name UHSN. Stage K is a K-Pop dance competition program launched by JTBC TV from April 7 to June 23, 2019. The competition is for K-Pop dance cover teams from all over the world. In each episode, there will be a K-Pop group joining other guests and regular casts to evaluate the performance, and the winning team will be given the chance to perform on stage with their favorite idols. The program comprises 11 episodes. Information of these two TV programs will be provided in Table 2.

Table 2.				
Program Name	Production Company	Released Network	Released Date	Number of Episodes
UHSN 유학소녀	TAKE ONE	Mnet	2019-05-23 ~ 2019-07-18	9
Stage K 스테이지 K	JTBC	JTBC	2019-04-07 ~ 2019-06-23	11

The other part of data in the second set includes four YouTube videos. Discourses about authenticity of execution, in Moore's essay, are usually made by professional music critics, so I turned my attention to similar materials. I have looked up some academic journals about music and culture to see whether any scholars have had written anything about Foreigner K-Pop, but unfortunately, I did not find anything. As a result, I had to look for some other less professional sources. I began with internet blogs or news articles, but then I found out there are more materials available on YouTube.

I found there is a specific type of video that has a title such as "Previous Idols React To…" or "K-Pop Trainee React To". I checked the profiles of the personality of this type of video and found out they are usually previous K-Pop personalities or singers who have made many videos about K-Pop. Therefore, while there were no other materials available, I compromised and decided to use them to represent the professional opinion. It the end, I selected 4 videos, whose detailed information will be provided in Table 3.

Table 3.				
Video Title	Posted date	Posted by	Account's Information	Address
Trainee reacts to KAACHI — THE KOREABOO GROUP UK/KPOP...?	2020-05-04	kinryyy	Mostly do K-Pop related video. Unable to tell whether account owner is/was actual trainee. But having a lot of videos of him performing music.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-lVU84FRaA
Former KPOP Idol Reacts to KAACHI	2020-05-14	Jessica Lee	Contestant of Korean reality survival show Idol School.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4jXOnXMj0k
Singer Reacts to INDIA'S First Kpop Group! +SB19, ZGirls, B	2020-05-15	GRAZY GRACE	Former K-Pop idol Crazy Grace.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvgonP6_lfw

Pop?				
Ex K-Pop Idol Reacts to SB19 Alab (Burning) | Vlog 57	2020-05-03	Jonathan Yau's Vlog	Former member of K-Pop group ElVIN CREW.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCcED2kGcSc

The third set of data is comments that I collected below various YouTube videos about Foreigner K-Pop. Comments were treated as experience of Foreigner K-Pop audiences. The collection was made on April 2, 2021. Comments were collected from eight YouTube videos that were used in the previous two analyses and six debut music videos on YouTube of Foreigner K-Pop[26]. These fourteen YouTube videos have 247119 comments in total. The researcher wrote a program to scrape comments. The scrapping logic is from top to down. The first comment appearing on the top is the first comment scrapped. The top-down ordering is made by an unknown Google algorism said to be based on the relevance to the video. Because music videos tend to have more comments (227458 in total), the sampling size was set to be above 1000 or all. In the rest of the videos (19722 in total), the sampling size was set to be above 500 or all. Replies to comments would not be scrapped. At the end of the data collection, 8891 comments were collected, among which 5521 comments were made in English. The analysis only focused on the English comments. The detailed frequency table will be provided in Appendix.

3) Cases of Selected Foreigner K-Pop

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[26] I included 5 High into the research but chose not to scrape YouTube comments about them because 5 High has released only one music video which is a cover of a song of another K-Pop group. I think it should not be seen as equivalent to other debut music videos, so I exclude it from the comments scrapping process.

BLACKSWAN's "Tonight"

BLACKSWAN debuted on October 16, 2020. The members' multinational background was much promoted at the time. In Korean news YTN, a headline introducing them was written "multinational girl group… from South America and Europe[27]." In Kpopstarz, a K-Pop-themed English news website, they were promoted as "Multinational K-Pop Girl Group[28]," and Fatou, member of BLACKSWAN, was introduced as "The First Senegalese K-Pop Idol[29]."

"Tonight" is BLACKSWAN's debut song. "Tonight" conveys a dark, powerful, and yet sexy image of women, which can be easily sensed from the color grading of the music video and from the very beginning use of silhouettes to depict the body curve of the members. The video is staged primarily in a deserted-factory-like space, while there are some scenes are shot in a studio-like space placed with just some chairs and tables that looks like having Baroque-styled ornaments. The beat of the song is strong, with the sound of electronic guitar giving an evil vibe to the music. The sexualization of female body is apparent in the music video. The female idols are wearing tight outfits which reveal clearly both the shape of their breast and the part between their legs. Their choreography and posing in the music video are also designed to be sexualized, including one move during the

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[27] See 지승훈, 2020, '다국적 걸그룹' 블랙스완, 16일 데뷔…남미 유럽 출신. https://star.ytn.co.kr/_sn/0117_202010151044464099. Retrieved 2021-06-16.
[28] See Ishani Sarkar, 2020, Multinational K-Pop Girl Group "Black Swan" All Set To Debut Today. https://www.kpopstarz.com/articles/295276/20201016/multinational-k-pop-girl-group-black-swan-all-set-to-debut-today.htm. Retrieved 2021-06-16.
[29] See Eunice Dela Cruz, 2020, MEET Fatou, The First Senegalese K-Pop Idol to Debut Through Upcoming Re-Brand Group BLACK SWAN. https://www.kpopstarz.com/articles/295052/20201003/meet-fatou-the-first-senegalese-k-pop-idol-to-debut-through-upcoming-re-brand-group-black-swan.htm. Retrieved 2021-06-16.

chorus which is simply meant to expose the part between their legs in front of the camera, while the lyric goes "You better turn off the light. You want me tonight. Show me what you feel. Make love."

Figure 1. BKACKSWAN

Figure 2. Prisma

Prisma's "Breakout"

Prisma debuted on October 31, 2020. It was introduced as "the new world's most multinational K-Pop girl group" by a Korean online web news[30]. In English source, they were called "Multinational K-Pop girl group" on The Korea Times[31]. Besides two Korean members, Prisma also has members from Spain, Italy, and the USA.

"Breakout" is Prisma's debut song. "Breakout" has an arrangement that resembles EDM music, including a "build-up," which is marked by the gradually intensified snares, and a "drop," which contains only melodies and verbal sounds which do not have any lyrical meanings. The EDM resemblance gives Prisma a cheerful young feel, which is also reflected in their costumes and choreography. Their costumes are streetwear-

[30] See 김정수, 2020, 세계 최다국적 신인 K-POP 걸그룹 명 9월1일 전격 발표. http://www.newsa.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=257227. Retrieved on 2021-06-16.
[31] See Dong Sun-hwa, 2020, Multinational K-pop girl group PRISMA to debut next month. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/09/732_295312.html. Retrieved 2021-06-16.

influenced and feel real-lived. Their choreography is powerful, with many moves such as punch and swing stress on giving an impression of the strength of the performers. The staging is mixed. Half part of the video is staged in a studio with simple background for the girls to dance within, and the other half is shot in real places in Seoul. Some places, such as DDP, can be easily identified by K-Pop fans or people who live in Korea. The song tells the state of mind of a woman (supposedly, as the singers are female) who earnestly wants to reach high and get out from the darkness that she has been trapped in, with the lyrics say, "I will win everyone and become the main character," "I am ready. Nobody can stop me," and "All I need is one shot to get out." The vigorous, strong, yet energetic feeling of "Breakout" is obvious with the comprehensiveness of the music, costumes, choreography, and lyrics.

UHSN's "Popsicle"

UHSN is a project group named after a Korean reality TV show with the same name. It is a very short-termed project group, and they were never promoted as K-Pop group officially. But their K-Pop aesthetic, their song that they sing in Korean, and their featured stories in the reality show has gained them K-Pop identities on the internet, especially among K-Pop communities. For example, they were introduced as "K-Pop exchange student group" in the English K-Pop-themed website, allkpop[32], and their members' birthday, zodiac signs, nationalities, and other information were all available in many K-Pop-themed websites, such as Kpop Profiles.

"Popsicle" is a cheerful song. Its video is fun and cheerful, conveying

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[32] See Susan Han, 2019, Listent to the catchy melody of K-Pop exchange student group UHSN's 'Popsicle' in their 2nd MV teaser. https://www.allkpop.com/video/2019/07/listen-to-the-catchy-melody-of-k-pop-exchange-student-group-uhsns-popsicle-in-their-2nd-mv-teaser. Retrieved 2021-06-16.

images of school-aged girls playing, singing, and dancing. The video looks to be shot in a deserted warehouse, but it could also be an empty school as the girls arrived at the location with a school bus. The girls' outfits are colorful and diverse in style. They might be wearing sporty outfits to convey an energetic and healthy image in one scene but change completely in another by wearing dresses that deliver a quiet and gentle girl style. The colorful outfits kind of reflects the theme of the song as popsicle is ice stick famous to be of many different colors. The colorful setting is surely made to celebrate the ethnic diversity of the group. The lyric of the song, which is made mostly in Korean, is also made in accordance with the image. For example, they sing, "a little bit more special sweet sugar, I am different from others who are all the same."

Figure 3. UHSN   Figure 4. EXP Edition

EXP Edition's "LUV/Wrong"

EXP Edition, also titled as "the world's most controversial K-Pop group" as introduced in the beginning of this thesis debuted on November 7, 2015. "Luv/Wrong" is their first song. At that time, EXP Edition was a six-man group, consisting of 3 white men, 2 black men, and 1 half-Asian and half-white. The music video started with a black and white backdrop, against which members dance in a group. The editing added a lot of visual effects with the members' faces as patches that move from one place to the other. Their faces were also edited to look more shining and smoothing in an almost

unashamed degree. These face patches were also wearing hearts in their eyes, stars on their hairs, and blushes on the cheeks. These post-editing effects create an excessiveness of cuteness to the members' image but also leave an oddly co-existence with rigid body figure of them. The song talks about a heartbroken man who is tired of his past relationship and decides to move on. Interestingly, most of the song is sung in English. There are only hardly 6 sentences in the lyrics that are made in Korean.

SN19's "TIHALUHA"

SN19 debuted on October 16, 2018, with their song TILAHULA. SB19 is a boy group consist of five Filipinos. Although, it is important to point out that they officially label themselves as P-Pop, rather than K-Pop, they were selected because it is still very common to find internet articles or videos that associate them with K-Pop. For exmaple, in Maeil Business New Korea, SB19 were called "Korean-styled Philippine idols[33]." As for English source, in Korea Times, they were called "all Filipino K-pop boy band[34]." They were called K-Pop not only because their performative forms and styles that make a resemblance of K-Pop but also because their agency, a Korean company, has been promoting that they were trained in Korea and by Korean companies.

Different from the rest of the Foreigner K-Pops mentioned in this study, SN19 has a debut song that is closer to a Ballad song. The beat of the song is gentle, and the tempo of the song is slow. There is no choreography performed in the music video, unlike other K-Pop music would do, and in

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[33] See 강영운, 2020, 한국인은 아니지만… "우리도 K팝 아이돌". https://www.mk.co.kr/news/culture/view/2020/02/210495/. Retrieved 2021-06-17.
[34] See Dong Sun-hwa, 2019, [INTERVIEW] How all-Filipino K-pop boy band SB19 rose to stardom. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2019/09/732_276281.html. Retrieved 2021-06-17.

fact, none of the members of SN19 show their faces in the video. The video features two Koreans and their love story set in Korea. If someone only watched the video without having the music on, one might just easily assume the song was sung by some Korean artists in the Korean language. On the contrary, the song was completely written in Tagalog and sung by five Filipinos. The song is about a man reminiscent of his lost love, with one lyric sung like this, "If there isn't any hope left, at least teach me how to forget you."

Figure 5. SB19

Figure 6. KAACHI

KAACHI's "Your Turn"

When KAACHI debuted, they titled themselves as the UK's first K-Pop girl group. All members of KAACHI were recruited in the UK, although they do not all claim to be of English ethnicity. Their debut gained a lot of attention on the internet among K-Pop communities. For example, in the English K-Pop-themed website, allkpop, a post that introduces them as "UK's First K-Pop Girl Band" has gain over three hundred thousand views[35]. In Korea, they were also covered by many news media, including one by Dong-a llbo that called them "the first Europe K-Pop girl group in

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[35] See KpopSUperfan2019, 2020, UK's First K-Pop Girl Band 'KAACHI' makes Worldwide Debut. https://www.allkpop.com/article/2020/04/uks-first-k-pop-girl-band-kaachi-make-worldwide-debut   Retrieved 2021-06-17.

the UK[36]."

Your Turn is an upbeat song, but the tempo is slow. It starts with a resounding voice that lights up every audience's immediate attention. The song is about a girl who is abandoned by her crush, but she has her friends coming to cheer her up. Therefore, the song delivers a joyful feeling of having a good friend. One lyric goes like this, "you are better off without him." Besides some dance scenes that were shot in a palace-like indoor space, the rest of the music video was shot in the street of London and is about the same story that the lyric is telling. The slow tempo might be made to fit the members' poor ability to dance. The members have tried to deliver the energy that the music attempts to convey, but they did not do it very well. Regardless, the smiles that KAACHI is wearing throughout the video make its audience feel the warmness that a true friend will always have.

5 High's "PIRI"

5 High is a girl group whose members were selected from a talent contest in India. All members are Indian. They have not officially debut yet since they did not release any song yet, but they had gained some publicity and had many activities on the internet. Officially, they titled themselves as "India's first all-girl K-Pop group," and this title have been carried with them in most news articles. For example, an Indian news article on the website NORTHEAST NOW used this title to introduce them[37].

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[36] See 임희윤, 2020, 영국에 유럽 최초 케이팝 걸그룹 'KAACHI' 떴다. https://www.donga.com/news/article/all/20200718/102027150/1. Retrieved 2021-06-17.

[37] See 2020, India's first all-girls K-Pop band to release their first music video on Sunday. https://nenow.in/uncategorized/indias-first-all-girls-k-pop-band-to-release-their-first-music-video-on-sunday.html. Retrieved 2021-06-17.

PIRI is the first song that 5 High released, but it was not original to them. PIRI is a song originally from another K-Pop group Dreamcatcher, and 5 High did a cover version of it. Despite so, their company has shot it with effort. 5 High were wearing cool outfits with shining flares, dancing in a group, with cameras shooting from different angles of them, though it is surely a video shot with a low budget. The song conveys a message of a hopeless woman who did not completely give up any chance yet, and she is waiting for the right moment with the right one to shine like a "burning fire". This song is the song with the most Korean part and the least English part, perhaps it is because it is originally a song written for "ordinary" K-Pop.

Figure 7. 5 High

4) Method of Analysis

Online Ethnography

Ethnographic inquiries of online communities and public data becomes seminal methodological questions in the landscape of digital media that is rapidly changing in nature. As researchers endeavor to respond to the emergence of online communities as cultures (Hine, 2015), data sources may exist in different forms that are not available to traditional ethnographic

methods. In this research, I use an unobtrusive method (Hine, 2015) to collect data based on my almost one-year exploration of topics regarding Foreigner K-Pop through blogs, news, videos, and all possible online forums and discussion treads. I adopt non-participant observation and content analysis of found and observed public data. Similar methods have been used in other studies about Korean popular culture fans' online community (Schulze, 2013) (Kim G. , 2019).

Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is method used by many social science researchers to describe and interpret the characteristics of texts, which, in this research, are recorded and visual messages. The purpose of textual analysis is to describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 1999). In this research, the analysis was focused on the content, which is to identify, enumerate, and analyze occurrences of specific messages and message characteristics embedded in texts (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 1999). This research adopts an analytical framework developed based on Moore's tripartition of authenticity, which will be explained as follows.

Analytical Framework

This research uses Moore's theory of authenticity in popular culture as the Analytical Framework (Moore, 2002). Moore argued three aspects of authenticity: authenticity of expression, authenticity of execution, and authenticity of experience. As Moore argued authenticity must be authenticated by actions, his theory accords with this thesis theoretical background that sees authenticity in postmodern culture as cultural practices. Moore's three aspects of authenticity will be elaborated as follow.

Authenticity of expression also called first-person authenticity is the authenticity inhabiting in the expression of the music performer addressing the true integrity of himself or herself. According to Moore, authenticity of expression arises when "an originator (composer, performer) succeeds in conveying the impression that his/her utterance is one of integrity, that it represents an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with an audience." Authenticity of expression originates in the advocacies of traditionally produced and uncommercialized music, but various examples can be found in some other more modern forms of music. For example, in rock discourse, the expression of rock performer's "personal desires, feelings, and experiences" is emphasized to roundabout the criticism of electronic instruments of being inauthentic.

Authenticity of execution also called third-person authenticity is the authenticity bestowed through the accurate representation of the idea of emotion. It is related to first-person authenticity because third-person authenticity is judged based on the execution of a standard or convention that was established by a previous performer who successfully convey that emotion with an authenticity of expression. The standard or convention is usually being priced as traditional and original which need to be accurately performed to acquire authenticity of execution. It is called third-person authenticity because it is judged from a third-person point of view. One example of authenticity of execution could be found in the blues-rock movement in which practitioners attempt to convey the emotion of blues music by appropriating the same crying vocal style of a blues singer.

Authenticity of experience also called second-person authenticity resides in the personal experience the audience has with the music performer. It occurs "when a performance succeeds in conveying the impression to a listener that that listener's experience of life is being validated." It could be very subjective, and the authentication process can be simply through

the listeners' acceptance or rejection. It is criticized for being naïve, but it is not deemed inadequate. Authenticity of experience is important in that aspect of music which "articulates for its listeners a place of belonging". One example is the Celtic bands such as U2 whose performance created a social space for its audience who authenticate his or her experiences "simply by undergoing them".

Materials were categorized based on this tripartition of authenticity. Materials that were made by the K-Pop idols and expressed the state of emotion, value, and ideology that an artist puts inside his or her artistic creation will be categorized as authentication of expression. Materials about the performative aspect and the evaluation of the performative aspect, made by the K-Pop industry or K-Pop experts, will be categorized as authentication of execution. Lastly, authenticity of experience examines the experience of fans/consumers of Foreigner K-Pop, in which what fans want and expect from what they consider a real K-Pop idol will be inspected.
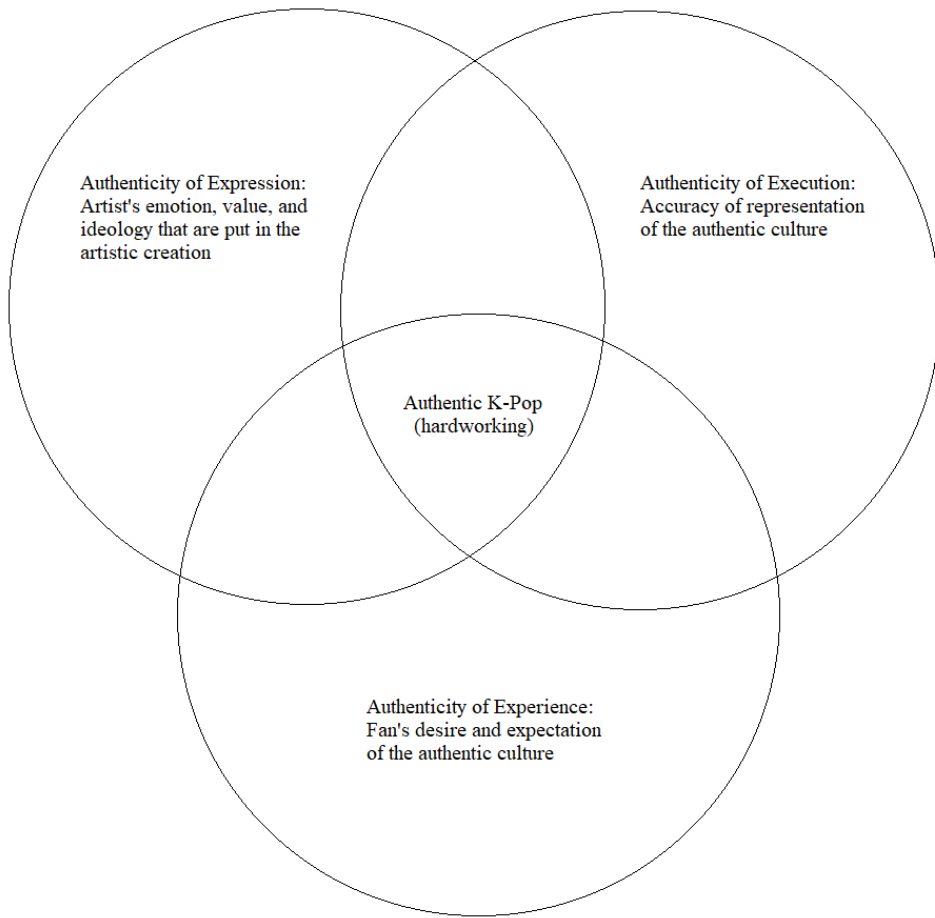
Figure 8. Three dimensions of authenticity

Chapter 2: Authenticity Claims and The Importance of Identifying Real K－Pop

With few exceptions, the discussion I paid attention to through my online ethnographical work about the Foreigner K－Pop was the practice and experience of K－Pop fans subculture and identity. One thing that I realized very soon with my observation was that K－Pop fans in the online mediascape where I did my field work seemed generally invested in expressing a social self that was in line with their personal cultural taste. The online mediascape provided a meaningful subcultural space within which participants could operate discursive identity work. In the case of K－Pop community reacting to the Foreigner K－Pop phenomenon, I observed a significant amount of contestation over what it meant to be authentic K－Pop.

1. Authenticity Claims

The authenticity claims found in the contestation reacting to the perceived controversy that was brought by the emergence of Foreigner K－Pop can be characterized into two camps of opinions. One criticized an authenticity which Foreigner K－Pop whose members were lacking for them abandoning their presumed non－Korean national－ethnical identity and choosing to perform the Korean national－ethnical one. The other criticized some of the Foreigner K－Pop for being inauthentic to the K－Pop culture, and they asserted that some of these Foreigner K－Pop cannot be authentic K－Pop. Both authenticity claims came with different forms. For example, "real" was a word used frequently and almost in the same fashion with "authentic," as K－Pop fans may invoke that some certain groups were not "real K－Pop."

The first camp of authenticity claims was characterized by their criticism

that members of Foreigner K-Pop lacked a sense of authenticity for them abandoning their presumed non-Korean national-ethnical identity and choosing to perform the Korean national-ethnical one. Usually, this camp of opinion about authenticity came with an essentialist understanding of K-Pop, which was exemplified in the comments that inaugurated an assumed K-Pop authenticity, which was highly connected to the performers' ethnicity, and the inauthenticity of their performance because of their non-Korean ethnic identity. Below, I have extracted comments to highlight some of these perspectives:

> My question is why they have to be a "K-Pop group." Why can' t they just be a normal pop group from UK? I feel like K-Pop is K-Pop. In other words, you can' t force to be K-Pop, because then that' s not authentic K-Pop. (By Jae Swag below "KAACHI is KPOP" - Interview with KAACHI (All 4 Members))

> I like that they like the Korean style, but I want them to have their own. Like I wish they incorporated Venezuela and Spanish into their songs instead. That would be so cool and make them unique. I love when Super junior has Spanish in their songs, and it would make them feel more authentic. (By Rocky56 below "KAACHI is KPOP" - Interview with KAACHI (All 4 Members))

Both comments were collected from a YouTube video of interview with KAACHI. In the first comment, Jae Swag stated its belief that K-Pop authenticity was something cannot be acquired but something was the way it was. In so doing, Jae Swag implied that KAACHI forced to be K-Pop, which was something they were not and made them inauthentic. The second comment, though in a rather encouraging tone, undernoted the Venezuela and Spanish socio-cultural identity of KAACHI and implied that those were of their authenticity instead of K-Pop.

The other camp of authenticity claim shifted their attention to the authenticity to K－Pop as an autonomized culture. K－Pop fans who had this opinion usually accused some of these Foreigner K－Pop of being inauthentic to the culture. This may come with an emphasized on a lack of knowledge or an insufficiency in what comprise of legitimate K－Pop. It was exemplified in the following comment:

> Imagine a person knowing so damn little about K－Pop that they can't tell the difference between an authentic K－Pop group and a K－Pop－inspired Western Pop group like KAACHI here. Couldn't be me. (By Korean Jesus below KAACHI's music video Your Turn)

As perfectly explained through the comment, Korean Jesus deemed KAACHI an inauthentic K－Pop but only a K－Pop－inspired Western Pop. And according to Korean Jesus, this misconception arrived from the fact that someone who claimed KAACHI authentic K－Pop knew so little about what authentic K－Pop. What set apart this camp of authenticity claims was that it was not about the inauthentic performers of Foreigner K－Pop, but it focused on the status of Foreigner K－Pop being inauthentic to the genre.

While the YouTube comments collection represented what Moore said to be an authenticity of experience for them representing the opinions of K－Pop audiences, with what have been discursively worked through these comments, it was manifested that different authenticity claims also invoked different authenticities. The first camp of authenticity claims presented an objection to that the Foreigner K－Pop idols possess some kinds of authenticity to themselves, which was what Moore said to be the first－person authenticity, and the second camp of authenticity claims was about the inauthentic execution of some of the Foreigner K－Pops, which was what Moore said to be the third－person authenticity (Moore, 2002).

2. Identifying Real K-Pop

As argued by Peterson, authentic qualities do "not inherent in the object, person or performance said to be authentic. Rather, authenticity is a claim made by or for someone, a thing or performance, and either accepted or rejected by relevant others" (Perterson, 2005). In this regard, it was found during the ethnographic work of this research that (in)authenticity claims made by K-Pop fans through YouTube comments, despite of being a powerful criticism of the Foreigner K-Pop, more often meant to spoke to other K-Pop fans and present the ability of oneself to differentiate "real K-Pop" from the fake one and preference of oneself of "the real one" instead of the fake. Many of these comments did not directly point out the inauthenticity of Foreigner K-Pop. They instead indirectly argued so by invoking other "real K-Pop, as in the comments that follow.

It's just pop, not K-Pop. (By Fumei Me below EXP Edition's music video Luv/hate)

They can be a good English Band, but don't came here acting like a real Korean. This is offensive. You can go back to your country or stay in South Korea, but don't try to be a Real Band of K-Pop. (By Mel issa below EXP Edition's music video Luv/hate)

I need a dose of real K-Pop now. Bye. I'm sorry I feel bad for them. They actually have good vocal but a K-Pop group??? They just have debuted in America as an American band. (By Unknown M below EXP Edition's music video Luv/hate)

IMO they are a K-Pop-inspired girl group, not a real K-Pop group. (By Ayu Puspita below KAACHI's music video Your Turn)

They look like middle aged aunties who gossips and showoffs, and their voice made me go to 10 hospitals, and when I found a comment saying watch the real K－Pop and bless your ears, I did. it worked. (By tiyasaaditya below 5 High's video PIRI cover)

The comments extracted from YouTube comments invoking a separation between real K－Pop and fake K－Pop exemplified the nature of authenticity claims that was often an attempt to construct a personal taste that was targeted toward what could be called real or authentic, which were equated to being of better quality or more desirability. In this regard, setting apart Foreigner K－Pop from real K－Pop could be seen as a construction of authentic fan identity whose cultural taste was about the authenticity to the genre. Therefore, comments made by K－Pop fans that incite an appreciation of real K－Pop were in effect "a distaste, a rejection of the tastes of others," the process of which Jancovich argued as audiences' engagement in the politics of "cultural struggles" (Jancovich, 2000). In the case of Foreigner K－Pop, I found the need to identify/distinct fake K－Pop from real K－Pop, particularly among the English－speaking fans, was linked to what can be called Koreaboo Stigma in the K－Pop culture.

3. Koreaboo Stigma

Many K－Pop fans during the observation downgraded Foreigner K－Pop through building a distinction between real K－Pop and fake K－Pop. This disction, used to comment the given cultural object, nevertheless, more functioned to paint the boundry between two divisions of subcultural identity, where one side was justified as authentic K－Pop fans and the other side, less desirable, was for inauthentic K－Pop fans, namely Koreaboo. In North America and some parts of Europe, Koreaboo is a term designed to disparage fans who are excessively interested in Korean pop culture. The invention of Koreaboo stigma was argued to manifest the prejudice of Western society against East Asian men, which was still relevent amidst the

popularity of Korean popular culture (원용진, 방희경, 이준형, 럭키마리사, 2020). As Koreaboo is usually associated with fans who have "excessive" and "delutional" attitude in their way of consuming Korean popular culture, they are also criticized for being "abnormal" and "superficial." On the other hand, fans who are not Koreaboo was usually apprasised by their maintainance of the "critical distance" from Korean culture while having a "genuine attitude" toward Korean pop culture.

Koreaboo Stigma was apparent in the criticism fans had of some Foreinger K-Pop. One of the most common ways was to say Foeigner K-Pop idols were Koreaboo or they represented Koreaboo characteristics. Below, I have extracted comments that highlighted such perspective:

> No Offense, but this is the worst case of Koreaboo I have ever witnessed. (By gangster rabbit below 5 High's video PIRI cover)

> There you are ladies and gentleman, the brand new Koreaboo!!! (By Supiah Meh below 5 High's video PIRI cover)

> I think what confuses me the most about them is the fact that they're based in the UK but are considering themselves a K-Pop idol group. I'm not Korean nor do I know how things go there, but as someone who is on the Western side of things, I think it would've made more sense if they came as a UK musical group like Little Mix or One Direction. The whole thing seemed like some sort of Koreaboo attempt to fit into the K-Pop genre, and it's honestly messing with my mind. (By Kafui A. below Former KPOP Idol Reacts to KAACHI)

> Popular opinion: They would have been better if they debuted as a pop group and not as Koreaboos. (By Rasmin Sadaf below KAACHI's music video Your Turn)

In the case of Forigner K—Pop, Koreaboo stigma was sometimes related to the (in)authenticity claims of the first—person authemticity, as Koreaboo usually also indicated someone who forgot about his or her identity and behaved as if he or she wants to become Korean. The following quotes from fans represented such connection.

> You guys acting as the very stereotypical Korean K—Pop idol (trying to do Agyeo and speaking terrible Korean) instead of trying to act like yourselves and showcase who you guys are as people and artist. It makes people dislike you even more which puts you guys in the Koreaboo section… (By yxuan below "KAACHI is KPOP" — Interview with KAACHI (All 4 Members))

> "Chunseo" is HISPANIC. Her name is Ruth…. That accent is fake as hell. EDIT: I meant her accent sounds like she's a Koreaboo… (By Ttsumani below Trainee reacts to KAACHI — THE KOREABOO GROUP UK/KPOP…?)

Meanwhile, Koreaboo stigma can be used to distinguish between real and accepted K—Pop and fake and rejected K—Pop. In this case, it was interesting that some Foreinger K—Pop were able to stay safe from the Koreaboo stigmization while some fell victim to it, as the following comment examplified:

> Y'all complained about UHSN, but now we have KAACHI, legit Koreaboos. See the difference is UHSN is actually good and produced a bop in under a month, plus actually cared to learn Korean culture and their language. (By vivi below UHSN's music video Popscicle)

In the above comment made by the bYouTube user vivi, it can be seen that

his or her distaste was expressed through an accusation of KAACHI being Koreaboo while UHSN being not. The comment provided examples for both Foreigner K－Pop being Koreaboo and Foreigner K－Pop not being Koreaboo, which implied there was a right way for the execution of Foreigner K－Pop to be accepted by the K－Pop community and opened a potential space for non－Korean K－Pop idols to compete a seat for themselves in the culture.

4. Summary and Remarks

In this chapter, I illustrated how K－Pop communities deemed (some, if not all) Foreigner K－Pop inauthentic. Three identical ways were observed through my ethnographic work in the research. They were through direct (in)authenticity claims, identifying real K－Pop, and Koreaboo stigma. In general, two camps of (in)authenticity claims were identified. The first one concerned the authentic expression of the Foreigner K－Pop idols, and the other one underlined Foreigner K－Pop as an inauthentic execution of K－Pop culture. Although I have pointed out each camp’s connection to what Moore described as the first－person and the third person authenticity, these authentication works did not happen only as an end. Instead, the need to identify authentic and inauthentic K－Pop, which became a means, was often found to be the discursive work of K－Pop fans’ cultural struggle for a social identity of the self (Jancovich, 2000). This manifested in that fans called Foreigner K-pop Koreaboo, a term coined between K－Pop fans, mostly in North Aemrica and part of Europe, to disparage fans who are “excessively” interested in Korean pop culture and be not “genuine” to the appreciation of Korean cultural contents (원용진, 방희경, 이준형, 럭키마리사, 2020). While the stigma was previously used between K－Pop fans, in the case of Foreigner K－Pop, the term was assigned to Foreigner K－Pop idols and, as I have outlined, used to discredit their authenticity.

Chapter 3: Displaying K-Pop Fan Identity: From Real K-Pop Fan to Real K-Pop Idol

While Koreaboo stigma was made associative to fans who were not genuine, excessive, obsessed, uncritical, and unintellectual, it divided the K-Pop community with a taste- and behavior- based cultural distinction, where one side was justified as being true to the culture and the other rejected as inauthentic. It appeared, and it would be absurd to assume differently, that both the foreigner K-Pop idols and the production companies behind them were well-aware of it, considering how much both have tried to display they belong to the side of real fans. The ways through which they achieved that will be presented in this chapter.

1. Rejecting Koreaboo Stigma

It was characteristic that most Foreigner K-Pop idols studied rejected Koreaboo Stigma that was put on them. They did so, directly, by showing how much they are proud of their root of identity, in this case, a non-Korean one, or, indirectly, by talking about where they are from and utilizing their root of identity in their promotion. In the interview with EXP Edition, Sime emphasized for more than one time that he is from Croatia (because people usually introduced EXP Edition that they are from the US), and he proudly shared that one of his dream of being a K-Pop star is that he wants to be on Korean entertainment show to represent Croatia. On the other hand, in the interview with BLACKSWAN, member Fatou and Leia greeted their fans with the language of their country of origin. It was noteworthy that Dani from KAACHI unequivocally spoke up for themselves in fighting back the Koreaboo stigma that, she reckoned as absurd, was put on them,

… people are like why you are Korean music… we are doing

Korean music or doing like K－Pop genre doesn't mean we are trying to ethnically be Korean… as the foreign members… none of us has ever tried to be Korean… we are very proud of our own cultures.

2. Genuineness, Fan Identity, and Comradeship

Foreigner K－Pop idols often found themselves in need of explaining the reason why they started to be part of the culture. One way of doing this was by telling the story of them starting to listen to K－Pop and how K－Pop attracted them in the first place. Loki from EXP Edition told the audience how he started liking K－Pop and became a K－Pop fan,

> I grew up in Texas… there are a lot of Koreans in Texas, and I had a lot of Korean friends… I remember I was like on the bus to school and all my friends … are all crowded around someone's cellphone, and they were watching Big Bang's Haru Haru music video, and that was like my first introduction to K－Pop. And that was really like … I had never seen anything like it before … it was immediately attractive and like addictive.

Following Loki, Hunter explained that he got to know K－Pop because he was with his Korean friend in a Noraebang in Korean town, and Frankie said he danced to K－Pop often when he was trained to be a professional dancer. The need for an explanation, made in English and about a non－Korean not living in Korea, of their passage from a non－K－Pop－fan to a K－Pop－fan revealed the characteristic of K－Pop as a subculture in most areas in the world. These various disclosures, therefore, served as manifesto that declared that they were just like any other who was watching, that they belong to this subcultural community.

Apart from explaining how they became a K－Pop fan, another common way was to simply explain the K－Pop acts/idols whom them loved. For example, Fatou and Leia from BLACKSWAN, from Belgium and Brazil, were specifically asked by the broadcast host about the role model K－Pop group they aspired to be, Fatou and Leia answered respectively,

> For me, it is Girls Generation. Like, they are legends, like literally legends. They are extremely talented. They have great stage presence, amazing songs. They are just amazing.

> For me, it is BLACKPINK. I think they are cool. And they are very famous overseas. If we can become as famous as BLACKPINK, it will be fantastic.

Through invoking K－Pop, not only did Fatou and Leia express they belonged to the culture but also present that they were knowledgeable about K－Pop and will make music align with other great K－Pop. These were important source of their expression that contented potential Koreaboo Stigma because they explained these Foreigner K－Pop idols' K－Pop fan identity. In view of being a K－Pop fan was the number one necessary condition to be a K－Pop idol, nothing summarized why these non－Koreans wanted to be a K－Pop idol better than Nicole's answer to why joined KAACHI, despite of the fact that as a K－Pop fan, they are fully aware of the controversy of Foreigner K－Pop, "We love K－Pop."

One significant effect of exhibition of these Foreigner K－Pop idols' genuineness of being a K－Pop fan was to further foster a comradeship with their audiences, which was a major theme in the execution of Foreigner K－Pop, of which an atypical example can be found in the conversation between Liisu and Luna in the first episode of UHSN,

> Liisu: Do you have any like K－Pop dancer friends?

Luna: No.

Liisu: No, me neither.

Luna: K－Pop is more and more popular. But no one dances it. For example, in Germany, there are people who do like random play dance in Germany in public, but in Poland, there is never.

Liisu: I have like friends like K－Pop, but not dances as well. I want to dance with people together like so bad.

This conversation was followed by Liisu's disclosure that she was excited about meeting people who "enjoy the same thing" in her trip to Korea and prefaced the upcoming episodes of comradeship these girls developed through their living experience, trainings, going to concerts, and other activities in Korea. The comradeship was particularly portrayed in a positive tone, be it cheerful, encouraging, or emotional. A cheerful case could be seen in the everyday routine of the girls when they waked up, that they played K－Pop music that they danced together to when they were doing their other morning routine. Such incident was portraited as a shared pleasure of them, which can only be enjoyed with "K－Pop dancer friends" that are not easy to find in their places of origin. Similar scenes and narrations can be found throughout the show.

In an environment of mediated cultural contact, Song concluded that intimacy and ordinariness are important qualities that internet celebrities strategically adopted to construct their authenticity (Song, 2018). In this research that analyzed the expression and execution of Foreigner K－Pop, I have demonstrated that both were incited to create a sense of intimacy and ordinariness that were meant to be shared with their audiences. These were contestations to Koreaboo Stigma and inauthentic accusation that were assigned to them, with which they argued an authenticity of themselves as K－Pop idols.

3. Comprehensive, Thoughtful, and Cultured: From

Real Fans to Real K－Pop Idols

While Koreaboo Stigma directly indicate to "superficial" K－Pop fans who have "excessive" and "unrealistic fantasy" about Korea, to state that they belong to the "authentic fan" side, Foreigner K－Pop idols often deliberated, were made with, a cultured and comprehensive self－image, persona, as a K－Pop idol. This was first and foremost felt through the scene that members of EXP Edition tried to explain why they think K－Pop was so different and attractive compared to other cultural forms. Below, I quoted Hunter from his sharing that compared K－Pop to American Pop.

> For a while, American boy groups… especially lately in the past five year, they have just kind of been sticking to just singing, just looking good, having catchy songs, that it is not really about their performance or about the visual necessarily, especially in terms of music videos and performances. And K－Pop it is all encompassing. It is about the style, like the new fashions, that the dance is on just a whole another level. … Most of the big groups (from American pop) lately, they just go on these huge award shows, these huge platforms, and they just stand and sing, like that's it, and maybe a little cross, and then that's their entire performance. So for us as a performer, it is so much more enjoyable to have all these different aspects come in, you know, wearing the latest fashions and it different like all different types of music coming together with hip－hop, rap, R&B, EDM, which is kind of in our sound lately, so much more fun as a performer (of K－Pop).

In the above quote, it can be seen that Hunter provided a thorough and comprehensive explanation why he thought becoming a K－Pop performer is much more enjoyable than becoming else type, which, on the one hand,

legitimized his choice to be a K-Pop idol and, on the other hand, supported the "authentic K-Pop fan" self-image that they deliberately created. Besides showing a deeper appreciation of K-Pop, another thing that Foreigner K-Pop did to, either intentionally or unintentionally, set apart themselves from other "superficial" K-Pop fans was to state their grandiose vision or blueprint of being a Foreigner K-Pop idol. This idea was evident in Dani's story about how she was inspired to join K-Pop,

> I remember when I was out there (in Korea), I happened to talk to this A-Jo-Shi in Hongdae. And he was telling me about… how he thinks there should be more foreigners because … it will make K-Pop more popular internationally and bring more people to be interested in Korean culture and be kind of like something that can help boost Korea.

In like manner, Mariam from Prisma shared her goal of being a K-Pop idol, "if we are gonna be successful, we will open a lot of doors for foreigners, (who) … want to do K-Pop in their life as a job." These goals and visions presented these Foreigner K-Pop idols as thoughtful figures.

Similar attempts were also evident in the execution of Foreigner K-Pop. In the TV program UHSN, it was hallmark that these foreign girls had a "deeper" and "extensive" appreciation of K-Pop culture. Three fields have been regularly referred for such a purpose. These three fields were the traditional Korea, the regional Korea outside of Seoul, and the history of Korea. For example, Oline explained in episode 6 the reason that she wanted to visit Gyeongju because she was "interested in traditional Korean culture and learning about that aspect of things." and the below anecdote that featured on the way Lissu, Livia, and Oline went to Gyeongju exemplified what it is called a "not superficial" way of appreciating K-Pop.

> Livia: We are going to the museum of Korean pop music. That's

really interesting.

Oline: That is gonna be interesting.

Livia: I think its gonna probably include stuff like trot music kind of stuff, like where Korean pop music started.

Oline: It is really interesting, honestly, about like how K-Pop, especially over the past years, is sort of like really being globalized.

If what Koreaboo implies was a "superficial" K-Pop fan who was "excessively obsessed" with the idols that they were fanatic about, the image that the expression and execution of Foreigner K-Pop analyzed in this section certainly presented a cultured and intellectual image of a K-Pop fan who did not only have a comprehensive knowledge about K-Pop but also a thoughtful attitude about themselves being in the culture.

4. Summary and Remarks

It was not unique to K-Pop that subculture communities tended to develop a "right cultural ticket" to define authenticity of subcultural identity based on a boundary policing at the behavioral level of fans. In the case of Ice Hockey fans, Crawford and Gosling have observed that male ice hockey fans developed a discourse that denigrated the existence of female fans who were, unjustifiably and wrongly, criticized for being "inauthentic and not dedicated" in their support (Crawford & Gosling, 2004). In the case of international, mostly English-sphere, K-Pop communities reacting to Foreigner K-Pop, this chapter demonstrated the behavioral policing effect that Koreaboo stigma has also brought to the individual non-Korean K-Pop idols. Non-Korean K-Pop idols tended to behave in a way that carefully opposite to the Koreaboo Stigma. First, they found the need to reiterate their non-Korean identity. Second, they tended to share in detail their stories with K-Pop that potentially functioned as a strategy to build an

emotional bond between them and the audience. Third, they usually deliberate a comprehensive, thoughtful, and cultured K－Pop fan image of themselves. It was also noticeable that a discourse of Korea was implemented in the struggle of authenticity for these Foreigner K－Pop idols, that it was Korean immigrants that got them into the world of K－Pop, that it was Korea that bonded them together, that it was a visit to Korea that inspired them to be a K－Pop idol, and that it was the interest in other parts about Korea that distinguish their unique taste. Such an appropriation of Korea became an important resource for the authentication of Foreigner K－Pop.

Chapter 4: Disrupting Boundaries of K

Despite the cultural sociologist critique that K-Pop is not Korean music and does not convey values and aesthetic of Korean performance (Lie, 2012), it was evident that many K-Pop fans were unwilling to accept the idea that a "non-Korean" K-Pop was as valid as a "Korean" one. Like in the case of blue music (Rudinow, 1994) and hip-hop community (McLeod, 1999), and other subculturalists, there were many K-Pop fans who "talked" about the subculture in essentialist terms, creating boundaries between themselves and others who were seen as inauthentic to the culture. The dispute mainly concerned the boundaries of K in K-Pop, which was stirred up by the attempt to "redefine" K-Pop from these Foreigner K-Pop.

1. (Re)Defining K-Pop

In both the interviews with EXP Edition and with KAACHI, "what K-Pop is" came as an important topic during the conversation. Both groups gave an ethnicity-free answer that K-Pop is a genre that does not necessarily need to be performed by Korean, and both groups cited the fact that most K-Pop acts consist non-Korean members. Speaking of the reason that their music can be identified as K-Pop, Coco from KAACHI said,

> I am pretty sure there are like certain elements which make K-Pop like dancing music or like group dance, and also like matching like members' outfits, like in the concept and training and fandom and that. But I think nowadays there are so many K-Pop idol groups including foreign members from various countries, and so you know to be honest, like in English, I mean in lyrics, like, English can be seen a lot in many K-Pop songs, so it is not really limited in like any geographical thing.

Coco's argument was supported by Hunter and Koki from EXP Edition, who stated that K-Pop is a genre with some sort of distinct feature and foreigners has been in part of it for a long time,

> (K-Pop) is just a genre music, and that is why we took a liking to it so much because of all the aspects that make it what it is, the styles, the videos, the visuals, everything.

> Also like it is not that foreigners haven't been in K-Pop. It's just that non-Asians haven't been in K-Pop before. And foreigners have been in K-Pop for a very long time, but we are just kind of the first.

The ethnicity-free answer can be seen as a justification for their legitimacy in K-Pop as Foreigner K-Pop. It was interesting that both answers pointed out that foreigners have been part of K-Pop for a long time, which led to the argument that it was not valid to say they are not K-Pop because they are not Korean. Nevertheless, they recognized their status as foreigner did not meet expectations of K-Pop from most people to some degree. Below, I quoted opinions of Frankie from EXP Edition and Nicole from KACCHI.

> K-Pop is the type of genre that just keeps changing. Every year you see that different changes. Even the music style keeps changing, and now like there is foreigner being added to the group, and there is now a non-Korean girl group that is coming out.

> ··· this is something very different that we are trying to do here. It is not just including foreigners in a Korean label in Korea but doing that also abroad. But it is just because we want to ··· expand K-Pop also in other countries as well this way, not just like in Korea. Because ··· you know, K-Pop has been like getting more popular worldwide, and it's just also a way of like making it even

expand more.

With that "K-Pop is changing" and "we want to expand K-Pop", members from EXP Edition and KAACHI considered what they are doing was changing K-Pop, effectively expanding the ethnical and geographical boundary of K-Pop, from a strict and narrowed perception of Asia/Korea to world (ethnically diverse and geographically dispersed) culture. In speaking of the ethnic diversity, Miriam from Prisma shared a similar viewpoint, "we are the first group like that."

2. Proponents: Pride, Diversity, and Representation

In response to the ethnic diversification and geographical dispersal brought about by Foreigner K-Pop, some fans were clearly proponents of it. Strictly speaking, it was not all proponents respond the same to the ethnic diversification attempts and the geographical dispersal attempts. Based on my observation, opinions that favored ethnic diversification of K-Pop were surly more noticeable than opinions that favored the other. Although it might be worthy of digging into why the K-Pop community tended to accept a geographically defined K-Pop more than an ethnically bounded one, this section focused on the shared discourses that were adopted by either side of the proponents. These shared discourses were about pride, diversity, and representation. Below, I extracted some comments that best delivered the opinion of such.

> I don't stan them yet, but I want to! I'm an Italian girl, and I'm proud of Miriam. Love them all! (By Nighhtcorely below PRISMA - Breakout [Official Video])

> I'm from Philippines, and I saw many comments about sb19… I'm really happy because all the comments I read about sb19 is so

good and amazing. So thank you guys… proud Filipino here. (By Claire Pauli below Singer Reacts to INDIA'S First Kpop Group! +SB19, ZGirls, B Pop?)

As an Arabian, I'm proud one of them is an Egyptian Muslim girl. (By Muna Adel below 유학소녀 (UHSN) – 팝시클 (POPSICLE) Music Video)

Including a Latina and a black girl is a HUGE step for diversity in K-Pop, and I'm loving it. (By YESY MARTINEZ below MV ㅣ BLACKSWAN (블랙스완) – Tonight ㅣ Goodbye RANIA)

There is a difference between being a Koreaboo and just expressing your love and expressing your wisdom to another culture. Imagine trying to learn a completely different culture that's foreigner to you. That's such a beautiful thing… (By K-pp Drama below 유학소녀 (UHSN) – 팝시클 (POPSICLE) Music Video)

This is why representation of color, race and gender is so important in the music industry. Just imagine how happy the boys and girls of color who watched it were. So inspirational. (By YOUTUBE TV below MV ㅣ BLACKSWAN (블랙스완) – Tonight ㅣ Goodbye RANIA)

As a colored girl who loves K-Pop, I've never felt more included in the K-Pop community than now. Seeing someone who is of color being an idol makes me so happy. Representation matters !!! This is a huge step. (By Jaidyn k. M below MV ㅣ BLACKSWAN (블랙스완) – Tonight ㅣ Goodbye RANIA)

In short, the diversity of different cultures and different races/

ethnicities/nationalities, which were represented through Foreigner K-Pop and within the K-Pop community, generated a sense of pride of the K-Pop fans from the same sort. This sense of being included and feeling proud became the reason that international K-Pop fans supported Foreigner K-Pop. From this point of view, it was clear that the Foreigner K-Pops attempts to "redefine" K-Pop did receive some proclamation.

3. Opponents: Equality, Opportunities, and Respect

Meanwhile, there were also many opponent opinions collected during the research. Opponents' opinion stood in the opposite side to the proponents. While diversity was what proponents of Foreigner K-Pop cheered for, it was at the same time what opponents were worried about, that Foreigner K-Pop will reduce the diversity. It sounded perplexing at the first sight, but if what proponents celebrated was diversity at a level within K-Pop, what opponents worried about was the diversity at a trans-continental level. This was manifested in that Asian/Korean Asia and Black/White West binary proposition of pop culture made by the opponents of Foreigner K-Pop. According to this proposition, if not overly simplified, the Black/White (especially White) West is the global dominant culture, and when the West infiltrates the Asian/Korean cultural sphere that has been secured by K-Pop, the inequality between the West and Asia at the global level will become nothing but maintained, which will cause diversity to reduce. Below, I extracted some comments that presented the opinions of such.

> White men have been able to be in successful boy groups in the music industry worldwide since the dawn of time. When has there been a successful Asian boy band in America? Yes, BTS has debuted in America, but they had to work REALLY, RELLY hard to get there. They are STILL experiencing racism and opposition in America. White men have never had that. … Why is it that

Asian-American artists like Amber Liu and Eric Nam have to go to Korea to get recognition in the media? Because they would have been rejected in their own country and yet, white men, who have never experienced a lack of representation in their life get to go to another country and establish a debut with NO training and just have success handed to them? Our culture has been suppressed and mocked for hundreds of years… (By Stressed Out Azim below EXP Edition's music video Luv/hate)

You can clearly see that they actually are talented. The problem is that they don't speak Korean fluently, they know nothing about Korean culture, and they haven't trained to become 'idols' like they're supposed to do. This is not about them not being Asian, it's more of a "if you wanna become a K-Pop idol, at least you have to work just as hard as K-Kop idols do and improve your dance moves a little more". … Asian people don't have that many chances in the USA, so I understand why they feel disrespected. K-Pop is a place where they can just be themselves and do their thing, it's for them, and now Americans want to fuck with that and they're obviously not happy… (By Eva Bravo below EXP Edition's music video Luv/hate)

My personal grievance with the companies behind KAACHI and EXP Edition is that they are using the label K-Pop for publicity purposes and attempting to whitewash it by labelling it as "international K-Pop". K-Pop has been critical in helping Asian artists carve out a piece of the Western dominated popular music scene for themselves. As an Asian person the success of K-Pop has shown me that we can be authentically ourselves and still succeed in a system that amplified voices of the West and ignored voices of the East. (By CLsaranghae7890 below "KAACHI is KPOP" - Interview with KAACHI (All 4 Members))

It can be seen from the comments presented above that a key concept of inequality (between the Asian/Korean East and White West), Opportunities (Hard work of Asian), and respect (for Korean/K-Pop community) was incited in the discourses against Foreigner K-Pop. The worry that the join of Foreigner K-Pop will threaten the place that Asian artists have been working so hard to secure from the opponents of Foreigner K-Pop was an instance similar to "The Great Music Robbery" coined by Baraka that argued the white American's collective appropriation of the Black American culture that has caused the demolish of Black American culture (Rudinow, 1994, p. 130). Although whether Foreigner K-Pop intended to (or will) rob any culture from Asia cannot be verified, evident in the anger of these opponent was the subcultural community which tried to preserve a culture claimed to be of its belongingness.

4. Summary and Remarks

In this chapter, I have presented the disrupting boundaries of the K in K-Pop that was caused by the statement of Foreigner K-Pop who wants to do "something new" to the culture. This "something new" has in turn disrupted K-Pop community and the connotation of K in that one side of the segregation were the proponents of Foreigner K-Pop and the other side the opponents. I have also argued that the proponents' discourse centered around the idea of pride, diversity, and representation, subjects that proponents thought Foreigner K-Pop were able to provide for them. Meanwhile, the opponents' discourse was surrounded by a question about equality, opportunities, and respect, subjects that opponents proposed Foreigner K-Pop would bring a negative impact to K-Pop community. With that, I attempted to argue that the disruption of boundaries of the K in K-Pop happens in the different imagination of the extent to which the K indicates. While one site projected a more dynamic imagination, the other

asserted the need for a tighter and more closed community.

Chapter 5: Fans' Critic as Neoliberal Governmentality

The disruption of boundaries of K in K-Pop presented in the previous chapter resonated a similar controversy in politics in recent years, the challenges posited to multiculturalism, a tension of justice and injustice between different subcultural groups within a sovereign state (Gutmann, 1993). While Gutmann proposed a deliberative universalism as the overarching philosophy to deal with such challenges, in the setting within a culture about the question of multiculturalism, especially a highly commercialized one such as K-Pop, where a single sovereign power is inapplicable, it was neoliberalism that governed and directed the various behavior of culture (Lorenzini, 2018). This was evident in that fans actively tried to define what is and what is not (or why it is and why it is not) K-Pop during my ethnographic work, whose attempt to define was usually followed by an implication that Foreigner K-Pop was second grade. Below are a few examples of such fans' attempts.

> Their skills are pitifully lacking that they shouldn't even call themselves a K-Pop group. Also, their complete disregard for training, dedication, and planning which the K-Pop industry entails is shocking. It actually hurts to watch and listen to them… they're just some girls who like K-Pop… Anything more than that would be a disgrace to K-Pop. (By Ting Ch below Singer Reacts to INDIA'S First Kpop Group! +SB19, ZGirls, B Pop?)

> These girls don't have the qualities (at least not yet) to be in the K-Pop industry. NO, I'm not saying they are talentless! They all have the capability to become big, but I just don't think being a K-Pop artist is one of them. Trainees go through so many ups and down, not only physically but mentally. K-Pop is obviously

from Korea, and you can't have a group that··· doesn't at least have a Korean fluent speaker··· can't speak Korean··· and the fact that they have no creativity. (By Dani Garcia below "KAACHI is KPOP" - Interview with KAACHI (All 4 Members))

It was clear with the extracted comments presented above that training was a recurrent theme in the criticism of K-Pop. Why a passage of training for K-Pop idols was important to K-Pop fans? And how the passage of training has been used by fans to construct the idea of authentic K-Pop? In this chapter, I present my study of four creative workers who were previously involved in the K-Pop industry and the way they addressed the problems of Foreigner K-Pop, treated as professional evaluation about the aspect of authentic execution (Moore, 2002). In so doing, I argued fans' critics as neoliberal governmentality, which formed various resources that transformed the authenticity of cultural actors in the field, in this case, Foreigner K-Pop idols, into the very instrument through which individuals are directed into a governable subjectivity as their strong desire and need to survive in the K-Pop industry.

1. Korean Proficiency

Korean proficiency was one of the fields where K-Pop professionals evaluated Foreigner K-Pop. In the most restrict case, the idol's Korean ability was considered necessary for K-Pop idols to be a K-Pop idol. After watching KAACHI's music video and media outlets which showed KAACHI's unsophisticated Korean ability, Kinryyy asserted, "how can you call yourself K-Pop group when you don't actually speak Korean?" It was clear with the quote that disregarded KAACHI's credibility of being K-Pop because of their lack of Korean ability.

In a reversed perspective and a rather positive tone, the fact that foreign

K－Pop idols try to speak and sing in Korean was appreciated and seen as a merit. Although these foreign K－Pop idols did not present their Korean proficiency to an acceptable level, K－Pop professionals might still see the fact that Korean is spoken as an indication of K－Pop. This perspective was core to Jessica Lee's evaluation. She explained, "From hearing the Korean accent, I could tell that they don't speak Korean, or they are not fluent in Korean. But I would still appreciate the fact that they still try to sing in Korean."

More importantly, Korean proficiency of the singer was usually connected with the essential quality of a K－Pop song. Crazy Grace pointed out the poor Korean proficiency of 5 High, an Indian K－Pop group, after she watched their cover of PIRI from Dreamcatcher. She explained, "They are singing in Korean. Of course, it's not that pleasing to the ear because they don't speak Korean fluently." To Crazy Grace, the poor Korean proficiency of the singer directly indicated to the poor execution of K－Pop songs. In this way, a K－Pop song was not evaluated by its melody, rhyme or flow, or vocal skills but judged by the singers' ability to pronounce Korean in a pleasing way.

With the three K－Pop experts' opinion presented above, it was characteristic that the Korean language proficiency was a major field of the execution of a K－Pop song. Three perspectives were found. The first one saw the ability to speak good Korean is essential to K－Pop idols. The second one saw the attempts to speak Korean both in songs and in interview as indicator to the status of K－Pop idol. The third one asserted "pleasing" Korean pronunciation is critical factors in a good K－Pop song. Either one explained well the importance of Korean language to K－Pop culture.

2. The Right K－Pop Style

A Reference to K－Pop style was another shared theme in the evaluations of Foreigner K－Pop by K－Pop professionals. Usually it happened when a scene, a note of the music, or a choreography intrigued these K－Pop professionals about K－Pop styles. To support what they called as K－Pop style, K－Pop professionals usually used examples from other K－Pop acts and compared them to the K－Pop styles observed from Foreigner K－Pops. Sometimes, K－Pop professionals would showcase how K－Pop style is by themselves.

After watching SB19's music video ALAB, Jonathan Yau pointed out the color use in the music video was of the K－Pop kind. In ALAB, each member of SB19 has a different theme color. He added various other "K－Pop" videos in his video to display the "K－Pop style" that he referred to. He included examples from music videos of NCT, Itzy, and BTS. Regarding the choreography, Jonathan Yau explained that SB19 followed K－Pop style. He said that it was the old school K－Pop style. Again, he showcased examples of choreography of other "K－Pop," through which he explained what he meant with the new school and old school. He said that Beast's Beautiful was the perfect example of an old school choreography, simple and repetitive, styles designed to make it easy to learn and remember. As for the new school, he referred to groups such as NCT and BTS, whose choreographies were usually composed of complicated moves and difficult body movement.

Jessica also pointed out the K－Pop style that KAAICH attempted to recreate, but she pointed out how KAACHI did it wrong. She explained that KAACHI's debut song Your Turn belongs to the upbeat songs in the K－Pop genre, but she criticized that KAACHI did not do it in the right way that K－Pop do it. She asserted, "when I was in the K－Pop industry, there was a particular singing style for those kinds of songs. There are a lot of tension in your voice, really giving an accent or emphasis on each note." After her explanation, she performed a short parse in KAACHI's song with the right

way of doing it that she asserted. After her showcase, she said, "I don't see that characteristic in that." She added that KAACHI's singing style was "dragging" and in an upbeat K-Pop song, the voice should be "poppy and bubbly."

Based on Jonathan Yau's and Jessica Lee's reaction, it was observed that whether K-Pop style was practiced and represented by Foreigner K-Pop or not was an important criterion for Foreigner K-Pop. Through the K-Pop professionals' personal display of examples of real K-Pop, they attempted to convince their audiences about the validity of such evaluation. However, there was no systematic explanation of K-Pop style observed during the research. The way K-Pop professionals explained K-Pop style thus fell into a case-by-case instance and hardly contributed to the development of a wholesome knowledge of K-Pop. It was rather important to see how K-Pop professionals positioned Foreigner K-Pop in relation to the original K-Pop that were recreated and represented.

3. Trained for Better Quality

Many K-Pop professionals criticized the unprofessional quality of music and performance of Foreigner K-Pops. Although there were some good comments made by these K-Pop professionals, most Foreigner K-Pop were called out for being unprofessional and being of poor quality. Sometimes it was the music video production being criticized. Other times, it was foreign K-Pop idols being criticized. The poor quality and poor performance of Foreigner K-Pop was then said to be unworthy of watching and not contributing to the K-Pop culture, and the training system was usually later referred to as the reason of high-quality real K-Pop.

Jessica Lee and Jonathan Yau criticized the unprofessional production of the Foreigner K-Pops they reviewed. In the following quote, Jessica Lee

criticized KAACHI's song was not professionally recorded and that KAACHI's dance was not performed in synchronization.

> The song sounds like it's not recorded in a professional setting, or even it is they did not go through the mastering process. So when I was in the K-Pop industry, after you record the song and they tuned it and all that, then they go to a separate a mastering room. And in that process, what they do is they try to blend the voice of the singer into the melody, so it seems like it is one. You know, not like voices separate and the melodies separate. But this one sounds like it is separate. Now about their dance, yeah, they are definitely not synchronized, like even the hand movement. It's like all different. And there is no power. ⋯ As all you guys all know, synchronization, when it comes to dancing, is one of the major characteristics of K-Pop idols. I think that is also something they could work on if they want to be labeled as a K-Pop group. Then I think they should be reaching that kind of level or standard that typical K-Pop groups have.

Jessica Lee's conclusion was that KAACHI did not reach the quality K-Pop fans expect from K-Pop. In a similar vein, Jonathan Yau said that he thinks SB19 did not have their clothing good enough. He said that it looks like SB19 are "wearing their own clothes to do the music video."

Contrary to Jessica Lee's and Jonathan Yau's focus on the production, be it recording, dancing, or clothing, Kinryyy and Crazy Grace put the emphasis of their criticism on the idols they reviewed. Kinryyy argued that he does not think members of KAACHI have what K-Pop performers are required to have. He said, "Very harshly speaking, I don't think that they can even pass to become a trainee in Korea⋯ Korea competition is very crazy, and even the trainee seems like an idol already⋯ I don't think some of them are good enough to even become a trainee." Usually K-Pop idols that were

seen on stage have gone through years of trainee life when they had to receive intensive training and waited to get promoted by their agency to become a K－Pop idol. By saying KAACHI did not have the level of skills that other K－Pop trainees had, Kinryyy disregarded their status as K－Pop idol. Meanwhile, referencing to KAACHI and 5 High, Crazy Grace argued that most of them are in lack of Gibonki, a Korean vocabulary can be translated to basis in English. She said,

> One of the things that differentiates the real K－Pop groups versus, you know, these girl groups that we are seeing these days, I think it really has to do with the Gibonki. In English, Gibonki is the basis, the basic training, the foundations of everything. If you guys are dancers, you guys know what I am talking about. We do so much of the basis where you have to, like, learn the lines of the body. You also need to get the strength down when it comes to dancing. You need to know how to release it, hold it. The most thing that I did as a trainee was the up and downs bounce. Bounce is with every single music. There is rhythm in every single song… You don’t have the basics down. Your dance really looks small. It looks like your body is shaky, you don’t have any strength, and you don’t really have that clean line whenever you’re dancing or doing any moves because it’s really about the basis when you are doing anything.

With her personal experience as a trainee, Crazy Grace pointed out that many foreign K－Pop idols did not receive enough training so they cannot have the same amount of quality delivered in their performance. To Crazy Grace, the quality, which was the result of years of training, was what differentiate a professional performer and an amateur, and she asserted many foreign K－Pop idols only belong to the amateur’s side.

The analysis found that quality is a theme where criticism made by K－Pop

professionals about Foreigner K-Pop, and the quality was usually linked to some sorts of insider knowledge of the K-Pop industry and acquired through years of hardworking by following the K-Pop trainee system. The analysis found that poor execution of a K-Pop song was rarely called out as the reason that Foreigner K-Pop was not K-Pop. Instead, the poor execution of a K-Pop song was more linked to the poor quality of the performer and thus to the criticism that Foreigner K-Pops were not qualified enough to be K-Pop.

4. Summary and Remarks

In a commercial setting where K-Pop idols ceaselessly need to "take care of itself" for self-establishment in the culture has shifted the cultural production onto what the consumers asked from the idols that were consumed (홍지아 & 정윤정, 2018). In the beginning of this chapter, I have outlined the importance of training that was recurrent in the definition of K-Pop made by K-Pop fans. I have used discourses made by four K-Pop professionals as an example and argued three themes that were invoked as the reasons why K-Pop idols were expected to undergo years of training. These themes, Korean proficiency, the right K-Pop styles, and basic qualities, were used to argue against the legitimacy of Foreigner K-Pop in the culture. These themes provided resourceful insight for Foreigner K-Pop idols to instrument their subjectivity in the survival of K-Pop cultural field.

It was observed that these themes resonated in topics that were addressed in most interviews with Foreigner K-Pop. For example, Nichole from KAACHI explained how they were trained in their interview with DKDKTV. Sally from Prisma took the chance she was on the camera and made a shout out to their fans, "We promised to keep working our hardest, so that we can keep making good music and creating gao stuff for you guys." And

Frankie from EXP Edition explained that Korean was the field where members spent the most energy to refine. He said that they have studied hard to "be as perfect as possible" and that they filled in the lyrics by themselves. These were examples that showed how Foreigner K-Pop idols interacted with the discourses that have been constructed by fans surrounding their existence in the K-Pop community.

It was also interesting to point out how fans addressed the hardworking ethics as Korean and as Asian and how this discourse was combined with the discourses created by K-Pop professionals invoking the importance of training in the production of K-Pop. The combination was seen as the direct result of the commercialization of idols' everyday life and the heavy use of audition programs to promote idols in the recent K-Pop industry. The importance of it in facilitating the quality of K-Pop is clear in the evaluation made by K-Pop professionals, just as it is important in the discussions about authenticity. With the commercialization of idols' everyday life and the heavy use of audition programs, the passage of training of an idol has become inseparable for fans to tell the authenticity of the given K-Pop idols and justifiable when inauthenticity was invoked.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

K-Pop, a music genre that was originally developed from Korea, was a culture long considered inauthentic by many cultural critics and scholars, whose members faced the need to grow a sense of authenticity of the culture in reaction to the potential threats of assimilation from an outside culture which was characterized, in this research, by the join of Foreigner K-Pop in the recent years. Previous literature about the tension between ethnic culture in a global setting has well argued the nature of authenticity as a process of authentication in the service of continuation of cultural prosperity and community vitalization. The primary interest of this research was inspired by the research mwork of Bennet (Bennett, 2001) and Kim and Sung (Kim & Sung, 2019) that attempted to study the diffusion of originally ethnic culture in the global-local setting and discussed the unique adaption and appropriation of local actors in the cultural field.

The development and popularization of K-Pop in the world were in a great deal accompanied by the industrial change of K-Pop production, which was explained by the active recruitment of non-Korean idols for the sake of localization strategy, commercialization of idols' everyday life to extract the maximum profit from these idols, and the increasing importance in the role of fandom in the making of K-Pop idols. These changes, I argued, gave the very condition to the emergence of Foreigner K-Pop and the cultural struggles of K-Pop's most loyal and concerned fans that followed. The struggles focused on a sense of instability of cultural authenticity that was previously almost untouched by and trivial to the K-Pop community but vigorous after the join of Foreigner K-Pop.

Against this backdrop, I asked three questions that are most relevant to the contemporary study of K-Pop and about postmodern cultural practice in a commercial setting. These three questions were:

i.   How did non—Asian K—Pop performers speak to other members in the culture to include themselves in the culture?

ii.   What were the ways these newly joined non—Asian K—Pop performers were made included in the culture and how were non—Korean performers evaluated?

iii. What were the arguments fans held to claim that authenticity is important to the culture?

My research involved a combination use of online ethnography and text analysis, which started in March 2020. My initial focus was on the TV program UHSN that featured ten non—Korean girls coming to Korea and learned everything about becoming a K—Pop star. After starting my research, I soon realized the need to expand my subject of study because most text available not only talked about UHSN but also included discussions with many other K—Pop groups of the same sort, K—Pop groups with non—Asian members. At the end of the research, I studied seven different groups, all in some way labeled as K—Pop, that together have members' nationality from twenty different countries, including Korea. My analysis adopts the framework developed by Moore (Moore, 2002) that calls for a tripartite authentication made from three different perspectives, the first—person expression, the third—person execution, and the second—person experience.

I have demonstrated how K—Pop fans deemed Foreigner K—Pop inauthentic, through both the inauthentic claim of their first—person expression and their inauthenticity to the culture as a question about their third—person execution. I have also argued how such an inauthenticity claim was combined with the Koreaboo Stigma (원용진, 방희경, 이준형, 럭키마리사, 2020), that was previously used to criticize the inauthenticity of K—Pop fans but now extended to the inauthenticity of the Foreigner K—Pop idols. The inauthenticity claim was countered by the Foreigner K—Pop idols' attempt to establish their authenticity through personal expression and through the

company behind them in the production process. I have argued in the third chapter that they displayed a genuine but intelligent K–Pop fan identity as a way to establish their authenticity amidst the storm of criticism that all of them were facing.

It had led to a disruption of the boundaries of K in K–Pop. This disruption surrounded the Foreigner K–Pops' attempt to "redefine" K–Pop by bringing more non–Korean ethnicities to the culture. I argued that this divided the community into proponents and opponents of the change. Proponents argued the change brought about by the Foreigner K–Pop as a sense of pride in the diversity of K–Pop through a more inclusive representation of cultures of other kinds. The opponents saw the join of Foreigner K–Pop as a potential threat of the dominant Western culture taking over the Korea/Asian Asia culture which provided an equal opportunity for people of Asian heritage to be "authentically our(them)selves and still succeed in a system that amplified voices of the West and ignored voices of the East." The reconciliation, as I demonstrated, was a sense of hard–working, perseverance, and dedication that became necessitated through the trainee system, which was invoked as "Korean" and making K–Pop for what it is.

Perhaps the question to ask next was why training was so important and essential to the making of the authenticity of K–Pop. On the one hand, training system has become part of the everyday life of K–Pop idol that was commercialized and sold to its audiences, while the system did provide a certain level of consistency in the standard of K–Pop performance (김명수, 2015), but on the other hand, it is vigorous for us to ask why it was the trainee system that was cited as a resource for K–Pop authenticity instead of others, such as "Keeping it real," one that was familiar with most people about Hip–Hop.

My interpretation is that the discourse of the trainee system provided a

manufacturable alternative to the "ghetto" and "miserable past," frequently referred to as resources of authenticity construction in other cultural settings. Trainee system provides manufacturable spaces for K-Pop artists to display a sense of perseverance, dedication, and hard-working, qualities that marks human uniqueness undergoing hardship, and a chance for K-Pop artists to exhibit intimacy and intelligence that legitimize their "extraordinary" nature of being an idol. Meanwhile, the open-ended and supposedly meritocratic trainee system served to satisfy the cultural need of international fans, whose taste and identity remained peripheral in most Western countries (Yoon & Jin, 2015), for a discourse akin to neoliberalism that advocates equal opportunity and indiscriminate competition, while maintaining K-Pop culture as a tight community and keeping it as an esoteric taste. Therefore, K-Pop idols who failed to respond to such desires will be rejected under this neoliberal cultural climate.

The contribution of this research lies in that it expanded beyond the current one-sided perspective of K-Pop culture, either as reinvented as Korean, usually with Korean state as the biggest player behind (김기덕, 2014), as a rejection to be Korean, criticism of its culture industry setting (Lie, 2012), or as perceived as Korean, which overweighted the importance of audiences experience (Schulze, 2013). I have provided a rich empirical analysis of how K-Pop was connected to a concept of Korea through the authentication process between fans, idols, industrial sectors, and self-claimed K-Pop professionals. It was particularly meaningful in my research to see how elements of Korea were cited in the construction of first-person authenticity and elements that were cited as Korean in the construction of second-person and third-person authenticity.

I foresee that K-Pop will continue its journey of globalization as its popularity grows and decentralized cultural production is significant in the age of progression of information technology. While I believe Koreaboo

stigma that haunts all non－Asian westerners and inauthentic claim that was invoked because of the absence of trainee culture, it will be imperative to see how K－Pop culture was practiced as a medium to express oneself, perhaps not in a commercial setting, in a local level outside, or even within, Korea. I will be very interested in continuing monitoring its happening.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Sentiment Analysis Result of Comments about K−Pop groups.					
Group − Song Title (N)	Sentiment Type		K−Pop Type (N)	Sentiment Type	
EXP Edition − Luv/Wrong (990)	positive	42.9%	Foreigner K−Pop (4243)	positive	50.6%
	neutral	27.1%			
	negative	30.0%			
UHSN − Popsicle (719)	positive	55.9%			
	neutral	23.5%			
	negative	20.7%			
KAACHI − Your Turn (658)	positive	50.6%		neutral	24.8%
	neutral	25.4%			
	negative	24.0%			
BLACKSWAN − Tonight (411)	positive	57.9%			
	neutral	35.0%			
	negative	7.1%			
Prisma − Breakout (375)	positive	61.6%		negative	24.6%
	neutral	25.3%			
	negative	13.1%			
5 High − PIRI (1090)	positive	47.7%			
	neutral	19.1%			
	negative	33.2%			
VERIVERY − Ring Ring Ring (779)	positive	67.7%	Ordinary K−Pop (2942)	positive	59.9%
	neutral	25.3%			
	negative	7.1%			
Cherry Bullet − Q&A (879)	positive	54.2%			
	neutral	31.9%			
	negative	14.0%		neutral	30.0%
FANATICS − FLAVOR (593)	positive	58.0%			
	neutral	32.2%			
	negative	9.8%			
woo!ah! − woo!ah! (691)	positive	59.9%		negative	10.1%
	neutral	31.3%			
	negative	8.8%			

Appendix 2. Number of Comments Sampled for Analysis					
Video Title	Posted on	Posted by	Number of Total Comments Sampled	Number of English Comments Sampled	Address
MV] BLACKSWAN (블랙스완) – Tonight] Goodbye RANIA	2020 –10–16	DanalEnte rtainment	976	386	https://ww w.youtube.c om/watch?v =Yb_K5– IIKgg
PRISMA – Breakout [Official Video]	2020 –10–31	UnionWav e Entertain ment	1005	276	https://ww w.youtube.c om/watch?v =17xRBNk Mp14
유학소녀 (UHSN) – 팝시클 (POPSICLE) Music Video	2019 –07–12	Stone Music Entertain ment	1017	605	https://ww w.youtube.c om/watch?v =g_dqiyxZ O_Y
EXP EDITION (이 엑스피 에디션) – LUV/WRONG (Official Music Video 뮤직비디오)	2015 –11–07	EXP EDITION TV	1013	807	https://ww w.youtube.c om/watch?v =u0Vubbfyt Qs
KAACHI – 'Your Turn' (Official Music Video)	2020 –04–29	KAACHI	974	562	https://ww w.youtube.c om/watch?v =1NWzao4 xf1E
[MV] SB19 – TILALUHA	2018 –10–26	SB19 Official	997	419	https://ww w.youtube.c om/watch?v =9Fqszuma 1zQ
[#daily K] Exp Edition Interview	2017 –09–01	ARIRANG K–POP	20	13	https://ww w.youtube.c om/watch?v =1SbHhN0 qsno
[Super K–Pop] BLACKSWAN (블랙스완)'s Full Episode on Arirang Radio!	2020 –10–19	ARIRANG Radio K– Pop	510	244	https://ww w.youtube.c om/watch?v =s5l1K8jhE l8
"KAACHI is KPOP" – Interview with KAACHI (All 4 Members)	2020 –05–16	DKDKTV	519	503	https://ww w.youtube.c om/watch?v =KFQu4bvv 7lw

Interview With PRISMA | K-Pop Girl Group From UnionWave Entertainment	2020 -10- 19	PopMachine Media	24	11	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuzJ1YAwLlA
Trainee reacts to KAACHI - THE KOREABOO GROUP UK/KPOP...?	2020 -05- 04	kinryyy	519	466	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-lVU84FRaA
Former KPOP Idol Reacts to KAACHI	2020 -05- 14	Jessica Lee	515	486	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4jXOnXMj0k
Singer Reacts to INDIA'S First Kpop Group! +SB19, ZGirls, B Pop?	2020 -05- 15	GRAZY GRACE	517	486	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvgonP6_lfw
Ex K-Pop Idol Reacts to SB19 Alab (Burning) | Vlog 57	2020 -05- 03	Jonathan Yau's Vlog	285	257	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCcED2kGcSc

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Writing a master's thesis is not easy. Coming up with one that you like is especially not. I am happy that I sticked to the subject that I liked from the beginning and finished this one that I could proudly say I am the author of, despite the much frustration in the beginning and the failure in my first thesis defense.

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국문초록

케이팝은 원래 한국에서 발전한 음악 장르로, 오랫동안 많은 문화 평론가들과 학자들에 의해 비현실적인 문화로 여겨졌다. 최근 케이팝 커뮤니티는 외국인 케이팝의 참여가 특징인 외부 문화로부터의 동화의 잠재적 위협에 대한 대응으로 문화에 대한 진정성을 키울 필요가 있다는 문제에 직면했다. 세계화, 아이돌의 일상화, 케이팝 아이돌 제작에 팬덤의 중요성이 높아진 산업계의 신자유주의적 환경을 배경으로, 이 연구는 외국인 케이팝의 진정성 구축 과정이 팬, 아이돌, 산업계 간의 협업 작업이라고 주장했다. 이 논문은 영어권 케이팝 팬들을 중심으로 온라인 민족학 연구와 텍스트 분석을 채택하고, 비아시아 공연자들 7개의 K-Pop 그룹을 중심으로 연구하였으며, 외국인 K-Pop의 진정성 구축에 있어 한국 요소와 한국으로 인용된 요소들이 어떻게 운용되고 있는지를 보여주었다. 본 논문은 진정성 담론에서 인내, 진실, 봉헌, 성실과 노력이라는 반복적인 담론이 대부분의 서구 국가에서 지엽적인 취향과 정체성을 유지한 국제 팬들의 문화적 욕망을 충족시키는 역할을 했다고 결론지었다. 이 담론은 케이팝 문화가 촘촘한 공동체적이고 소수의 취향을 유지할 수 있도록 허용하면서 동등한 기회와 무차별 경쟁을 주장하는 신자유주의와 연결된다.