FROM FACTORY GIRLS TO K-POP IDOL GIRLS

Cultural Politics of Developmentalism, Patriarchy, and Neoliberalism in South Korea's Popular Music Industry

GOOYONG KIM

Foreword by Douglas Kellner

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To
my mother, Bokshil Kim;
siblings, Choon-oak, Jeong-oak, Yoon-oak, Mi-oak, and Jaeyong;
children, April and Lucas;
wife, Seja Yoon;
and
late father, Deuk Kim.

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Foreword

Douglas Kellner

I first met Gooyong Kim in fall 2006 when I invited him as my PhD student at UCLA after several years of not having adopted a new student, and he then began his works in Cultural/Media Studies, which was successfully concluded in his dissertation, *The Popular as the Political: Critical Media Pedagogy as a Condition for Grassroots Collective Action Mobilization via YouTube Videos*, in 2010. The dissertation was an ambitious work to theorize how individuals' critical understanding and utilization of a digital video sharing platform can facilitate a social change as a collective action mobilizer, as witnessed by the Internet media's integral role in the Arab Spring movements and the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011. While Professor Kim's *From Factory Girls to K-Pop Idol Girls* deals with an entirely different topic from that of his dissertation, the texts share the same keen sense of social problems and urgency that strives to understand how the *status quo* maintains itself by an updated deployment of popular media culture and engaged audiences. Both projects thus interrogate how popular culture in the new media reproduces the status quo and yet can also be used for progressive social transformation.

Dr. Kim's *From Factory Girls to K-Pop Idol Girls* constitutes the first, serious attempt to critically analyze structural conditions of contemporary popular music production and marketing, focusing on female idols' proliferation in the Korean popular music (K-pop) industry since 1997. K-pop has been immensely popular and influential throughout Asia and the Asian diaspora throughout the world since the 90s, and became the fastest growing music genre in the United States and other Western nations recently. I acknowledge there are a growing number of scholarly efforts to investigate the phenomenon, however, by and large in a microscopic and celebratory manner. While any academic inquiry on a subject begins by descriptive explana-

tion, academia cannot advance its serious business without a sophistication of its examination by multi-perspectival, *critical* approaches. I commend Dr. Kim's ambitious project that will usher in a maturing stage of K-pop scholarship, more than 20 years after the emergence of the K-pop phenomena. With his contribution to disembarking "Critical K-pop Studies," I do hope his book helps the academic community as well as the general readers develop more advanced, well-balanced perspective to the topic, which provides a wealth of intriguing research agendas on International and Intercultural Communication, Political Economy of the Media, Cultural/Media Studies, Gender/Sexuality Studies, Asian Studies, Korean Studies, and Critical Studies.

Gooyong Kim's most important achievement is to correctly contextualize the success of K-pop within Korea's economic development trajectories. With an acute application of Michel Foucault's discussion on governmentality, a biopolitical dimension of neoliberalism, his book reveals how the regime of free market capitalism updates and reproduces itself by 1) forming a strategic alliance of interests with the state, and 2) using popular culture to facilitate individuals' subjectification and subjectivation processes that lead to neoliberal agents. To that end, Kim securitizes how dynamics of Korea's rapid industrial modernization (1960s–1980s) was updated, and reapplied its formula of economic development when the state had to implement a series of neoliberal reformations, imposed and mandated by the IMF in 1997. The K-pop industry has thus been supported and promoted by the state, and young, female talents have increasingly been mobilized and deployed in the culture industry in a similar way to how unwed, obedient female workers were exploited and disposed of on the sweatshop factory floors to sustain the state's export-oriented, labor-intensive manufacture industry policy during its rapid developmental stage decades ago. For a better understanding of K-pop female idols as a specialized topic in his book, Kim investigates how a strategic convergence of Korea's lingering legacies of Confucian patriarchy and the state developmentalism not only successfully markets the idols as an affective cultural commodity in the neoliberal culture industry, but also, more importantly, deploys them as an active ideological apparatus that pleasurably and effectively perpetuates and legitimates neoliberal mantras and imperatives in individuals' everyday lives.

Thus, the book's contributions and implications are multifold. Firstly, *From Factory Girls to K-Pop Idol Girls* reveals the continuing importance of the Korean state's industrial policy even in a neoliberalism that individuals tend to believe constitutes a demise or a minimal role of the state. Secondly, Kim's study indicates the sustained utility/legacy of the nation's gender-based hierarchy in a nationalist agenda for economic development during a period of neoliberal reform and patriarchal nationalist development alike. In addition, the text examines how a post-feminist, neoliberal discourse of girl power has mobilized and marketed young, female talents in the industry as

affective commodities, and how K-pop female idols function as neoliberal commodities which have exercised an active biopolitical power to reinforce the Korean state and society's hegemony over Korean culture and individual lives.

Finally, as I established in my book, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern*, Gooyong Kim's study of K-pop embodies a multiperspective approach that provides comprehensive and critical approaches to popular media culture that engages media production, consumption, and critical textual analysis within the context of contemporary Korean and global society. Combining historical contextualization with political economy of the media, critical textual analysis, and investigation into the socio-ideological effect of K-pop in the existing networks of power and domination in gender relations, Kim endeavors to understand K-pop female idols as a cultural politics of Korea's establishment, which plays a powerful role in individuals' leisure activity, socialization, identity formation, and value system. His endeavor demonstrates the continual vitality of a Critical Cultural Studies and the need to take seriously the artifacts of popular media culture as a condition of social transformation, as well as a reproduction of the status quo.

Popular music is a major, although mostly unrecognized, ideological force throughout the world, and Gooyong Kim has shown how K-pop female idols function as an important cultural and ideological force in contemporary Korea. His book will provide an illuminating introduction to Critical K-Pop Studies for scholars throughout the world and provoke lively, constructive discussions of K-pop's ever-increasing impact in ever-changing, neoliberal Korea and beyond.

Douglas Kellner
University of California, Los Angeles
July 2018

Acknowledgments

The research for this book gave me a refreshing opportunity to resume my academic journey while I was in the middle of nowhere with many personal and family issues. Starting with the sudden, untimely death of my father in 2010 and by a series of misfortunes in my family thereafter, I was devastated to the extent that I abandoned anything scholarly. Then, Girls' Generation's American debut performance came along on January 31, 2012, and rekindled my intellectual curiosity and helped me maneuver the plights. While this book is a critical investigation into the event and other adjacent phenomena, I truly appreciate the debut event for providing me a turning point in my academic and personal life.

This book is possible by a great deal of inspiration and resources I have received from any number of people in my life. Research ideas for this book were incepted while I was teaching courses on Korean popular culture and media at Temple University. Along with many students who asked discursive questions, Hyung-min Kim and Anat Schwartz were initial interlocutors during my research's formulating period. I thank them for having spent time brainstorming with me, and wish them the best of luck in completing their PhDs at Georgia State University and the University of California, Irvine respectively. While there were many memorable students at Temple, I would like to thank those who sat and spent time sharing their ideas in person: Evan Greensweig, Huy Ha, Alexis Mongiello, Maura Sanner, Travis Sears, Noah Udofia, Daniel Wampler, Jimmy Wong, and Liwei Yi. I thank my informants in the greater Los Angeles area: Bibi Lee, Irelene Lee, Scarlett Lee, Carly Stevens, Gunnbong Kim, and Ven. Beom-Kyung sunim. Colleagues I met both at the *Hallyu* 20 Years conference in Vancouver, May 2016, and the seventh annual Korean Screen Culture Conference in Helsinki, May 2018, were helpful in strengthening my arguments: Dal Yong Jin, Tae-jin Yoon,

Jae-ho Kang, Michelle Cho, David Oh, Benjamin Han, Shin-dong Kim, Jihoon Felix Kim, J. W. Chung, Sungil Ko, and Andrew Logie. I especially appreciate Douglas Kellner and John Lie for their generous comments and suggestions at various stages of my writing. Also, I am grateful for genuine advices and encouragements of my mentors: George Katsiaficas, Roy Nanjo, and Greg Tanaka. I would like to show my gratitude to my close CNU Department of Communication alumni who have nourished me with night-long debates over drink: Young-Khee Kim, Hye-Seung Yang, Kyunsoo Kim, Sung-Un Yang, Hyunjoo Kang, Jong-beom Kim, Woojong Lee, Saemin Lee, Sang-kyu Lee, Gwangwoo Sohn, Seung-chul Lee, Gunnwoo Park, Deuk-ryong Oh, Namyong Park, Joohyung Lee, Bi-oh Yoon, Seung-joon Yang, and Wooram Goh. I offer my apologies to other sources of inspiration and information for not including their names due to a shortage of my memory. Lastly, the 2017 Korean Studies Grant Program (AKS-2017-P06) from the Academy of Korean Studies supported the finalization of this book manuscript.

Chapters of the book are modified versions of my previous works that I presented at a conference or published elsewhere. Papers were presented at various meetings and procedures like Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, International Communication Association, National Communication Association, Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies, and Oriental Club of Philadelphia's Regional Symposium. An earlier version of chapter one was published in *Routledge Companion to Global Cultural Policy*, edited by Dave O'Brien, Toby Miller, and Victoria Durrer, in 2017; chapter two was included in *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*'s special issue on the Korean Peninsula edited by Haerin Shin in 2018; and chapter three was incorporated in the *International Journal of Communication*'s special issue on *Hallyu* edited by Dal Yong Jin in 2017. I sincerely appreciate the editors who considered my humble pieces, and all the anonymous reviewers of various stages of my pieces for their invaluable comments, criticism, and suggestions. I also thank an anonymous reviewer of this book's manuscript for constructive suggestions. While their advice was all insightful, I was not always capable enough to fully incorporate it in this book: If anything has been misconstrued in this book, the fault is mine.

My family has been the biggest contributor to my completion of the book. I would like to thank my wife, Seja Yoon, and children, April and Lucas Kim, for being patient with my occasional outburst of frustration in the abyss of writer's block and for understanding my inability to play whenever you wanted to. Without your love and support, I would not have been able to complete this book. Also, Candy the golden retriever stayed late at night to accompany me, providing a regular break for fresh air. Lastly, I dedicate this book to my mother, Bokshil Kim, and my late father, Deuk Kim, for their

unconditional love and support: They have always been the most compelling motivation in my life. I love and thank you!

Introduction

This book aims to expand a horizon of academic inquiry into South Korea's contemporary popular music (hereafter, K-pop) in its broader implications for South Korean society (hereafter, Korea) and beyond. With Javier León's (2014) lament that there is a dearth of scholarly works that critically interrogate connections between a trend of popular music and neoliberalism, I examine how the recent success of K-pop is a cultural manifestation of the country's political-economic and sociocultural transformations. Since the "singer is the image of the spirit of a people," and popular songs embody a culture's belief (Pavletich 1980, 4), K-pop as one of contemporary Korea's most successful businesses provides an optic to understand the society. Popular music not only reflects a local sentiment at a given time, since it cannot be separated from the society of its origin, but it also reconfigures or promotes a certain cultural, economic, political, and/or social agenda simultaneously, as examined by Raymond Williams's (2007) cultural formation. Put differently, as symbolic "forms and actual or desired social relations" (175), K-pop warrants a serious academic inquiry because it has been configured within, and reproduces contemporary Korea's formative constraints of various legacies and dominant parameters simultaneously.

Likewise, this book strives to critically understand the current place of Korean female singers in their formative roles in changing, contemporary gender relations. Despite the fact that gender equality in Korea is worst amongst developed countries (Bethmann and Rudolf 2018; OECD 2018), the popularity of a number of K-pop female idols surpasses that of male idols. Not only as dance music performers but also ubiquitous media figures, the female idols are one of the most explicit sociocultural icons of the era, who make the most active, lucrative contribution to Korea's culture industries as a cultural commodity both in the domestic market and overseas. In this respect,

to examine K-pop female idols as one of the nation's most dominant sociocultural genres helps better understand the paradigm and the possibility of socioeconomic and politico-ideological relations around gender in the nation. Considering Motown girl groups in the 60s as a social phenomenon of the era, Gerald Early (1995) indicates their "music is the story of American democracy at its best and its worst" in terms of cultural diversity, fluidity, freedom, and racial inequality, revolving around African American female singers and their bodies (134). Likewise, K-pop female idols are conceived, produced, circulated, and consumed in regard to contemporary Korean people's imagined and/or shared desire, created by various historical junctures. Again, like the Motown girl groups were a cultural manifestation of the Fordist assembly line production system (Gordy 1994) and the Tiller Girls of instrumental rationality of industrial capitalism (Kracauer 1995), female musicians/performers in contemporary Korean history have mainly been instrumental in either satisfying patriarchal desires or adopting the cultural hegemony of the empires, both Japan and the U.S. (Fuhr 2017; Lie 2015).

From this historical context, I examine how K-pop female idols have been conditioned by Korea's neoliberal social and industrial reconfigurations since the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and Korea's subsequent reliance on the IMF's emergency bail-out funds that mandated a series of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). By analyzing how they, and more specifically their sexualized bodies, are represented in the glossy music videos of K-pop, this book sheds critical light on whether or not the traditional, patriarchal gender script has been broken and they exercise agency as portrayed in the videos with regards to their relationship to the K-pop industry's business strategies, its decision-making structures, and the county's patriarchal traditions within Korea's neoliberal transformations. Since "what has replaced tradition, with its function of providing a sense of continuity and coherence, is popular culture" in Korea (Lie 2015, 94), K-pop female idols should be critically examined in reference to their regulatory role in defining and providing new sociocultural norms and values of gender-based social relations. Thus, with this book, I hope to help the general audience who is interested in K-pop's recent surge of global popularity understand how and what role the music genre plays in cultural politics within the country's growing neoliberalization, which coincided with the music's major introduction to the public in 1996. By doing so, this book helps readers better understand the cultural phenomenon by different parameters of complex interactions between the state's policy, culture and media industry, cultural tradition, and gender norms.

Compared to a growing number of scholarly examinations on *Hallyu* or the Korean Wave—the global success of Korean popular culture, such as film, TV dramas, K-pop, and live performances—studies on K-pop have been rather marginal to date. With a supposedly wide audience reach and

their pioneering roles in *Hallyu*, TV dramas and films have been a major area for both governmental support and scholarly attention (Chua 2010). As opposed to more than two decades of K-pop's growing global success, especially its rekindling *Hallyu* around 2007, and contribution to the country's economic developments, relatively speaking, K-pop has not enjoyed a due scholarly recognition. In addition to this overdue (or insufficient at least) acknowledgement, per Javier León's (2014) disappointment, there is a dearth of critical and systematic academic examination on a relationship between the music genre and Korea's growing neoliberalization since the late 1990s. Moreover, there is no critical investigation into K-pop female idols' recent proliferation, which is the music genre's most distinctive characteristic from a perspective that investigates how K-pop has been conditioned within Korea's preexisting sociocultural and politico-economic backgrounds.

To date, scholarly examination on the issue has mainly been descriptive in its nature and scope, focusing on microscopic text analyses of *Hallyu* contents, impacts of communication technologies, innovative strategies of the culture industry, and/or fan activities. Though there are several edited volumes on the topic, such as Kyung Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe's (2014) *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*; Euny Hong's (2014) *The Birth of Korean Cool: How One Nation Is Conquering the World through Pop Culture*; Yasue Kuwahara's (2014) *The Korean Wave: Korean Popular Culture in Global Context*; Youna Kim's (2013) *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global*; Sangjoon Lee and Abé Markus Nornes's (2015) *Hallyu 2.0: The Korean Wave in the Age of Social Media*; and Tae-Jin Yoon and Dal Yong Jin's (2017) *The Korean Wave: Evolution, Fandom, and Transnationality*, to name a few, the current literature tends not to pay due attention to the industry's structural conditions of possibilities in its production, distribution, and consumption that can only be correctly understood by taking broader economic, historical, industrial, and social contexts into consideration. Although in December 2013 the *Korea Journal* published a special issue on the global success of K-pop as a response to scholars' critical assessment of it, it is still confined to descriptive accounts on how K-pop becomes successful from technological, production, and business perspectives. Dal Yong Jin's (2016) *New Korean Wave: Transnational Cultural Power in the Age of Social Media* and the *International Journal of Communication*'s special issue in 2017 analyze various economic and industrial backgrounds, including the state's policies; however, they are not an exclusive study on K-pop but a survey on *Hallyu* in general. Fortunately, there have been few significant academic endeavors to understand solely the K-pop phenomenon from various perspectives recently: JungBong Choi and Ronald Maliangkay's (2015) anthology, *K-Pop: The International Rise of the Korean Music Industry*, Michael Fuhr's (2017) *Globalization and Popular Music in South Korea: Sounding Out K-Pop*, and John Lie's (2015) *K-Pop: Popular Music, Cultural*

Amnesia, and Economic Innovation in South Korea are worth a critical review here.

As one of the first major scholarly endeavors to understand K-pop and its phenomena, JungBong Choi and Ronald Maliangkay's (2015) anthology, *K-Pop: The International Rise of the Korean Music Industry*, makes a significant contribution to investigating conditions and elements that have led a peripheral nation's popular culture in the global economic and political system to a transnational phenomenon. To this end, the volume examines how fandom, in other words, the consumption side of the music genre, has been the main engine for its global popularity. While the editors acknowledge the foundational role of the Korean government that provided the K-pop industry with deregulation policies along with state subsidies and tax breaks, they are not interested in larger, structural conditions of K-pop production as much as its circulation and consumption. While there is an attempt to examine the topic from a critical perspective, chapter three: "The Political Economy of Idols: South Korea's Neoliberal Restructuring and Its Impact on the Entertainment Labour Force," the volume is still confined to describing what K-pop has changed rather than what has led to its sudden rise and success. In other words, contrary to its claim that it "aspires to be more than a compilation of reports on the ripple" that K-pop has created (Choi and Maliangkay 2015, 1), the book does not pay due attention to K-pop's structural conditions of possibility, that is, forces and elements behind its production, within the nation's place in global cultural, economic, historical, and political configurations. Rather than investigating how the success of K-pop has been an integral part of Korea's complex neoliberal transformation by a dynamic interaction with the nation's preexisting cultural, industrial, and political traditions such as patriarchal capitalism and developmentalism (or developmental dictatorship), Choi and Maliangkay's (2015) work has still "failed to shed much light on related phenomena" in the dominant system of neoliberal capitalism (1).

The volume's focuses on the fans' consumption of K-pop and excitement they retrieve from it can be a symptom of being complacent to a business mantra of the neoliberal culture industry. To focus on fans tends to celebrate those who are mesmerized by K-pop, and in turn, likely to legitimate the industry's business or marketing strategy that aims to create audiences' identification and participation in cultural commodities. In other words, since the K-pop industry has taken advantage of fan club activities as marketing channels and consumer behaviour monitoring venues, a descriptive attention to fan activities will eventually serve the industry's strategic planning to incorporate and commercialize their immaterial, affective labour systematically. Also, while the volume claims that K-pop has been successful by the fan, of the fan, and for the fan, the chapters are not successful in examining audiences' detailed, complex reception processes, motivation, and gratification.

As to an unprecedented amount of fans' involvement in the K-pop industry's production procedure, Choi and Maliangkay commend K-pop "fans/audiences as adjunct producers" (10). However, they fail to recognize that exploiting fans' ostensible creative contribution is one of the common characteristics of a neoliberal service economy that profits from the audience's immaterial, precarious labor. In other words, while fans can certainly exercise a reconstructive meaning-making activity that goes beyond consuming cultural texts, the fact that they still have to refer back to the text and rely on a sharing platform that the industry provides, does not guarantee fans' genuine control over the original text.

While I do not negate or ignore active fan activities as a means of constructing and expressing their subjectivity, I rather try to understand how K-pop female idols, as a neoliberal commodity manufactured by the culture industry, have contributed to mobilizing audiences' dynamic investment in affect, time, and money to conform to the *status quo*. As a psychological compensation mechanism where audiences, especially female fans, can fulfill dreams of autonomy, glamour, intimacy, power, recognition, and success, I argue the female idols provide them with a para-social relationship and belief that their inherent lack could be compensated, and in turn, their indignation as a critical transformative potential would be dissipated in patriarchal society. While female audiences can develop an imaginary empowerment by self-
identification with visually perfect-looking female idols, their consumption of manufactured female empowerment does not change the harsh reality of gender-based exploitation and marginalization. On the other hand, the idols provide male fans, who suffer from dire living situations of un- or underemployment, with a pseudo-opportunity to gratify an unconscious need of male supremacy, which is pervasive in the nation's operative mechanism, by consuming the idols' various manufactured affects, and infantilized sexualization. In this regard, while fans tend to have an emotional "conviction where one's feelings can seem highly personal yet not quite one's own" (Duffett 2013, 162), their agency is not likely to overcome a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship between the resource-rich cultural production of the industry and their "passive" consumption on an individual level.

In this regard, the volume inadvertently acknowledges an immediate importance in examining the political economy of K-pop fans' cultural consumption: K-pop is an "econo-cultural spectacle that turns spectacle that turns ocular-acoustic-choreographic styles into reified cultural commodities . . . [by] a mutant character business that enmeshes advertisement, idol figures, digital technologies, and cultural merchandise—a business operated by the syndicate of South Korean mega-corporations and show-business magnates" (9). However, Choi and Maliangkay (2015) neglect an intellectual vantage of examining the complicated issue of global K-pop fandom phe-

nomena, deciding instead to keep the "simplistic image of consumer/consumption at arm's length" (9). Confined to describing what K-pop fans do and trying to provide them with consumeristic, artistic, and curatorial agency, the anthology still fails to critically comprehend the fan's situational behaviors, which are context-specific to their conditions of locality, identity, class, race, gender, and so on.

Another problem lies in the volume's discussion of K-pop's alternative contribution to the global system of capitalist cultural production that is demarcated between the developed global North and the developing, peripheral South. While throwing out vague terms like meta-fandom, partisan fandom, and soft racism without providing any definition, Choi and Maliangkay (2015) endorse that a decades-long issue of cultural imperialism or domination by the West has been ameliorated, if not overcome, by "the presentational mode and content of the integrated entertainment genre" and its global popularity (13). This counterflow of cultural production, or what Choi and Maliangkay (2015) call "the role reversal in the global creative industry" (14), has been celebrated by the current scholarship on the success of *Hallyu* since Doobo Shim's (2006) work on cultural hybridity. However, as I will argue in chapter three, one has to pay critical attention to concrete conditions and modes that beget cultural hybridity in terms of real economic, historical, industrial, social, and political contexts of cultural production. Otherwise, one loses sight of locality in cultural production by fetishism.

For Michael Fuhr (2017), K-pop is a sonic and visual signifier of what the country has strived to achieve or emulate: "globalized modernity" in Korea (3). Using a modernist project of development as an optic, he analyzes K-pop from various factors that have contributed to its origin, growth, and success. By using globalization as the main focus of his examination on the topic, he strives to understand the topic from a holistic approach by doing both macro structural and micro textual analyses. "K-pop exposes a local cultural vision of what globalized modernity means" in Korea (3). Historical examination of K-pop using the ethnomusicology perspective is an excellent source for a greater contextual understanding of the music genre's conditions of possibilities. By "multiple relations and asymmetries through which K-pop is utilized and connected" to various cultural, industrial, political, and social imperatives and purposes (13), Fuhr (2017) successfully establishes what he calls "relational musicology" of K-pop by its discursive and performative dimensions. To be more specific, what makes Fuhr's (2017) research on K-pop promising is his contextualization of the music within Korea's contemporary industrial and governmental policy trajectories for national developments, acknowledging K-pop has changed the nation's status from a recipient of cultural commodities to an exporter.

As "the soundtrack (and K-Pop idols are the faces) of Korea's globalization process on the new millennium" (8), K-pop has been a manifestation of

the nation's collective imaginary or desire for globalization that the country has tried to achieve on various grounds. As a concrete result of various economic, cultural, industrial, political, and social parameters and decision-making procedures, Fuhr (2017) tries to understand the K-pop phenomena à la mode Anthony Giddens's (1984) notion of structuration that simultaneously represents and constructs the nation's global imaginaries in its characters, logic, strategy, and forms. In this respect, K-pop retains an "inherent tension between the global imaginary it depicts and issues of national identity that were underlying, intersecting, and conflicting with it" (59). However, his study retains a common problem that is consistent amongst *Hallyu* scholars, that is a misconstruing of the relationship between neoliberalism and the state.

As opposed to liberalism's effort to balance two distinctive spheres of the state and the market, the public and the private, and the political and the commercial, neoliberalism has blurred the boundaries, transplanting market principles into the core functions of the state (Miller and Rose 2008). However, in the current scholarship, there is a general misconception of neoliberalism by a myopic opposition between the state and the market, which ignores the variegated, contradictory nature of neoliberal social formations. Or, the term has been overused or misused by scholars without properly indicating its specific tenets they aim to examine, and in turn it has become banal. Contrarily, I maintain neoliberalism is internally combined with the developmental state to the extent that a concerted effort between the two becomes prevalent in the trajectories of K-pop's inception, development, and promotion. To that end, I analyze how K-pop has been conditioned to prosper while the state is in charge of reconstructing its national economy to accommodate neoliberal challenges for economic development. With a different set of roles and expectations, the state is an integral part of the neoliberal program via a construction of minimal social safety nets, while providing the private sectors with industrial fundamentals like mandatory education, infrastructure, and legal frameworks. However, since state policies do not automatically guarantee their success, the biopolitical aspect of neoliberalism plays an important role in shaping individuals as competitive, neoliberal agents. Thus, neoliberalization works not only by political imperatives to restructure the national economic system, but also through civil society's voluntary, bottom-up support for the reforms as indispensable ethical responsibility (Lim and Jang 2006). To address this perspective, deploying Michel Foucault's (2008) notion of governmentality, a biopolitical dimension of the neoliberal worldview where subjectification and subjectivation processes occur, I also examine an extra-juridical functionality of the global market system's political economy, where cultural and ideological apparatuses exert determining roles in perpetuating and normalizing neoliberal principles and mantra. With the notion of "*homo economicus*," Michel Foucault (2008) maintains that neolib-

eralism universalizes economic logic as the general matrix of people's daily behaviors in everything that human beings endeavor to realize based upon a meticulous calculation of cost for benefit. From this point of view, I maintain that, conditioned and promoted by state initiatives, K-pop, and to be more specific K-pop female idols, have been an integral part of neoliberalism's grand transformative project that turns society into a massive marketplace by conditioning the audience's value system and code of thoughts and conducts.

While Fuhr (2017) is correct that the Korean government has been integral to the success of the cultural phenomenon as a "result of strategic planning and a fostering of the domestic entertainment sector by state-national bodies" (10), he is ironically still confined to a myopic perception of neoliberalism as a demise of state intervention. Despite his perspective that regards "the Korean nation-state [as] a pertinent agent in the field of K-pop" by its strategic promotion for economic development (133), he still believes there is a distinct rupture from state developmentalism to neoliberal "free-market economy" in Korea. Due to this conceptual misunderstanding, his claim that "sweeping effects of Korea's state-national globalization agenda, legislative changes, and promotional policies closely tied to the greater transition to a digital economy have contributed to the emergence of a vibrant domestic content market with high export-rates" for an increasing national economic competitiveness since the Kim Young-sam administration (199 –8) becomes completely erroneous (143). Subsequently, Fuhr's (2017) naïve understanding that a "perseverance of Korean cultural identity is at the heart of the government's globalization agenda and has been defined as a key policy objective" reverses causal relations between an economic imperative of the neoliberal state and its strategic use of cultural legacy and identity for economic development (155). To redress Fuhr's (2017) short-sighted argument that the Korean government has promoted its culture industry in order to secure and develop its unique cultural identity, I interrogate how the K-pop industry as a national economic project has manipulated and exploited one of Korea's traditional cultural values, that is patriarchal gender hierarchy, as an effective tool for economic, industrial, and political modernization or development in chapter two.

Furthermore, while discussing a key aspect of neoliberal culture commodities in K-pop such as an excessive use of affect and visuality, and a void of narratives and storyline combined with atemporality and a lack of real places, Fuhr (2017) does not examine a cultural logic of neoliberalism in K-pop. Though he examines K-pop as a cultural manifestation of (neoliberal) globalization, Fuhr does not indicate that the state policies under IMF SAPs were a local adaption to or a survival strategy in the global system of neoliberalism. Chapter one further dissects this point.

John Lie's (2015) *K-Pop: Popular Music, Cultural Amnesia, and Economic Innovation in South Korea* has been a source of my inspiration for its

broad, structural analyses on K-pop's emergence, evolution, and success. As a connoisseur of music himself, Lie acutely historicizes trajectories of the K-pop phenomenon within Korea's cultural, economic, industrial, political, and social contexts, which I strive to emulate and further elaborate in this book. By doing musicological comparisons between different popular music genres in Korea, he basically maintains that K-pop is not an authentic music of, for, and by Korean people, but a recent strategic invention for economic development: "Nearly every aspect of K-pop is functional, intended to satisfy the market rather than fulfill some deep artistic or political urge" of the people (141).

However, Lie (2015) does not shed enough critical light on one of his book's main arguments, K-pop as economic innovation, in its roles in and relations with Korea's increasing neoliberalization. While emphasizing that K-pop is a result of a "confluence of social change, economic culture, and industrial transformation that sustains the export imperative" (4), he does not examine how this innovation was conceptualized, designed, and implemented within the state's developmental policies and the industry's strategic appropriations of various business practices elsewhere. In turn, while an industrialization of popular music and the nation's volatile neoliberalization coincided in the late 1990s, he does not critically examine what aural, visual, and ideological messages K-pop sends out either: Considering popular music is a "master key" that allows us to satisfy "hungers not only for fun and relaxation but also for meaning and even salvation, appetites for everything" in one's life (151), he should have examined various implications of K-pop's commercialism in its production backgrounds and its semantic ramifications in society. For that matter, though "K-pop would fail the ethnonational test of authenticity" since its roots are in rather African American U.S. popular music, Lie (2015) does not investigate the effects of K-pop's lack of sociocultural automorphism, but just indicates K-pop has been influential in formulating, or priming, Korean people's sentiments, ideas, thoughts, desire, and worldview, as well as an integral part of their psyche. Moreover, while it would have been great if there was some empirical substantiation on the claim, his argument is still sociological or philosophical. In sum, while he intends to analyze broader historical, ideological, political, and social implications of K-pop's success as a strategic innovation for economic development, he then seems to suspend this task by saying we have to admit the reality that people love the music genre and we cannot do anything about it. While this book itself tries to validate his points, chapters four, five, six, and seven delineate how K-pop exercises cultural politics by perpetuating and normalizing gender-specific scripts of neoliberalism to the audience.

Another issue in John Lie's (2015) examination ironically comes from his contribution to the literature, that is, his argument on cultural amnesia. As a critical reconsideration of the "official" narrative of traditional culture, in

which K-pop is explained by its imagined or real continuity to authentic Koreanness, he maintains that K-pop is qualitatively new not only to Korean traditional music, *kugak*, but also to its previous popular music genres such as *yuhaengga*, trots, and so on. Germinated with the revolutionary success of Seo Taiji and Boys in 1992, and heavily referenced to American popular music, K-pop is a cultural manifestation of a new phase or orientation of contemporary Korea. For Lie (2015), the decline of Confucian norms and ethics, an increasing Americanization of popular culture, and an emergence of consumerist youth culture are all the powerful contributing factors to K-pop's success, but largely remain amnesic to the audience.

While I agree with Lie's argument on amnestic factors behind the K-pop phenomenon, I aim to reevaluate his assessment, especially his emphasis on "epistemic break" (Foucault 1994) or paradigm shift (T. Kuhn 1996) between K-pop and its predecessors. By a political-economic analysis accompanied by critical textual analyses, I strive to understand whether or not K-pop has been incepted, produced, distributed, and consumed in a revolutionarily new way. While Lie (2015) clearly indicates K-pop has been an industrial innovation as much as an aesthetic one, his current argument does not successfully examine how the industry manages to produce its cultural commodity, and in turn usher a transnational fandom yet. In other words, a substantiation of his arguments on cultural amnesia (Confucian, or patriarchal tradition) and economic innovations (strategic field of industrial development under neoliberalism) has not been elaborated enough. While he continuously indicates K-pop is severed from "Confucian ethos of seriousness and sincerity, along with conservative attire and a demure posture" (59), he does not discuss normative codes and rules of doing business, not to mention that various decision-making processes in the K-pop industry are still grounded in Confucian patriarchy—to be more specific, gender-, age-, and class-based hierarchal relations. In this respect, by taking into account Lie's (2015) argument that "K-pop is a way of auscultating the South Korean body politic" (4), I delve into reconsidering how various amnesic components still are effective and powerful in the K-pop phenomenon by different guises and levels of engagements. To be more specific, in chapters one, two, and three, I re-assess lingering roles of patriarchal managerial structures and practices in the K-pop industry, the state's strategic intervention in the market, and the establishment's different applications of patriarchal gender norms and values for the success of K-pop as a neoliberal economic innovation.

As briefly reviewed above, scholarly work that effectively investigates K-pop as an integral part of the country's formal and informal neoliberalization is nonexistent to my best knowledge. To fill this serious academic void, I critically reexamine and recontextualize the cultural phenomenon, focusing on the relationship between a continuing legacy of state developmentalism along with other cultural traditions in the neoliberal K-pop industry. In this

respect, I argue that the Korean government's neoliberal social policy assisted its culture industry to produce high-quality culture commodities by conflating the cultural and the economic and further legitimizing the systematic commercialization of the previously unmarketed, such as female bodies and sexualities in the name of economic competitiveness. In order to practice critical K-pop studies by contextualizing its development within Korea's modernization trajectories, this book strives to understand how seemingly contradictory sociocultural and politico-economic factors such as Confucian patriarchism, feminism, developmentalism, and neoliberalism have been part and parcel of K-pop's origin, development, and success.

PLACE OF CULTURAL MEANING: BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

While any meaning of cultural artifact is generated by a complex interaction between a text's material properties and production backgrounds, and an audience's specific location in cultural, economic, political, and social milieus, this book mainly focuses on the former for several reasons. First, while the current scholarship on *Hallyu* or K-pop specifically has mainly dealt with how the content is circulated and consumed, there is a serious dearth of literature on a production aspect of the culture industry. While there have been efforts to understand the textual quality of the cultural content, which try to understand what appeal the content retains and how it pleases audiences, they are largely descriptive or microscopic, and in turn ignore a structural condition of the textual production. On the other hand, related to the former, like Choi and Maliangkay (2015), there is a growing attention to how fans enjoy or construct their own meaning-making on the content; however, it does not pay due attention to what implicit or latent messages are embedded or prevalent to the extent that the audience still consumes no matter how active they are in reconstructing or negotiating with it. In other words, I aim to reconsider a fundamental asymmetry of agency and resource between the industry and the individual in cultural (re)production.

While I certainly appreciate a recent academic achievement on the audience's active intervention in meaning-making and text-production, on an individual level like DIY content creation on the Internet, I pay more critical attention to how K-pop frames the listeners' perceptions on various sociopolitical matters and experiences and in turn, contributes to constructing neoliberal subjects, *homo economicus*. By understanding how K-pop female idols have enabled female audiences to place themselves in "imaginative cultural narratives and, as such, they help both to construct and provide insights into that wider experience" (Whiteley 2000, 9), I strive to recontex-

tualize the phenomenal success of the female idols back into their actual role in contemporary patriarchal, neoliberal Korea.

Amongst many cultural commodities by the K-pop industry, this book is dedicated to analyzing how music videos deploy and perpetuate cultural, economic, ideological, political, and social hegemonies as a means of an Althusserian "ideological state apparatus." As an effective medium that fuses culture and economy, and combines traditional and local artistic sentiments with the most technologically advanced skills provided by transitional media corporations, K-pop music videos have been the most appealing commercial tool to promote the industry, trespassing formal boundaries across borders. In other words, as a means of cultural politics, music videos have been particularly successful in legitimating and perpetuating a dominant system of ideas and social relations by the *status quo* (James 2015).

However, rather than a comprehensive survey, which is nearly impossible in an ever-changing culture industry and media, this book's overall structure looks like a mosaic that juxtaposes several significant pieces and parts of the topic, which I happen to have acknowledged. In turn, examining a female idol group's popularity and significance in its cultural, social, and historical implications, this book inadvertently chooses certain music videos of certain female idols, skipping some of the key moments and players in the industry. Understanding dynamic interactions in each component, I reconsider K-pop female idols not just as a cultural phenomenon, but more importantly as a result of more complicated historical processes in Korea's adjustment to a changing economic and industrial environment in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and Korea's subsequent neoliberalization by reliance on IMF bail-out funds.

K-POP FEMALE IDOLS: POSTER-CHILDREN OF KOREA'S NEOLIBERAL TRANSFORMATION

On January 31, 2012, Girls' Generation (hereafter, SNSD), one of the most representative K-pop groups, made a surprising debut performance on CBS's *Late Show with David Letterman*, and triggered a plethora of questions that have led to this book. Honestly, I had not seriously considered SNSD's popularity or influence until I saw the debut performance, which my students at Tempe University informed me of. My inability to answer all the questions that I got has driven my research on K-pop to date. However, it is beyond the scope and capacity of this book's inquiries to answer how SNSD could appear on the *Late Show with David Letterman* and *Live with Kelly* show on February 1, given the group's substantial lack of reputation, popularity, and influence in the U.S., or at least due to my negligence. Instead, since an investigative journalist could fathom this, I rather decided to comprehend

what led to the recent success of the music genre, and how different factors have interacted in their constitutive roles in the phenomenon.

In my blunt observation on the debut performances, SNSD was not treated well enough for the performance: The stage itself was too small for the members to execute proper dance routines, and in turn, they ended up making awkward moves. After SNSD's clumsy performance as the last slot of the program, there was no interview about the song or the group by the host, but a mere introduction of the group as a female group from Korea. It is atypical for Mr. Letterman not to have an interview with a guest on the program: What was most disturbing to me about the media's coverage of the debut is that the group was not appreciated for their artistic talents, if there are any, but for their exotic otherness, or mystique Asian femininity. Rather, they were consumed as a mere prop of exotic subjects to three old, white male hosts. On the *Live with Kelly* show, SNSD members were asked to teach the hosts how to perform dance moves: Soon afterwards, the male host of the show complemented a member's proficiency in English, not the group members' musicality or anything meaningful about the performance. It seemed clear to me SNSD was not there on the stage for their musical talent but something else. However, quite contrary to the vapid reception by the local media and audiences in the U.S., the state government as well as local media in Korea celebrated SNSD's American debut as a national achievement that proves K-pop's economic and cultural prowess, which is deemed as a new strategic field of national development.

While SNSD was consumed as a cultural commodity of exotic female performers in the U.S., Korean media proclaimed it an optimistic sign of the county's competitiveness in global capitalism. Considering Korean popular songs have reflected a "strong impact and appropriation of American pop music and more importantly its transition into new articulative forms of Korean identities" (Fuhr 2017, 47), this event warrants an inquiry into how the K-pop industry has established its business practices and strategies with reference to American cultural, economic, and social hegemonies. While there are critical accounts on K-pop female idols like those by David Volodzko (2016) and Lucy Williamson (2011), they are journalistic writings that do not cover the topic systematically. As an effort to understand how K-pop has become a national agenda as a part of the state's economic development policies that correspond to changing capitalist market conditions and practices since the 1990s, especially a major economic crisis in 1997, this book examines the music genre and its adjacent phenomena from broader structural perspectives.

Likewise, amongst K-pop female idols, SNSD is the main focus of this book's examination for the group's sheer success that is summarized by their common moniker as the "National Idol" of Korea and their winning "Video of the Year" at the 2013 YouTube Music Awards, beating Justin Bieber,

Miley Cyrus, and Lady Gaga. Despite occasional discussion on other female idols, such as S.E.S. and Suzy of Miss A, most chapters critically deal with broader implications of SNSD's performances on and off the stage for their relevance to debates and discussions on female subjectivity and sexuality, and their challenges and transformation of gender-related norms and boundaries. As Fuhr (2017) accentuates that K-pop is a cultural embodiment of Korea's latest globalization strategy, which is a result of the complex "dialectic relationship between the global imaginary and the various manifestations of national identity that cohere and cross-cut," creating various tensions and ruptures (18), I reexamine the idol group to reveal how different traditional, emergent, and innovative factors dynamically interact and co-construct each other. This book's lack of coverage on the most up-to-date, ever-flourishing female idols is certainly subject to criticism for its ignorance, negligence and/or laziness. However, I do hope this inevitable shortcoming does not distract from my main argument about the critical, historical, and structural examination on the topic. Rather, I do hope this book instigates further systematic inquiry on K-pop female idols' cultural, economic, and social implication and contribution.

While a sheer number of female idols can be regarded as a sign of Korean women's growing influence, whether or not their increased presence in the industry has yielded a substantial improvement in real life is still an open question. As a closer examination on the changed social existence of women in Korea, this book strives to investigate whether K-pop female idols have contributed to increasing women's broader cultural and social participation or not, and if so, how. As a more critical reconsideration on the volume of their presence, this book aims to understand whether the female idols have opened up new possibilities of women's existence and careers or not in Korea. While Korean women had enjoyed a gradual increase in social participation, many of them were forced to take part in economic activities in post-IMF Korea due to a massive disemployment of their husbands or fathers who used to be the main breadwinners in the patriarchal society. However, the nation's traditional gender hierarchy has still treated them unfairly in pay, compensation, union protection, and a hypocritical double-standard on their sexual display and behavior that the industry has promoted. As to Korean women's grudging entitlement or precarious participation in social domains, I maintain the situations of the female idols provide an allegory of Korean women's employment status, unequal treatment, and double standards on their sexual identities and behaviors.

With a classic argument that any meaning is produced, circulated, and consumed between representation, audience, and social formation (A. Kuhn 1985), this book critically analyzes how female subjectivities and sexualities have been represented and promoted in the industry to examine whether K-pop female idols harbor an active alternative role mode for female audiences.

For a more contextualized understanding of the topic in the neoliberal industry's marketing and survival strategies, I strive to comprehend how a new construction of ideal femininity juggles between Korea's existing patriarchal gender hierarchy and the neoliberal hegemonic cliché of female empowerment by sexualization. Specifically, I investigate how a narrative of female idols' success is constructed in their music videos. Since the body is a central locus of social control and power where cultural values are displayed, contested, negotiated, and changed (Jagger and Bordo 1992), and female bodies have been corporeal "histories of the repressed, in themselves, [that] hold a special key to revelation" of the dominant ideology (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, 17), I analyze how the idols' bodies are displayed as a cultural text that is replete with a symbol of societal norms and regulations. Since there is a strong correlation between representations of the K-pop female idols and discriminatory gender attitudes to labour and personal relations in both domestic and public spheres (Lin and Rudolf 2017), I provide a diagnostic analysis of Korean society through understanding a changed social status of K-pop female idols. By doing so, I hope to better explain how the musical and performative imagination of the K-pop industry has transformed and reconfigured women's location, meaning, and existential conditions in Korean society, and in turn, how this aesthetic reconstruction of women's reality, or visual representation, discloses or conceals their asymmetric, exploitative relationship to the patriarchal society.

In this respect, I deal with the idols not only as a manufactured ideal of femininity by the neoliberal industry, but more importantly a popular mode of Foucaultian governmentality that exerts biopolitical power in audience's everyday lives. In other words, by examining how neoliberalism has permeated its political economic mantras in individuals' psyches and mundane behaviors via K-pop, this book allows readers to understand how the industry promotes certain types of female idol personalities, physical characteristics, behaviors, and emotions that help condition the audience's subjectification and subjectivation processes. Considering Motown's girl groups of the 1960s influenced teenage girls' perceptions and behaviors on premarital sexual activities and consumerism in the U.S. (Douglas 1994; Stos 2012), it is important to examine how a certain representation of K-pop female idols is promoted as a means to understand which female conduct is promoted in the music genre.

In this book, I maintain that there has been continuity in women's contributions to and roles in economic developments between the contemporary K-pop industry and the labor-intensive manufacturing industry that led to the nation's neck-breaking modernization between the 60s and the 80s. These successes largely stem from mobilizing and exploiting female workers, which was orchestrated and maintained by the state government. As Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi (1998) acutely indicate that contemporary Ko-

rea is a "palimpsest of multiple layers of Japanese colonialism and neo-imperial domination, especially by U.S. hegemony" (3), I contend that the recent development of K-pop has been possible, configured, and based on the experiences of the country's turbulent industrial capitalist nation-building, which was driven by national elites who were trained by former colonial occupiers including domestic juntas. In turn, I investigate, as this book's title indicates, if there is any improvement in the female idols' labor conditions in terms of their autonomy, dignity, and subjectivity, and how K-pop industry as neoliberal service industry differs from the nation's previous engines of industrial developments from the 1960s to the 80s. By the context of gender-based labor relations in patriarchal neoliberalism, the K-pop industry has actively incorporated female idols' social vulnerability and labor availability in its business, and perpetuated the neoliberal market rationality of competition and success. To be more specific, just as Korea's manufacturing industry conglomerates achieved their fortune by exploiting cheap, docile, and abundant female workers from the 60s to 80s, the K-pop industry capitalizes on the competitive spirits, perseverance, and physical strength of young trainees and idols who dream of being successful and famous in the glossy culture industry. In other words, replicating the yesteryear's authoritarian, exploitative labor relations in a neoliberal service economy, the K-pop industry takes advantage of the hegemonic business model that produces quickly profitable, homogenized, disposable cultural commodities, that is female idols' omnipresence and abundance, from a highly concentrated, hierarchal production system which integrates in-house procedures of artist recruiting, training, image-making, composing, management, contracting, and album production. From this point of view, K-pop is an exemplar of a neoliberal service economy that reflects how business demands have shifted from a manual sweatshop workforce to immaterial, service labor. Retaining Korea's traditional culture of patriarchal sexism, female idols are employed to meet a growing demand of culture industry as service sector economy, and by doing so, they are effectively reinterpreting the traditional gender-based code of ethics, diluting its strict areas of application, and disseminating a new set of entitlements in inclusion and exclusion. Thus K-pop female idols are the most salient example of the industry elite's strategic appropriation and application of different business models in the contemporary neoliberal economy.

While bell hooks (1981) indicates that a subordinated woman in a colony suffers from a double colonization by the colonizer and the patriarch of the nation, I maintain the representations of K-pop female idols retain how the industry elites internalize the idols and the audience alike with the hegemonic gender relations ideal of patriarchal neoliberalism that combines the two most powerful colonizing forces in contemporary Korea. This hegemony further reproduces the country's patriarchal value system by infantilizing and/or hypersexualizing female subjects, and has been present in a split

personality or even a schizophrenic characteristic of K-pop female idols who embody innocence/purity imagery and practice hypersexuality at the same time, as examined in chapter five. This double confinement of female subjectivity legitimizes and reproduces female subordination to the sum of the political-economic *status quo*. Considering the K-pop industry as a hallmark of Korea's adaptation to neoliberalism, a limited characterization of female identity in K-pop confirms the national agenda of masculine capitalist development by commodifying female idols in their physical appearances and affective, immaterial labor. In turn, it conditions, or helps subjectify (female) audiences to sell the traditionally non-marketable for their survival and success in neoliberalism, where "women are required, to a greater degree than men, to be engaged in improving and transforming the self" (Baker 2010, 188). In this seemingly promising perspective on female success in the industry, women voluntarily contribute to renewing and perpetuating the centuries-
long gender oppression in the nation, by abandoning any sense of unfairness or oppression in social relations but equipping themselves with an extra amount of agency and efforts. In this model of voluntary internalization of exploitative social relations between genders, women, especially any K-pop female wannabes, trainees, and idols, become and exercise an ideal neoliberal subject, *homo economicus*, who capitalizes on their efforts in already exploitative capitalist society, as examined in chapter six. In this respect, an unprecedented number of K-pop female idols reveal how the nation's neoliberal culture industry has been successful in updating and capitalizing on the traditional gendered hierarchy in the neoliberal culture industry.

Thus, this book examines how Korea's preexisting conditions, Confucian patriarchy and developmentalism, have been an integral part of the genre's proliferation on the one hand, and in turn, investigates how the music has been an integral part of Korea's growing neoliberalization by its biopolitical functionality.

SOME METHODOLOGICAL NOTES: INTERSECTIONALITY OF MACRO AND MICRO DIMENSIONS

As an effort to systematically understand the topic, the book adopts various approaches by deploying both macro and micro levels of examination. With the book's focus on a broader structural examination of the topic, the first three chapters examine larger cultural, economic, political, and social contexts of the K-pop industry and the success of the female idols. Chapters four, five, and six examine micro levels by looking into how the idols are represented in music videos, and what kind of implicit and explicit messages are intended in the entertainment medium. The last chapter recontextualizes

the previous chapters' macro structural and micro textual analyses of the topic. By investigating how a certain K-pop songs and performers are featured in one of the nation's most popular TV shows, chapter seven examines a broader cultural politics of K-pop in the contemporary Korean society.

As Jager (2003) maintains, "particular events and works throughout Korea's modern history have been discursively linked to one another and to discern the underlying logic of these narrative connections" (xi), chapter one examines how K-pop has been produced in a neoliberal version of developmentalism, which was a main driving force behind the country's neck-breaking industrialization during the 60s, 70s, and 80s. Providing an alternative perspective to the current, dominant scholarship, chapter one argues that the Korean government has played an integral part in promoting K-pop to maintain national competitiveness as a part of the state's neoliberal social policies. Michel Foucault's (2008) notion of governmentality is deployed to illuminate how the politico-economic *status quo* has exploited young females as an effective means of neoliberal subjectification and subjectivation in the nation's post-IMF service economy. Arguing that K-pop female idols are the apex of neoliberal commodity, chapter one concludes that they are the latest export item in Korea's decades-long developmentalism, and perpetuate the contemporary myth of market competition and self-development.

As a more elaborated examination of the continuity the K-pop industry retains, chapter two contextualizes the music genre within the nation's centuries-
long Confucian patriarchy. By deploying Raymond Williams's notion of cultural genre, chapter two investigates how post-IMF neoliberal, patriarchal Korea's historical specificity has rendered the proliferation of K-pop idol girl groups, which commodify highly sexualized young female bodies, as a formal universality. As a critical reaction to the existing K-pop scholarship, this chapter analyzes how K-pop female idols operate on the continuum of the traditional, patriarchal hierarchy that led to gender-based labor exploitation during the country's active industrialization from the 60s to the 80, within a different set of sociocultural and politico-economic contexts of neoliberal Korea. Korea's culture industry has created a system of manufacturing idol groups that has worked for years, stripping idol girls' individual personhood to make lucrative cultural products through mainly an infantilizaiton of and/or a sexualization of female bodies as a commodity. This system has worked for years, as the sexual desires of the male audience are satisfied by the commodified sexuality of female idols, while their place in the social hierarchy is confirmed by the cuteness that the girls perform as a show of submissiveness. Just as docile, disposable, unwed female workers were exploited for a politico-ideological slogan of national development during the nation's active, volatile industrialization period on labor-intensive manufacturing industry work floors, young, appealing, sexualized K-pop female idols have

been deployed to maintain the national economic competitiveness in the post-IMF, contemporary neoliberal Korea, however in a flash performance stage of K-pop.

Chapter three investigates the sociocultural implications of SNSD's debut performance on the *Late Show with David Letterman* as a means to understand what led to K-pop's recent global popularity. Investigating critically how the current literature on K-pop's success focuses on cultural hybridity, chapter three maintains that SNSD's debut clarifies how K-pop's hybridity does not mean dialectical interactions between the electro-dance music genre as a hegemonic American form and Korean content that "appropriates all the elements of urban American (often African American) sound, movement, and energy" (Lie 2015, 124). Furthermore, the chapter argues that cultural hegemony as a constitutive result of sociohistorical and politico-economic arrangements provides a better heuristic tool, and K-pop should be understood as a part of the hegemony of American pop and a cultural surrogate of a neoliberal capitalism. Specifically, analyzing SNSD's signature songs like "Gee" (2009), "The Boys" (2011), and "I Got a Boy" (2012), the chapter examines how those songs can be interpreted as a cultural affirmation, or propagation of neoliberalism's ideology. It examines how cultural hybridity as an alleged reason behind K-pop's global (at least in Asia) popularity rather recirculates and reproduces the American popular culture hegemony rather than producing alternative creativity or negotiated cultural re-creation. The chapter reexamines cultural creativity or originality of K-pop within the context of the birth and practices of the industry, considering a "particular combination of Western and Japanese construction of Korea with Korean constructions of the West" (Jager 2003, ix).

As a recontextualization of K-pop's thematic evolutions within contemporary Korean history, chapter four examines how K-pop female idols have become neoliberal *episteme* since 1997, which coincided with the country's explicit neoliberalization. Drawing a genealogy of K-pop female idols over time, chapter four investigates how the idols have incorporated and represented a major *episteme* at a given moment. Establishing a taxonomy of K-pop female idols by Generation I, II, and III, the chapter situates characteristic developments of the idols within Korea's major neoliberal events. Tracing trajectories of paradigmatic representations of the idols, it investigates how each generation is a symbolic response to the country's extensive neoliberalization. Generation I is characterized as ambiguous femininity with a salience of cuteness and innocence from 1997 to 2007; Generation II is also identified as a sexual ambiguity, however, with a salience of growing sexualization from 2007 to 2010; and Generation III has been typified as an explicit sexualization since 2011. Each generation corresponds to the IMF's structural adjustment program in 1997, the Free Trade Agreement between Korea and the U.S. in 2007, and the G20 Seoul Summit in 2010, respectively.

Chapters five and six scrutinize how K-pop female idols are represented in music videos as a micro level of analysis of the phenomenon. Chapter five examines how K-pop female idols are commodified in their bodies and personalities. Focusing on one of the most popular female idols to date, Suzy of Miss A, chapter five examines how she simultaneously retains contradictory feminine characteristics, explicitly sexual and traditionally innocent/pure. It investigates why and how her ironic personality is possible in the context of Korea's neoliberal project of economic development within its centuries-long patriarchy. To that end, the chapter investigates Suzy's split personality by reconsidering how the traditional gender norm has been updated in the neoliberal culture industry, proliferating and re-legitimating patriarchal gender norms and values.

Chapter six deals with how the K-pop industry promotes a discourse of resilience as a neoliberal ideal of female subjectivity. How can the public become willing, devoted, docile workers in situations where they are not able to sustain decent, humane living conditions under cut-throat, flexible neoliberal working conditions? Chapter six argues, in a therapeutic narrative of overcoming obstacles and achieving goals, that K-pop music videos provide audiences with a message that individuals have to be responsible for their success and well-being rather than complaining about external, institutional hindrances. While ostensibly promoting female empowerment, they update and reinforce patriarchal gender norms and expectations. To this end, the chapter examines SNSD's "Into the New World" (2007) and "All Night" (2017) to investigate how resilience discourse is promoted along with neoliberal positive psychology that aims to sustain a happy, devoted, and auto-correcting working populace.

Chapter seven recontextualizes a social implication of K-pop in contemporary Korean society. This chapter interrogates a broader ramification of the recent resurgence of 90s popular music, an earlier version of the current K-pop, which was epitomized by the unprecedented success of MBC's *Infinite Challenge*: "Saturday, Saturday is Singers" (ToToGa). It aims to understand what is suggested in the program's special reunion performances of the decade's most iconic popular musicians. Focusing on how the program reconstitutes a cultural memory of the decade, chapter seven examines the cultural politics of the 90s' retro music in contemporary neoliberal Korea. Examining extra-musical conditions of ToToGa, and analyzing why and how it became popular with regards to its referential roles to audiences' emotions and socioeconomic environments under neoliberalism, the chapter investigates how ToToGa, as a cultural politics of memory of the 90s, selectively navigates and repackages contradictory memories, conferring new meanings onto the 90s and making its memory bearable. Since remembering the past is fundamentally based on a necessity of the present, it seeks to answer why there is a boom of 90s pop music at this moment. To this end, chapter seven

analyzes how ToToGa reconstructs and represents hegemonic discourse on the decade's sociocultural and politico-economic meanings.

Chapter One

Popular Culture as a Strategic Field of Neoliberal Intervention

Developmentalism, Neoliberal Social Policy, and Governmentality in the Post-IMF Korean Popular Music Industry

Compared to centuries of slow, tedious progress in Western nation-states, Korea rapidly achieved its economic, political, and social modernization in less than four decades, a phenomenon commonly known as the Miracle on the Han River. In just a decade, Korea rendered another phenomenal achievement at this time in the culture industry, that is *Hallyu*, or the Korean Wave.[1] As an allegory of this fast development, K-pop's main features consist of addictive, fast, and dynamic beats and sounds, garnished with a perfectly synchronized, mesmerizing choreography by attractive, physique male idols, or appealing, delicate, and sexy female idols (C. Kim 2012). Since TVXQ's debut in 2004 (H.O.T. was the first K-pop idol to launch in 1996), the Korean soundscape has been dominated by K-pop idols that are mainly produced and/or played for the purpose of product exportation (Oh and Park 2012; G. Park 2013b). For George Katsiaficas (2012), along with glorious democratic uprisings against military juntas in the 70s and the 80s, as a reflective of Korea's industrial, technological, and economic development, *Hallyu* has become a symbol for Korea's competent advancement to a more civil, sophisticated country with an image of an attractive, clean, and advanced nation-state. To a large extent, this cultural phenomenon has been equated with national achievement and pride, which Jeongsuk Joo (2011) calls "pop nationalism," and has retained an ideological conflation between economic

development or superiority and cultural modernity. With the local media's aggressive reportage on its global success, which is always translated to amount of cultural export revenues, K-pop and *Hallyu* in general have been promoted as self-assertive tokens of the nation's cultural attractiveness and economic competitiveness.

During her inaugural speech in February 2013, the former, impeached President Park Geun-hye declared her intention to recreate the Miracle of the Han River by *Hallyu*. The Miracle was effectuated by her father, dictator-President Park Chung-hee, by distinctively masculine, exploitative modernization rested on an unprecedented, nation-wide mobilization of young and cheap, but well-disciplined female workers into the labor-intensive manufacturing industry for commodity exportation from the 60s to the 80s. In this respect, Korea's "miraculous" industrial development was possible through "Confucian parental governance into a modernizing project" by an optimal combination of patriarchal hierarchy and masculine developmentalism (H. Kim 2001, 53; K. Shin 2002). Thus, her policy outlook is quite outdated and poses a stark difference in characteristics, nature, and orientations between the previous industrial development and the current cultural business. I suppose the impeached President Park officially disclosed how the state has treated the cultural in its relations to other governing tools and subjects in contemporary Korean history: Culture is a pliable auxiliary of governmental policies for economic, political, and social development. Actually, according to the Hyundai Research Institute, the recent global success of K-pop has contributed to national economic growth mainly by immaterial, service sectors like tourism and cultural content production, and by an increasing exportation of consumer products that the idols endorse or use (P. Kim 2011).

While the preceding administrations of Kim Young-sam (1993–1998), Kim Dae-jung (1998–2003), Roh Moo-hyun (2003–2008), and Lee Myung-bak (2008–2013), all actively promoted the culture industry as a means to develop or sustain the national economy, they were modest in officially summoning and deploying the rhetoric of state developmentalism in the realm of culture. With Park Geun-hye's speech, the state officially declared that its economic/industrial policy coincides with its cultural one, or subsumes the latter to the sum of the former. Historically and practically, owing to the devastated economic, social, and political conditions after the Japanese colonial occupation and the Korean War, the state's cultural policies have been instrumental in realizing the government's political, economic, social, and/or ideological agendas (Yim 2002). For example, dictator-President Park Chung-hee, who seized power through a military coup in 1961, made full use of patriarchal nationalism that mandated the population, especially women, to exercise obedience, diligence, loyalty, frugality, and cooperation in order to implement export-oriented, labor-intensive industrialization, which provided the illicit political elite with a rationale for developmental dictatorship

in the poverty-stricken country. In this respect, regarding national development as a result of an active "incorporation of the actively residual [sociocultural and politico-economic traditions] by reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion" (Williams 1977, 123), I strive to critically examine the success of K-pop within a continuum between Korea's residual legacy of developmentalism and post-IMF neoliberal state policies. With a careful reconsideration of the sociocultural and politico-economic backgrounds of national development, I provide an alternative approach to the currently dominant K-pop or *Hallyu* literature which does not pay due attention to those structural issues. To be more specific, with regard to a lingering influence of patriarchal gender hierarchy and discrimination, I examine why and how the K-pop industry promotes female idols as one of the most successful and omnipresent commodities in post-IMF neoliberal Korea. Within a complex interplay between developmentalism, traditional culture/custom, and neoliberal capitalism, this chapter investigates how female idols in their teens and twenties, who used to be confined to the domestic sphere, have suddenly occupied a central arena in cultural and social domains as much as male counterparts.

With a rapid rise of *Hallyu*, there are growing numbers of scholarly endeavors that explain how it has been possible from intrinsic perspectives, attributing the success to the Korean culture industry's technical and business innovations. For example, cultural hybridity allows Asian audiences to relate their sentiment to K-pop's glossy features (D. Shim 2006; Ryoo 2009); K-pop's cultural proximity makes palatable to the region's burgeoning tastes (Iwabuchi 2001, 2008; Cho 2011); K-pop's innovative production value, such as seamless choreography, catchy songs, fashionable outfits, and spectacular music videos makes it attractive (Park 2013a, 2013b); it was K-pop industry leaders' strategic manufacturing and business planning that led to a global success (Shin and Kim 2013); and, YouTube is a major factor in K-pop's global reach (Jung and Shim 2014; Oh and Lee 2013; Oh and Park 2012). In sum, the current literature is celebratory, merely focusing on microscopic analyses, rather than larger sociocultural and politico-economic contexts critically, not to mention explaining how a recent surge of female K-pop idols is possible at all.

While there are a few scholars who have critically examined a political economy of the culture industry (Jin 2007, 2014, 2016; Kang 2015; H. Lee 2013; D. Shim 2002), their arguments are not successful in explaining how governmental interventions have been an integral part of *Hallyu*. For example, citing a researcher at the Korea Culture and Tourism Policy Institute, Doobo Shim (2008) believes it was liberalized global market conditions rather than the state's promotional policies to export the cultural commodities that caused *Hallyu*'s international success. Although I have no objection to this observation, there is a need for more critical attention to be paid as to

how Korean cultural industries became capable of producing quality entertainment content and promoting female idols in the context of the country's neoliberalization and traditional gender norms/expectations. How could the industry, which was not developed as much, have achieved the state of the art in its aesthetic, technological, and business features in such a short period of time, and competed other already advanced foreign products and services in a jungle-like neoliberal market competition? To that end, I investigate what roles the state played in the culture industry, while facing challenges from other competing foreign economies and neoliberal policy mandates from the IMF's SAPs.

By examining the political economy of K-pop's success, I reconsider a lingering legacy of Korea's developmentalism in K-pop's neoliberal, service-oriented market rationality. I review Michel Foucault's (2008) notion of governmentality as a means to analyze how, by their popularity and ubiquity, the idols have played an ideological state apparatus (Althusser 1971) that promotes the population's subjectification and subjectivation processes to internalize the neoliberal value system, and in turn, interpellates individuals to be neoliberal agents. There is an important caveat to be discerned to correctly understand neoliberal characteristics of the K-pop industry: Comparatively, the K-pop idols "voluntarily" become prey of the industry's rampant profiteering which capitalizes on their competitive spirits, perseverance, and physical strength by their dream of being successful and famous in the neoliberal show business, while under Park's developmental dictatorship, workers had to endure exploitative, inhumane working conditions to support themselves and their families by the state's effective utilization of patriarchal nationalism in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. More importantly, as a popular mode of governmentality, the idols, especially female idols, as manufactured cultural commodities by the industry—meaning that they are highly visible, adored, and respected by the public—exert an effective, hegemonic agency that preaches individuals (consumers, audiences, fans, and so on) are capable and powerful, indicating "it is girls' generation," while the "industrial warriors" who largely paved the way for the Miracle were despised as "Kong-suni"[2] and have still not received due recognition for their contribution to national development. In sum, I shed critical light on K-pop idols' political, economic, cultural, and social implications for post-IMF Korean society in a nexus between the state's politico-ideological necessity and the market's economic imperatives.

LEGACY OF NATIONALIST DEVELOPMENTALISM IN THE K-POP INDUSTRY

Developmentalism or the developmental state has been an effective model for the third-world's rapid industrialization and economic growth since World War II (Wallerstein 2005), and Korea is one of the most successful examples of the nation-state being in charge of social integration and economic management. The Miracle of the Han River was possible by the state's complete control and guidance of the industry based on the nation's cultural, economic, geo-political, and social resources in the post-Korean War era. Designed and implemented by the state, export is an integral part of national development, and has been systematically managed by the state's comprehensive subsidies given to *chaebols*, industrial conglomerates like Samsung. This national development relied on its labor-intensive, export-oriented industry that was based on a constant, abundant flow of cheap, young, docile workers since the 60s. In this respect, it is worth quoting John Lie's (1992) analysis on how Korea's developmentalism worked during its active industrialization from the 60s to the 80s:

> The state cultivated and fostered large conglomerates [and they] were able to take advantage of state-supported credits and tax incentives, while undertaking large investment and achieving efficiency and export promotion. Moreover, the state forced large conglomerates to compete for state patronage, therefore, the state was able to foster relatively efficient organizations to execute its economic plans and strategies. (293)

In other words, Korea's miraculous modernization was a result of the state's active control in the market.

Ironically, the Korean government's aggressive globalization campaign in the 90s ended up increasing its status as the controller or the orchestrator of the national economy, which resulted in the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Ironically and ostensibly, in the face of the SAPs mandated by the IMF in 1997, Korea's authoritarian developmentalism was officially replaced by neoliberal free market principles. However, it is important to scrutinize whether or not Korea's state-led developmentalism actually gave its power to market-oriented neoliberalism since the market itself still is "state-constrained and state-regulated" (Yeung 2000, 139). Rather, neoliberalism is internally combined with the developmental state to the extent that an emergent combination of neoliberal economic management and authoritarian state configures (Harvey 2005; Peck and Tickell 2002). Since the market is configured within institutional frameworks and rules by the state as its condition of possibilities (Foucault 2008), the state is an integral part of the neoliberal program via a construction of minimal social safety nets, while providing private sectors with industrial fundamentals like mandatory education, infra-

structure, and legal frameworks that allow easy lay-offs (OECD 2000a; 2000b; World Bank 2002). In this respect, since developmental states always facilitate competition, free trade, and open-export market practices, Harvey (2005) indicates neoliberalization "therefore opens up possibilities for developmental states to enhance their position in international competition by developing new structures of state intervention" (72).

By the same token, the state has intensively promoted free market orthodoxy in the name of economic recovery from the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and Korea's subjection to the neoliberal SAPs by the IMF. Actually, not having been able to cope with ever-escalating competition in the labor-intensive manufacturing industry in which Third World countries offer the least expensive wage, most malleable labor policies, and other subsidies, the Korean government initiated its strategic promotion of the neoliberal culture industry since the Kim Young-sam administration (1993–1998). Since President Kim Dae-Jung's administration (1998–2003), the state has actively implemented an industrial model of cultural policy, which highlighted the economic potential and value of culture as an important source of national wealth. As a benchmark for dictator-President Park's cultural policy to facilitate the illicit government's industrialization projects in the 60s and 70s, the Kim administration enforced the "five-year plan for the development of cultural industries [in 1999], the vision 21 for cultural industries [in 2000] and the vision 21 for cultural industries in a digital society" in 2001 (Yim 2002, 41). In this respect, the state has been in charge of investing in cultural content, creating a new marketplace, promoting creative content development, and marketing the culture industry overseas (Choi 2013). However, as a means to meet challenges from global neoliberal capitalism while providing an infrastructure for market innovation and development, the state transformed itself from a direct mobilizer or controller of the industry to a new, "indirect" coordinator that channels particular economic sectors to a new one (H. Cho 2000). In other words, updated with the neoliberal rhetoric of market autonomy, the state renovated its relationship with the culture industry by providing indirect funding, such as establishing educational institutions, holding events for local talents to debut, providing governmental venues to promote the culture industry domestically and globally, and proving tax benefits. Though the state government and the market have different sets of interests and goals based on their own autonomy and relationships, both have closely intertwined to utilize and exchange cultural, material, and symbolic resources to develop and maintain the national economy (Evans 1995). Therefore, the post-IMF Korean government should be regarded as the "'neo-statist' developmental regime" that maintains initiatives and intervenes in market coordination and implements market-friendly policies and regulations (Hart-Landsberg and Burkett 2001, 421; Kalinowski 2008).

To be more specific, the right-wing, conservative administrations of Lee Myung-bak (2008–2013) and Park Geun-hye (2013–2017) exponentially expanded developmentalist approaches to the culture industry by increasing governmental budgets, reconfiguring governmental agencies and setting agendas. Specifically, the Contents Industry Promotion Law has strategically funded overseas promotion of K-pop including in the North America and Europe (Jin 2014). As a major governmental body, the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST 2011) has taken a charge of constructing *Hallyu* as the nation's strategic, new economic growth engine. MCST implements the

> promotion of the Cultural Content industry through cooperation among government agencies by operating the Cultural Content Industry Promotion Committee in the Office of the Prime Minister; and establishment of a stable financial environment by creating a fund for the production of global media products . . . [and] development of creative professionals through planning and marketing, project-linked training programs, and exchanging students with renowned educational institutes in other countries. (17)

In this context, the state revenue for its culture industry has steadily risen from 5,726 billion Korean Won in 2005 to 6,900 in 2010, which is equivalent to 6.2 percent of GDP. Specifically, based on the Framework Act on Cultural Industry Promotion, the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA) was established on May 7, 2009, in order to aggressively develop and promote profitable cultural commodities in the global market. As a collective of various state institutions and agencies like the Korea Broadcasting Institute, Korea Culture and Content Agency, Korea Game Industry Agency, Cultural Contents Center, and Digital Contents Business Group of Korea IT Industry Promotion Agency, KOCCA commands a comprehensive plan from developing human resources to supporting a "development of specialized culture technologies from design to production, the commercialization of contents, and the promotion of various overseas expansion projects to develop the content industry into an export industry" (KOCCA n.d.). The Content Industry Promotion Act of 2010 deploys more assertive administrative support to emphasize monetary benefits of cultural "content" enterprises like online game development. Furthermore, the government has provided the industry with financial supports such as tax breaks and lending loans (Ministry of Strategy and Finance 2012). Those governmental measures indicate how much K-pop's recent success has benefited from a continuity of Korea's decades-long developmentalism.

The state has actively promoted *Hallyu* as an export item to keep its national economy afloat. Institutionally, the *Hallyu* Culture Promotion Organization and the Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange (KOFICE) were founded to further facilitate overseas promotions and ex-

ports of *Hallyu* products in 2012. Practically, the Korean Wave Index, created by the MCST in 2010, quantifies how Korean culture has been consumed and favored by different foreign countries so that the industry can modify export portfolios and strategies to cater to each country's selling points and perspectives. In turn, with theses state initiatives, in 2011, K-pop achieved a revenue of $3.4 billion, and its export reached $180 million, a 112 percent increase compared to 2010, with almost 80 percent annual growth since 2007 (Naidu-Ghelani 2012). Establishing the Priority Sectors criterion to support new economic growth engine sectors, the Export-Import Bank of Korea announced it would provide loans and credit guarantees worth $917 million to help spread K-pop and other *Hallyu*-related products (Na 2013). For example, a sizeable part of the government's fund for the "2013 Popular Music Production Support Project," designed originally to assist independent musicians for promoting diversity, went to several K-pop idols such as Girls' Day and Hyorin of Sistar, who have been manufactured and marketed by major K-pop industry leaders (*MoneyToday* 2014). The KOCCA, the fund administrator, maintains that the decision was necessary in order to facilitate an overseas promotion of K-pop, since Korea's economy became heavily dependent on export after the 1997 IMF crisis (Crotty and Lee 2006). Amongst 17 fund recipients, 7 went to major K-pop management companies, claiming approximately $500,000 from $888,000, and negating the *raison d'état* of the governmental policy. In this respect, contrary to Lisa Lewis's (1990) argument that a poor economy threatens the prosperity of the music industry, posing "dim prospects for female musicians" (69), the beginning and success of K-pop female idols coincided with Korea's neoliberal developmentalism during its worst economic recession.

More than just an export item, K-pop became a comprehensive marketing tool to help raise overseas market recognition of Korean brands. In order to conflate K-pop's global popularity with Korean manufactured goods' quality, the Korea Trade Promotion Agency with another governmental agency, the Korea Trade Insurance Corporation, signed a memorandum of understanding to assist small companies with less than an annual export revenue of $50,000 by giving "free marketing and financial consulting to the companies, as well as insurance discounts" (J. Kim 2014, n.p.).

Furthermore, K-pop has been deployed as an item of destination tourism in Korea. Through state-private partnership, or state-corporate nexus, with uses of various governmental venues, the state has hosted several international K-pop events like the Annual K-Pop World Festival. Though the festival is planned and organized by multiple government bodies, such as the MCST, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the KOFICE, and the Presidential Council on Nation Branding, the media publicize it, conglomerates like Samsung fund and engage in PR, and the municipal governments recruit tourists for the event. In this regard, K-pop has been a center of strategic relations

between the state, the society, and the market while the neoliberal service industry has become a major field of economic growth in post-IMF Korea. Thus, emphasizing the role of intellectual property and creativity and reducing any cost of production and logistics, K-pop is a new economic model which procures a faster, higher profit margin than the traditional manufacturing industry, like automobiles, as a "distinct spatiotemporal configuration" of the post-IMF Korean economy: "The sharper the differentiation between these two temporalities grows (with dematerialization/digitalization), the more abundant the business opportunities become" (Sassen 2001, 268).

As a reminiscence of authoritarian business practices during the active developmental era, the management and production style of the K-pop industry is almost identical to that of the manufacturing industry, which led to export-oriented national development. It is characterized by the "Fordist regime of accumulation" which operates through a "hierarchical bureaucratic form of work organization, characterized by a centralized management; and vertical integration, driven by a desire to achieve cost efficiency in production and exchange" (Gibson and Kong 2005, 544). Likewise, dominated by a few giant talent agencies, SM entertainment, JYP Entertainment, and YG Entertainment, the K-pop industry utilizes an economy of scale, based on vertical integration of music production and promotion and its subsequent outcome of market concentration. Not only fully utilizing a vast pool of audition participants and trainees to formulate idol groups, but also selectively deploying each group member separately according to his/her assigned and manufactured image in various commercial media events (Lie 2012; H. Shin 2009), the K-pop industry has rendered highly homogenized, predictable music commodities, female idols, whose only aim is to make viable financial profits.

Most distinctively, Gil-sung Park's (2013b) model of K-pop production, "globalization-localization-globalization" which 1) outsources a creation of songs and choreography by foreign artists, 2) trains K-pop performers by local personnel, and 3) distributes its products to foreign markets, is the exact same mechanism the export-driven manufacture industry had relied on. Korea's traditional developmentalism rested on 1) foreign raw resources, technologies, and machineries that were processed by 2) Korean local workers, and 3) foreign consumer markets to sell its processed commodities. "Connect and develop" as K-pop's mechanism of manufacturing creativity, in which "the internal process of innovation or creativity is often bypassed in favor of borrowing, buying, or outsourcing creativity and innovation to external communities" (20), is a K-pop version of a neoliberal manufacturing business model that relies on Korea's local labor market which provides a "stable of top performers at a relatively cheaper cost" (25). Then, the matter of originality and creativity is completely equivalent to that of financial capability to buy a song from overseas practitioners, leaving domestic artists mere perfor-

mative technicians. The K-pop industry has imported foreign resources and then reverse engineered them until local corporations can come up with acceptable variants to sell to the market (L. Kim 1993). In others words, the K-pop industry has followed in the footsteps of Korea's labor-intensive, export-oriented manufacturing industry where unwed, female workers constituted the vast majority of workforces (Monk-Turner and Turner 2001). In this respect, while Timothy J. Dowd, Kathleen Liddle, and Maureen Blyler (2005) indicate American female musicians benefit decentralized production activities through musical diversity, K-pop female idols are a result of the oligopolistic K-pop industry that utilizes a centralized production system to produce and market seemingly diversified, yet homogenized musicians. Unlike Motown girl groups benefitted from an expansion of decentralized production in the U.S., the success of K-pop female idols has been possible by the K-pop industry's highly concentrated production practices.

The nature of K-pop's emergent character is found from how Korea's industrial demands have shifted from a manual sweatshop workforce to neoliberal service and affective labor. In other words, by the K-pop industry's aggressive replication of the traditional business strategies used by Korea's labor-intensive manufacture conglomerates that ushered in the Miracle, K-pop female idols stemmed from the industry's response to the nation's shifting market conditions wrought by the IMF crisis. Like its predecessors decades ago, the contemporary K-pop industry takes advantage of a hegemonic model that produces quickly profitable, homogenized, disposable commodities from a highly concentrated, hierarchal production system which integrates in-house procedures of artist recruiting, training, image-making, composing, management, contracting, and album production. In this respect, the idols severely lack any creative autonomy or authenticity, to the extent that they "execute what has been conceived for them; they wear what they are told to wear; they sing what they are told to sing; and they move and behave as they are told to move and behave" (Lie 2015, 141). In other words, as much as Korea's manufacturing industry giants achieved their fortune by exploiting cheap, docile, and abundant workers from the 60s to 80s, the K-pop industry capitalizes on the competitive spirits, perseverance, and physical strength of young trainees and idols who dream of being successful and famous.

In sum, the Korean government has subsumed culture as a mere instrument for economic profit, and in turn, strengthened the country's international competitiveness (Jin 2006; Nam 2013). Thus, contrary to its rhetoric, neoliberalism works best in a strong regulatory state, especially in Korea's dirigiste mode of state-led capitalist development.

K-POP: STRATEGIC INNOVATION FOR NEOLIBERAL DEVELOPMENT

Considering that music is a product of larger structural conditions (Cloonan 1999; Negus 1999), it is important to acknowledge that K-pop was incepted in the middle of a state-led aggressive globalization frenzy (hasty membership attainment of OECD in 1996). In turn, its global popularity coincided with the government's forceful neoliberal efforts to expand its economic territories by ratifying multiple Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), especially with the U.S., in 2007. As an allegory of the Korean economy that relies on export for its economic, political, and social development and maintenance, K-pop is mainly produced and/or played by Koreans for the purpose of product exportation in the post-IMF Korean economy (Oh and Park 2012; G. Park 2013b). Ever since, branded as a trendy and fashionable benchmark, or a spin-off from Western music—to be more specific, American popular music with urban African American influence—K-pop becomes an umbrella category that overwhelms other existing genres of Korean popular music. In this regard, Korean popular music's diversity, in terms of content, form, and production, has decreased as three major K-pop management companies, SM Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, and YG Entertainment, dominate the market, which goes against the rhetoric of neoliberalism that canonizes free choice and unlimited competition.

The industrialization of culture and a commercialization of popular music have been a tenet of neoliberal knowledge/information-based economy: Likewise, K-pop was incepted as a part of Korea's neoliberal strategies for economic development. Given the fact that cultural commodification has existed since the Renaissance (Cowen 1998), what is special in the surge of K-pop comes from the state's integral role in intensifying its scope and power in the name of post-IMF national competitiveness and economic development. In the K-pop industry, it has intensified to the extent that a formal boundary between culture and economics and art and commerce became obscure, if not obsolete (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005), and culture became a mere marketing strategy to promote the state and to host foreign capital (Gibson and Kong 2005). In this respect, K-pop is regarded as a culture technology (CT) for revitalizing Korea's postindustrial, service-oriented neoliberal economy along with the five strategic technologies such as information and communication technologies (ICTs), bio-technology, nano-technology, and environmental technology (Shin 2009). In this respect, Soo-man Lee, CEO of SM Entertainment, is boastful of his CT manual that mandates components

> necessary to popularize K-pop artists in different Asian countries . . . [like] what chord progressions to use in what country; the precise color of eyeshad-

> ow a performer should wear in a particular country; the exact hand gestures he or she should make; and the camera angles to be used in the videos. (Seabrook 2012, n.p.)

Actually, K-pop contributes to raising the confidence of Korea's neoliberal service industries such as private dance and singing academies, tourist-driven shopping malls with K-pop fashion items, cultural content production, and an increasing exportation of consumer products that the idols endorse or use (P. Kim 2011; Mahr 2012). The Korean government's strategic support and promotion of ICTs and the culture industry is a distinctive case in point. Practically, ICTs are not only a major arsenal for speculative financial transactions but also a basis for commodification of the cultural.

Among *Hallyu* items, K-pop is the most strategic cultural commodity, developed through rigorous market research and experiments (Shin and Kim 2013). K-pop idols require high initial investment, costing about $5,000 per a trainee a month with multiple years of training in foreign languages, dance, singing, and acting (KpopStarz 2013). For example, it cost a total of $2.6 million to scout, train, and debut a member of SNSD (Chan 2012). As a means to squeeze profit margins over their initial investment, the K-pop industry exploits minors' affective labor while beginning the star manufacturing process as early as 5 years old and rigorously training for up to 7 years under "slave contracts" which last up to 17 years (Williamson 2011). In this regard, as opposed to their glittering stage persona, K-pop idols in general are hyper-exploited workers who have been disciplined in military camp-like training facilities "without any sustained rest or relaxation, in a state of semipermanent sleep deprivation . . . [occasionally resulting in] physical injury and illness, not to mention mental stress" (Lie 2015, 126).

Guy Debord's (1994) society of spectacle captures how K-pop has contributed to strategic innovations for neoliberal development, characterized by the production and consumption of images, staged media events, and consumerism. Via K-pop's glossy, sexualized spectacles, everyday experiences are mediated and conditioned to the extent that the spectacle constitutes social relationships based on and mediated by images, and it is integral to consumerist imperatives of market capitalism. Textually, equipped with highly crafted visuals as a manifestation of ideal beauty and propriety (S. Lee 2012), K-pop is filled with color, play, camaraderie, and love, which forces the audience to focus on a positive, rosy future of society. In this respect, considering that the capitalist economy is dependent upon a seamless continuation of consumption, K-pop idols are a cultural linchpin that teaches and provides cues to utilize commodities as a means of self-transformation into someone better like the idols, mobilizing individuals to be a steady force of neoliberal consumerism, while invoking an asocial fantasy of evading established rules and romanticism of narcissistic pleasure as a cultural amnesia. Considering

how women, who used to be confined to the domestic sphere, have been summoned to be active, conspicuous consumers in today's neoliberal economy (Kendall 2002; T. Kim 2003; Nelson 2000), K-pop female idols are not only explicit commodity consumers themselves but more importantly interpellate female audiences to be boastful consumers effectively. Thus, K-pop's relentless repetition of fantasy enforces a feedback loop upon its audiences that entraps them in the eternal return of always wanting more. Thus, the overwhelmingly visual nature of K-pop is an example of Michael Wolf's (2004) "entertainment economy," which transforms the Korean soundscape into a subcategory of the neoliberal service economy.

EMERGENCE OF K-POP FEMALE IDOLS: THE POSTER-CHILDREN OF THE NEOLIBERAL CULTURE INDUSTRY

According to statistics on Korea's biggest music chart, Melon, between 2005 and 2013, a total of 244 different K-pop idol groups have come and gone, (130 all-boy groups, 103 all-girl ones, and 11 coed ones). In 2013 alone, there were 30 new idol groups, and it is difficult to find solo musicians on the chart, where 7 to 8 spots out of 10 were taken by idols for last 5 years. With SNSD and Wonder Girls debuting in 2007 when K-pop became increasingly Americanized (Lie 2015), the number of all-girl idol groups has been growing, by at least 10 new groups per year (KpopStarz 2013). These figures do not include those not ranked on the chart but working behind the scenes, and the number would be even higher if we consider the total number of wannabes and trainees. According to a recent study (Chang 2018), there are about a million employees in more than 1,000 talent agencies in the industry. In sum, K-pop has become one of the most dominant fields of development and growth in Korea.

An increasing proliferation of K-pop idols discloses how contemporary Korea is conditioned and runs on a limited number of sociocultural pathways, ruling out anything not considered profitable or fashionable. The phenomenon symbolically represents a neoliberal replacement of labor-intensive industry by a service one that is feminized in order to capitalize on the gendered-nature of production and consumption in post-IMF Korea (Gonick 2006). In this respect, the first K-pop female idol group, SM Entertainment's S.E.S., marked the beginning of the systematic management of female bodies and their imagery in 1997. This came as an effort to shore up the Korean culture industry and market to overseas audiences, since the local economy was devastated by the 1997 Asian Financial crisis. In turn, this strategy is similar to the way in which the Korean popular music industry promoted female dancers and musicians at various clubs for U.S. soldiers in the post-

Korean War era for economic as well as cultural endeavors (Kim and Shin 2010).

Deploying various styles and feminine images from innocent and cute to sexy and mature, S.E.S. made an earnest effort to break into the Japanese market, but was not favored as much as in Korea. Afterwards, BoA, another of SM Entertainment's female idols, saw success with her first Japanese album, *Listen to My Heart*, which was first ranked in Japan's Oricon Daily Chart and Oricon Weekly Chart in 2002. By teaming up with a major Japanese music label, Avex, BoA was successful in marketing and promoting her Japanese albums, such as *Listen to My Heart* (1.3 million copies sold in 2002), *Valenti* (1.3 million in 2003), and *No. 1*, (1.4 million in 2004). This success prompted the Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS 2011), a government agency, to regard K-pop as a strong strategic item for export businesses, accounting for $180 million in profit.

As the most sought after, and globally well-known K-pop female group to date, SNSD debuted as a group of nine girls chosen by SM Entertainment in 2007, an event that coincided with the initiation of negotiation of the FTA between Korea and the United States (KOR-US FTA). As a product of years of conditioning during rigorous traineeship periods of five to seven years, the girls each have their own "talent" and attractive appearance, whether that is her face, body, or image: With SM Entertainment's complete direction, everything from the girls' outfits, hairstyles, makeup, dance moves, gestures, and romantic relationships are completely controlled to gain the audience's favor. The phenomenal success of their song, "Gee," with its addictive, catchy hooks and fast beats decorated by amicable, easy-to-follow "crab dance" choreography, brought the group to international popularity in January 2009, and subsequently motivated SM Entertainment to aggressively deploy SNSD to market to overseas audiences. As used in fishing, the "hook" in K-pop is used to catch or trap audiences' audiovisual sensibilities. As a psychological as well as commercial tool that mesmerizes individuals' attention and mind by a captivating repetition of catchy sing-along phrases and beats that creates their affective responses, the hook in K-pop exerts an ideological function that "furthers the dramatic action, or defines a person or place" (Kasha and Hirschhorn 1979, 29). The hook in popular music helps formulate popular memory, and subsequently consciousness (Shepherd 2003), by its addictiveness once it sticks to audiences' ears, eyes, and minds. Likewise, the song topped all of Korea's major music charts within two days, and the music video gathered one million views on YouTube in less than a day. SNSD followed up with more award-winning, instant hits with catchy, easy-to-follow tunes, rhythms, and dance moves.

SNSD assumed a particularly important role that reinstated K-pop female idols as the central figures of Korean popular culture after more than five years of male idols' dominance in the music industry (2002–2007). More-

over, with SNSD's transnational popularity, K-pop became a priority cultural commodity to export to Asian countries after Korean TV drama and films, which Jin (2014) coins *Hallyu* 2.0. In this respect, Kosin and Yi (2015) maintain SNSD is the most important contributor to reviving *Hallyu* with the "perfect storm for fans to become addicted" to its appealing physicality, perfectly synchronized group dancing, and flawless style (n.p.). Ever since January 2009 with its single "Gee" as the year's best-selling single of 2009 in Korea, SNSD has become a synonym for the canonical K-pop female idol, and female power and success. SNSD's subsequent single, which was released in June 2009, "Genie: Tell Me Your Wish" became another hit in many Asian countries as well as Korea, and led to the group's first concert tour in China, Taiwan, and Japan. As an official debut song in Japan, SNSD released a Japanese version of "Genie: Tell Me Your Wish" in September 2010, and later a Japanese version of "Gee" in October 2010. Mainly with these two successful singles, SNSD was coronated as the "Idol of the Nation," after winning the title of "Artist of the Year," at both the 2009 and the 2010 Seoul Music Awards consecutively. As an index of its influence, SNSD has continuously ranked high in various public opinion polls: The group received the Musician of the Year award for three years in a row from 2009 to 2011, and ranked in second place in 2012, fifth place in 2013, second place in 2014, and third place in 2015 (Gallup Korea 2015). The idol group reclaimed the number one spot in Forbes Korea's 2014 Power Celebrity 40 after winning the position in 2011 and 2012, and second place in 2010 and 2013 (Benjamin 2014). SNSD was selected as one of the five acts that best represent K-pop in a poll administered by the Korea Creative Content Agency (Jackson 2015).

K-pop idols are a media industry unto themselves: They are not just singers, but celebrities, who act, endorse, model, and advertise. Likewise, SNSD's appearances in various media platforms made them omnipresent media figures who demonstrated global popularity and appeal by appearing in multiple commercial endorsements in Asia. In turn SNSD's success is scrutinized in terms of effective Korean business models like Samsung and Hyundai. As a main promotion strategy, SNSD has appeared on the country's major variety TV shows like *Infinite Challenge* to promote new songs or album releases, and to showcase each member's personality, character, interest, and so on. Individual members also have their own media businesses; for example, Tae-Yeon is a radio music show DJ, Yoon-Ah is a well-known drama actress, and Jessica and Tiffany are musical performers. Furthermore, as a total promotion operation, SNSD has hosted its own reality TV shows, such as *Girls Go to School, Right Now: It's Girls' Generation, Factory Girl, Girls Generation' and the Dangerous Boys,* and *SNSD behind the Story*. There is a double feedback loop between SNSD's initial media exposure as performers and the publicity the group amasses from advertise-

ments, which again feeds positively into their celebrity status. From this perspective, K-pop idols are treated as an immediate cash-cow, deployed in multiple commercial activities, such as television dramas, movies, and product endorsements, rather than just relying on the plummeting profit margins of album sales. SNSD has successfully publicized itself as a singular neoliberal cultural commodity, (re) defining what it means to be a successful K-pop idol.

As a manifestation of the nexus between the state and the industry, SNSD has been deployed in the state's various official events and ceremonies as the nation's representative cultural icon. For example, Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), a governmental agency that promotes Korea's tourism overseas, hypes SNSD as an exemplary of Korea's popular culture that sets a "global standard for girl idol groups" (n.d., n.p.). In November 2010, the state hosted the 2010 G20 Seoul Summit, an international forum where twenty major world economies' governments and central banks gathered to discuss the global financial system and the world economy. SNSD was extensively mobilized as a part of the state's PR practices, including being a member of the G20 Star Supporters and Talking to the G20 Leaders (Chun 2010). More extensively, SNSD assumed numerous endorsement duties for the state like Ambassador for Gangnam District Office in 2012, Honorary Ambassadors for 2010–2012 Visit Korea in 2011, Ambassador for Incheon Airport Customs in 2010, Ambassador for the Incheon World Ceramics Festival in 2009, and Volunteer Ambassador for the Seoul City Government in 2007, to name a few. In turn, as a token of the state's appreciation and recognition, SNSD is the only K-pop group that received the Prime Minister's Award at the 2011 Korean Popular Culture and Arts Awards, organized by the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA), a state government agency, for its successful overseas publicity and popularity as a means of PR practice for Korea. With all of these accolades, the *Korea Post* officially published and sold the SNSD postage stamps in August 2012 (Kang 2012).

SNSD's 2012 American debut has been used as a compelling rationale for the state's aggressive neoliberalization initiative, which was culminated with Korean President Lee Myung-Bak's visit to the White House to nudge President Obama to sign the KOR-US FTA. SNSD's strategic debut on CBS's *Late Show with David Letterman* on January 31 and ABC's *Live With Kelly* on February 1 played a significant role in distracting the public's attention away from serious issues with the KOR-US FTA. Claiming that Koreans should be more competitive and aggressive in the global marketplace, the mainstream Korean media celebrated that SNSD explored and "conquered" a new, uncharted marketplace that would bring Korea economic fortunes. Thus, more than a global cultural commodity, the group became an Althusserian ideological apparatus to justify and perpetuate the myth of competition as the sole source of international success to rebut the dangers of the FTA.

Therefore, SNSD is a major allegory of neoliberal Korea where its economy, politics, cultural forms, modes of everyday experiences, and social relations are increasingly reconfigured by various activities of K-pop idols. With fast beats, addictive hooks, and salient rhythms that do not allow audiences to contemplate, K-pop is an episteme of neoliberalism, which overwhelms people not just by its neck-breaking speed of transforming society into a grand marketplace but, more importantly, with its simple ideological pitch that instigates people's desire to be rich, popular, and successful like the idols. In other words, just as neoliberalism mesmerizes people with an unrealistic valorization of market logic, K-pop has captivated audiences by seamlessness, breathtaking choreography, and appealing, sexy appearances of K-pop performers.

K-POP AS NEOLIBERAL SOCIAL POLICY

As discussed above, neoliberalism is far from a retreat of central governments; rather it is a market-driven state reform in order to guarantee a maximum functionality of market principles and a commodification of social life at large (Moran 2003). To achieve a better neoliberal reconfiguration, neoliberal social policy seeks to fend off any possible anticompetitive dimensions, by forcing individuals to confront and endure socioeconomic risks personally, as opposed to traditional soical policy that aims to compensate, nullify, or absorb possible negative effects of economic liberalization.

Likewise, K-pop can be recognized in Andy Pratt's (2005) notion of neoliberal social policy: As a popular form of social inclusion based upon the individual's desire to be successful and rich within the existing global economy structure, K-pop contains socially dissatisfied, alienated, yet musically aspiring youths, encouraging them to stick with the neoliberal mantra of self-endurance, self-discipline, and self-development as the key factors for success. By preaching a possibility of social mobility based on their musical talent rather than conventional means such as studying, the post-IMF neoliberal society encloses at-risk individuals, who do not pursue education as a main means of socioeconomic mobility, and keeps them in the established system by a dream of being successful in the neoliberal culture industry. In this respect, John Lie (2015) indicates that "K-pop stardom has become [the] South Korean dream, a beckoning and lucrative opportunity for young, non-university-bound South Koreans" where there are extremely few well-paying stable job opportunities for them (132). For example, as one of the most celebrated and promoted stories of unconventional success by K-pop, contenders of K-pop audition programs have become a staple of the music industry's propaganda that instigate the public's desire of being successful and famous. The dramatic success story of Huh Gak, who won first place on a

popular K-pop audition program, MNet's *Superstar K2* on October 22, 2010, was permeated to preach a neoliberal mantra that individuals have to be persistent and hopeful even in the devastated socioeconomic conditions of post-IMF Korean society. Despite being uneducated, underemployed, and unappreciated, Huh Gak, who dropped out of middle school due to family issues and financial difficulties, became an icon of a windmill success in the K-pop industry, and in turn encouraged individuals to keep motivated and resilient, enduring all the economic and social inequalities and injustices. A constant flow of aspiring contenders to K-pop themed audience programs along with an army of K-pop idol wannabes and trainees then form a large pool of potential talents for the culture industry, which (re)produces a concentrated and hierarchal structure of Korea's previous manufacturing industry conglomerates, thus, channeling young people's social energy to the competitive market economy, and in turn achieving social inclusion goals (Scott 2011).

K-POP IDOLS: GOVERNMENTALITY AND NEOLIBERAL REGIME OF TRUTH AND LIFE

Neoliberalism is an implementation of market-oriented techniques of government in the realm of the state and the personal, and in turn, constructs neoliberal subjects who are active, responsible, competitive, and self-interested. In this active formation of subjectivity, a neoliberal agent is an "entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of his own earnings," in contrast to the classical liberal person of utilitarian exchange based upon his/her needs (Foucault 2008, 226). To explain an active personification dynamics, Michel Foucault (2008) uses a notion of "human capital" as a neoliberal regime of truth and life that conditions individuals' behavioral rules and codes to pursue any activity, which increases their capacity to achieve their goals, create self-interest, and engage in competition. Thus, neoliberalism affects itself as a form of biopolitics that (re)produces neoliberal subjectivity, and transforms society into a massive market (Foucault 2008; Hardt and Negri 1994). Privatization and deregulation are key tenets of neoliberal political strategy in order to govern individuals through a discursive invention of self-interest, investment, and competition in all social spheres (Hardt and Negri 2001, 2004). Thus, neoliberalism should be regarded not only as the political economy of marketization in society, but also, more importantly, as a biopolitical subjectification of individuals (Foucault 1995) in an effort to internalize particular forms of responsibility produced by market imperatives (Nealon 2008).

Neoliberal governmentality simultaneously works in a macrostructural manner through state policies and in a micro-technological level through

individuals governing themselves by naturalizing neoliberal rationalities as the basis for their conduct (Binkley 2007; Lemke 2001; Rose et al. 2006). In this regard, the notion of governmentality provides a better heuristic optic to the K-pop phenomenon, by explaining the music genre as a cultural and ideological apparatus that helps condition and govern individuals' thought and behavior in a nexus between power relations and subjectification processes. As a synecdoche or an ethos (Barry et al. 1996) of neoliberal Korea that implies particular mentalities and governing manners, which are realized and practiced in individuals' concrete thoughts, feelings, behaviors, habits, and perceptions, I argue K-pop idols are a form of everyday pedagogy that tells people how to understand, articulate, and argue on social values and practices through specific lexicons and principles of neoliberalism. As such, I examine how K-pop helps implement the government of others (subjectification: "how one is objectified as a subject through the exercise of power/knowledge"), normalization of the neoliberal value system, and the government of one's self (subjectivation as a "relation of the person to him/herself") (Rosenberg and Milchman 2010, 66). In this respect, like Binkley (2006), I argue that the recent popularity of K-pop has acted as a micro-mechanism for individuals to naturalize neoliberal governmentality and become active, voluntary agents of neoliberalism.

In tandem with the state's supports, the K-pop industry has implemented its private, economic goals as a public agenda of national development, exercising Foucauldian biopolitics which (re)produce and proliferate neoliberal subjects. A concept of discipline, especially docility-utility (Foucault 1995) is permeated in K-pop idols who have been conditioned through years of training, and audiences who internalize and glorify their favorite K-pop stars. This process functions as a method of controlling and subordinating the idols' individuality and characters to the industry's entrepreneurial goals and principles on the one hand, and moreover, permeates and intensifies a neoliberal government of self-managers in the fabric of individuals' daily lives on the other (Nam 2016). Idols, especially female idols, are under an agency's airtight surveillance to the extent that they are forced to go on an extreme diet, surrender any use of personal communication devices, and even endure corporal punishment in a dormitory training center. As a means to control and maintain an imaginary availability for a romantic relationship to the public, female idols are strictly prohibited from having a romantic relationship. Actually, through an extraordinarily long trainee period, female idols have internalized and reinforced a subordinate self-image that is contingent upon the male gaze and desire as witnessed by the rampant, explicit sexualization of female idols. Just as the Korean state mobilized and deployed young, docile female workers into the bottom of the hierarchy of capital accumulation during its rapid industrial period (H. Kim 2001), from audition to training to debut, K-pop female idols are conditioned as an obedient,

disciplined, and sexualized labor force, directly manufactured by male corporate elites in the K-pop industry. Especially since there are abundant idol wannabes, trainees, and idols voluntarily or involuntarily accept harsh working conditions as a precondition for them to be successful in the industry. K-pop management agencies enjoy picking candidates who are most obedient. Going through these intense idol-manufacturing processes in the K-pop industry, the idols actively internalize, embody, and realize what the (male) industry leaders ask and want them to do.

Furthermore, as a means to perpetuate neoliberal governmentality in the public, the K-pop industry broadcasts seemingly raw video footage that shows how the idols undergo military boot camp style training procedures, and it plays an important role in normalizing the brutal conditions of competition, self-development, multitasking, and flexibility as a general social environment that fans themselves have to overcome. In turn, the industry helps create docile social subjects who endure political and economic instabilities and risks. In this respect, as a mundane, popular mechanism to penetrate a neoliberal self-government of the populace, reality TV shows, such as *Real Wonder Girls*, *2NE1 TV*, and *Big Bang TV*, provides an experimental, training ground for the government of the neoliberal enterprising self (Ouellette and Hay 2008). The nationwide popularity of K-pop audition TV programs such as *Super Star K*, *K-pop Star*, *Great Birth*, and *Korea's Got Talent*, and the surge in people's applications for the programs, indicates how the neoliberal governmentality of competition and success is widespread in Korea, seeing that there were cumulatively over two million applicants for *Super Star K*, season four (August 17–November 23, 2012). In this respect, K-pop idols, who are important role models for fans, are an effective tool for conditioning thoughts and behaviors, producing autoregulated or autocorrecting selves who are free yet fulfill neoliberal ideals of rational and self-responsible individuals, competitive and flexible workers, and self-calculating consumers.

As neoliberalism has marketized what was thought to be unmarketable to the extent that their "private life—the lack of it, to be precise—[becomes] part of the commodity" (Kang 2015, 60), K-pop female idols are successful in intensively expanding economic profiteering into the previously unexplored or underexplored manipulation of female sexualities by images of girlish cuteness, innocence, and delicate sexuality. As such, SNSD's massive fan base includes *sam-chon* fans. These middle-aged male fans indicate how the group has deftly exploited Korea's gendered virtue of *aegyo,* which is a complex quality of ideal female coquettishness combined with decency, humor, submissive sexuality, and affective readiness for male counterparts. Although *aegyo* has been considered and practiced by Korean women to serve male counterparts for ages, it has been confined to private, domestic relationships between couples. Moreover, there was not a case of systematic

mass production, marketing, and distribution of *aegyo* as an affective commodity prior to K-pop female idols like SNSD.

Just as the 1996 Telecommunication Act, a neoliberal deregulation of media ownership, directly caused the proliferation of aggravating pornographic media representations of female pop stars in the U.S. (Levande 2008), there is a skyrocketing intensification of sexually explicit portrayals of K-pop female idols as a cultural symptom of Korea's growing neoliberalization. As Korea's neoliberalization intensifies and the number of K-pop female idols multiplies, the idols' escalating competition to grasp audiences' attention has led to the images of women becoming increasingly explicit. Differently put, the mere fact that there are a growing number of K-pop female idols does not mean that they have successfully achieved and exerted autonomous (sexual) agency; however, by the industry's hierarchal decision-making procedures, they perform a seemingly positive role of active female (sexual) subject, which is planned and prepared by the managerial elites, rather than embody and enact it by themselves. In other words, increasing numbers of female idols face a double bind as they are presented as active subjects while being re-objectified, and in turn lead female audiences to believe they too can commend active (sexual) subjectivity. However, this process does not change, but further reproduces the existing patriarchal gender hierarchy.

As an indicator of the idols' double gender bind, SNSD's human capital lies in their attractive appearances and charming behaviors that beget teenage followers. Considering that consumers automatically become producers or carriers of neoliberal ethics of self-development and self-competitiveness (Foucault 2008), SNSD's appealing, sexualized visual images and lifestyle have conditioned Korean women to imitate or emulate them by purchasing the same or similar commodities. As an ensemble of consumer products, SNSD's images are systematically and strategically promoted and marketed with the help of various commodity merchandise such as clothing, jewelry, shoes, and cosmetics. The idols render a "wider and more pervasive *production* of the self . . . [which is] built from the array of possible forms of consumption and expression that these types of consumption provided for the individuals" (Marshall 2010, 36, emphasis original). To show how K-pop idols are seamlessly woven into neoliberal commodities, there are numerous online shops and communities where SNSD's fashion items are introduced, promoted, and sold globally. Among others, www.style.soshified.com, a subsection of www.soshified.com which is the most popular, comprehensive SNSD fan community with well over 200,000 active members and 176 staff members, stands out by a monthly average of 1 million visitors and 10 million page views internationally. Claiming to provide a complete list of "what Girls' Generation wore or what items they were seen with" (n.p.), the online site is an extensive advertising outlet where virtually all aspects of

SNSD's everyday lives are commodified and marketed, integrating SNSD into the neoliberal consumer economy. Basically, it teaches audiences what to buy and how to use lifestyle commodities so that they can express pseudo-individualities, and in turn shape their identities as an outcome of stylistic self-fashioning and improvisation in a neoliberal consumer culture of seductive images and sensations. What is noteworthy is that there is a tutorial category where users, as self-reliant everyday experts, post seeming self-help know-how to follow or emulate the idols' fashion styles on "Get This Look," "Hair Tutorial," "Make-Up Tutorial," "Outfit of the Week," "Reviews," and so on. By acquiring, customizing, and personalizing commodities promoted by SNSD, the vernacular experts keep up with a current, trending consumer lifestyle and actively practice biopolitics in which self-development, self-realization, self-glamorization, and personal well-being are an ongoing neoliberal life project. In other words, hosting a participatory genre of peer tutorials in styling issues, the site encourages fans to exercise their free, capable agency in neoliberal self-fashioning and self-renovation opportunities and requirements, and in turn, governs them by teaching them how to govern themselves as neoliberal, self-reliant lifestyle subjects.

SNSD's influence on fans' lifestyle choices and self-promotion strategies go beyond unobtrusive measures to the extent that fans pursue plastic surgery. For example, K-pop Combo, which is a common or sometimes mandatory plastic surgery for double eyelids and a higher, pointier nose amongst the idols, is an easy, rampant measure for the fans to look cute and amicable, associated with an ideal *aegyo* quality. More specifically, SNSD Plastic Surgery stands for "some of the best and carefully done plastic surgical procedures of the world" by its capability to maintain "natural looks" (SNSD Plastic Surgery n.d., n.p.). Not to mention numerous nonsurgical procedures like Botox injections, skyrocketing rates of plastic surgery amongst Korean females proves the idols' biopolitical power, which revolves around a sensual image of an "ideal new feminine subject demanded by neoliberalism" (Francis 2013; Gonick 2006, 11).

Considering the first plastic surgery was done on a Korean prostitute who wanted to appeal to American soldiers in 1961 (Stone 2013), plastic surgery in Korea is instrumental to financial betterment through getting a better job or a raise. Due to bleak job-market prospects coupled with the proliferation of K-pop and beauty industries in the daunting post-IMF economy, an ever increasing number of Koreans accept and are willing to surgically transform their bodies to look alike K-pop female idols in the hopes of being successful. Though individuals ostensibly exercise their "free choices," personal accountability, and self-empowerment as ethics of neoliberal citizenship, this neoliberal logic of human capital has increasingly made the population a mere object of profiteering, and furthermore, autoregulates and autocorrects consumers who are confirmative to the *status-quo*. By consuming various

beauty commodities and services, female audiences, who are the main engine of neoliberal consumerism, try to change their appearances and images as a means to accumulate their human capital, which ultimately confines them to rapacious commercialism. By doing so, they become active, neoliberal agent, by practicing personal responsibility, self-development, and self-enterprise as ethics of "good" citizens who comply with predetermined, gendered pathways and are obedient consumer-workers in society. In this respect, SNSD is a popular, effective form of neoliberal biopolitics that employs "technologies of subjectivity . . . to induce self-animation and self-government so citizens optimize choice, efficiency, and competitiveness" (Ong 2006, 5).

On the other hand, this increasing portrayal of active female subjectivity is a seemingly natural response to a broader socioeconomic trend that witnesses a growing number of highly educated, well-paid professional women: in other words, an increasing female consumer power. With music videos replete with high-end consumer products like Bentleys and Ferraris, SNSD's extraordinary emphasis on luxurious commodities "mark out moments of audience empowerment and subversive identity formation," purely based on dubious, symbolic satisfaction (McRobbie 2008, 534). For example, SNSD's music video "I Got A Boy" exemplifies how the idols have promoted consumerism by implanting a glossy heteroglossia of fashion and romantic fantasy. Multiple changes in the idols' outfits, dance moves, conceptual themes, and music tones represent how the music video is a tidal wave of commodities. In other words, girl power in SNSD is an instrument to entice female audiences into the consumer product market. However, these seemingly empowering representations further alienate and reduce Korean women by revealing pervasive economic and social insecurities that they face in their everyday lives. In other words, unless female audiences symbolically satisfy themselves from consuming media fantasies of girl power, they are subject to conforming to the "regular consumption of products for fear of repudiation by others, the production of the normative, unquestioning and quiescent female subject by means of the commodity form" (536). Consequently, SNSD is an innovative governmental tool that perpetuates and maintains the *status-quo* by preaching a pleasurable consumption and participation in mediated fantasy of girl empowerment.

However, audiences sometimes carve out crucial alternative uses of K-pop music for their sociopolitical causes. For example, chanting SNSD's "Into the New World," students at Ewha Women's University protested against the university's controversial plan to establish Future LiFE (Light Up in Future Ewha) College, which aimed to grant official bachelor's degrees pertaining to "new media production," "wellness," and "hybrid design" for working women without prior college education credentials. Blaming the university for selling diplomas for commercial gain, around 300 students began to occupy the Main Hall, where the president's office is located, on

July 28, 2016. On July 30, 2016, when students expected to meet the university president, they encountered 1,600 police officers, and were forcefully dismissed instead of having a civic discussion with the administration. While resisting the police, the students sang the song in a synchronized mode instead of typical protest songs. By criticisms and pressure from other universities, students, and the public (Ko 2016), the university announced that the plan had been rescinded on August 3. Considering "social movements are non-routine forms of 'popular' politics" (Steinberg 2004, 4), K-pop can be ambivalent in its applications in people's concrete lives. Therefore, it is a meaningful incident that K-pop music became a part of the students' victorious protests. In other words, with the biopolitical nature of K-pop, which has infiltrated every corner of individuals' code of thought and conduct, the students' critical appropriation of SNSD's song indicates the open, rather unpredictable potential of popular culture in society. On the other hand, even though the students exhibited some critical agency to utilize the neoliberal cultural device for their critical cause, their way and cause of waging protests are still confined to a neoliberal mantra of individualization, competitiveness, and homo economicus: The protesters rejected any solidarity offered by other university students, social movement organizations, and political parties as a manifestation of the neoliberal canon of individualization based on one's own interests. In this respect, the students' protest could also be considered as a consumer movement that aims to maintain a commodity's values by keeping unqualified consumers from buying the educational product.

As examined so far, rather than a cultural phenomenon, K-pop female idols are a neoliberal manifestation of commodified femininity constructed by the industry with a "positive" twist, which is "girl power" or "female sexual empowerment" (Frost 2005; Gill 2008; Gill and Scharff 2011; McRobbie 2009). Emerging from a nexus between neoliberalism and developmentalism, the female idols are a moving mannequin of the fashion and cosmetics industries, who "[have] been and [are] increasingly a pedagogical tool and specifically a pedagogical aid" in perpetuating the *zeitgeist* of the neoliberal consumer economy (Marshall 2010, 36). In this respect, SNSD is an economic stunt by the K-pop industry and the state's neoliberal social policy as a means to regain national economic competitiveness and confidence. Therefore, with K-pop's economic success, the Korean government is both omnipresent and minimal: universally engaged to naturalize neoliberal principles and maximally disengaged by having private talent agencies enact its policies.

GIRLS' GENERATION NOT ON THEIR OWN TERMS: FROM FACTORIES TO PERFORMANCE STAGES

Manufactured and marketed by SM Entertainment, SNSD as the most successful K-pop idol girl group is not an exemplar of girl power, since it is an exemplar of how women are objectified and commodified (Radin and Sunder 2006) as a strategic political-economic ploy by the state and the industry. As a neoliberal social policy that is more concerned with the state's economic competitiveness and growth than its deterioration of living standards, K-pop is one of the most successful models of Korea's dirigisme mode of capitalist development through exploiting a cheap, docile, abundant, willing workforce (Escobar 1995). Thus, it is Korea's signature neoliberal service economy which provides the state with global competition as a political legitimation, and universalizes governmentality by its conditioning of "the human body [with docility-utility], human body parts [for sexuality], and human behavior [of competition and enterprise] as commodities" (J. Lee 2010, 12). As an automated embodiment of governmentality, K-pop idols are the most salient example of alienation, but by being adored, celebrated, and respected as role models of the neoliberal economy. Thus, while K-pop female idols ostensibly promote female empowerment at least in their increasing public displays in the entertainment industry, they are only able to reproduce and perpetuate a dominant nexus between patriarchal gender hierarchies, developmental capitalism, and neoliberalism (Epstein and Turnbull 2014). In this grand scheme of neoliberal hegemonic construction, K-pop female idols' young, amicable, sexualized bodies convey "the political unconscious," exemplifying what is important, what to think, and how to govern oneself (Jameson 1981, 142).

In the working process of the Miracle on the Han River, the rhetoric of self-empowerment, self-responsibility, and voluntarism was effectively deployed to legitimize Park Chung-Hee's developmental dictatorship (1961–1979). As the nation's ethos, the sociocultural rhetoric ceaselessly and effectively mobilized rural, unwed women to work as an obedient, docile, cheap, disposable workforce on the sweatshop floors of textile factories. Now, the same ethos is spectacularly and sensationally deployed in post-IMF neoliberal Korea through the glossy, mesmerizing visuality of the K-pop industry. Consequently, since "[*p*]*olitics* (in the broad sense of relations, assumptions, and contests pertaining to power) is what links value and exchange in the social life of commodities" (Appadurai 2005, 42, emphasis original), it is no coincidence that the impeached former President Park Geun-hye, daughter of dictator-President Park Chung-Hee, declared that the Second Miracle on the Han River would be realized through Korea's popular culture.

NOTES

1. Portions of this chapter were previously published in "K-Pop Female Idols: Culture Industry, Neoliberal Social Policy, and Governmentality in Korea," by Gooyong Kim, in *The Routledge Handbook of Global Cultural Policy*, pgs. 520–537, published by INFORMA UK LIMITED in September 2017. Reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear.

2. Derogatory terms that indicate "factory girl." See Shin, K. 2002. The Discourse on Women in Korea: Episodes, Continuity, and Change. *The Review of Korean Studies* 5: 7–27.

Chapter Two

K-Pop Idol Girl Groups as Cultural Genre of Neoliberalism

Patriarchy, Developmentalism, and Structure of Feeling/ Experience in K-Pop

On September 3, 2014, Eun-B, a 21-year-old female idol of Ladies' Code, died in a car accident, and other members were injured, including RiSe, who fell into a coma for four days and passed away after a series of intense surgeries on September 7. The accident occurred very early on a rainy morning when the group was in transit back to Seoul after finishing a performance at a local TV station in Daegu. It was reported that the management company's overbooking practice resulted in the accident. This process involves idols constantly being forced to stage performances from various local venues around the clock without a break or proper rest. Considering a study that reports how, especially novice female idols confront extreme working conditions accompanied by a frequent coercion to provide sexual services as a bribery or a rite of passage to the stardom (National Human Rights Commission of Korea 2010), this accident is a glimpse into the ways in which the K-pop industry manipulates its female idols without considering their safety or will for its economic imperative to secure maximum profits. Thus, the accident summarizes that the current working conditions of the contemporary K-pop idols are no better than those of female workers in sweatshop factories during Korea's rapid industrialization period from the 1960s to the 1980s.

As opposed to the current literature that focuses on what is new and unique in K-pop and *Hallyu* in general, I strive to reveal both continuities and emergents from both macro and micro properties in the industry and its products.[1] As a macro, structural examination in the previous chapter, I

examined how K-pop became prevalent within a preexisting set of political-economic and industrial backgrounds, that is, a continuity of developmentalism in the neoliberal culture industry. In this chapter, I analyze the phenomenon from another continuity: the nation's centuries-long patriarchism. Since the recording industry both creates a new culture and gets influenced by a broader sociocultural environment where its creation takes place, I critically reconsider any historical continuities and leaps in the music genre by examining if there is any relationship between K-pop female idols and the nation's centuries-
long patriarchy that has influenced the business culture of the industry. To that end, I utilize Raymond Williams's (1977) typology of cultural systems: the dominant, the residual, and the emergent. Examining a system of cultural production where there are "complex interrelations between movements and tendencies both within and beyond" the existing sociocultural legacies and contexts (121), I investigate how the idols have emerged in the cultural process of Korea's patriarchal neoliberalism, which retains Korean's historical legacy of gender-based development. In other words, considering that the "very concept of genre promises to transform historical specificity into formal universality" (Elliott and Harkins 2013, 1), I investigate how and why K-pop female idols have been successful, while Western girl groups like the Spice Girls resurfaced but briefly demised in the early 90s. By doing so, I aim to reveal how a proliferation of K-pop female idols as a formal universality that commodifies sexualized female bodies within neoliberal, patriarchal Korean society functions as a historical specificity of Korea's neoliberal culture industry.

Based on Suk-Young Kim's (2016) argument that K-pop does not have a firm reference point to its aesthetics but "flexibly associates itself with old and new, local and global, while interweaving both retrospective and anticipatory vectors" to make a competitive commodity (137), I investigate K-pop female idols' continuities from previous girl groups in the 60s by examining production processes, visual and sonic characteristics, and business models. While their glossy visual appeal by impeccable physicality, the latest fashion, and synchronized choreography are being celebrated as K-pop's idiosyncrasy, this perceivable attraction is not new, but an appropriation of Motown Record's successful marketing strategy of girl groups as well as previous Korean counterparts in history. As a resurrection of girl groups that were prevalent in both the U.S. and Korea in the 50s and 60s, K-pop female idols disclose Korea's immanent and present cultural-economic formations in its diagnostic relationship to the society since the "singer is the image of the spirit of a people," and popular songs embody its belief system (Pavletich 1980, 4). While the American girl groups articulated the *zeitgeist* of egalitarian hope and social progress in the 60s (O'Brien 2012; Pavletich 1980), K-

pop female idols are an *episteme* of neoliberalism that endeavors to transform the entire society into a grand marketplace.

Like Motown's girl groups set a tradition of "black public taste that was taken seriously as an expression of a general aesthetic" (Early 1995, 4), I contend the K-pop industry has also manufactured and legitimated a popular ideal of female subjectivity in post-IMF Korea. Thus, since American girl groups influenced teenage girls' perceptions and behaviors on various issues (Douglas 1994; Stos 2012), understanding the dominant representation of K-pop female idols provides a useful optic for hegemonic femininity at the moment. Based on the political economy of Korea's rapid industrialization and its post-IMF neoliberalization which set parameters of cultural production by a dynamic interaction with the nation's preexisting cultural, industrial, and political traditions such as Confucian patriarchy and developmentalism (or developmental dictatorship) as examined in chapter one, I argue the success of the idols discloses Korea's immanent and present economic and cultural formations in its diagnostic relationship to the society, based on Raymond Williams's (1977) notion of genre as the "practical and variable combination and even fusion of what are, in abstraction, different levels of the social material process" (185). By understanding how K-pop female idols became a dominant force in economic, cultural, and social domains in Korea, I reveal Korea's constant reterritorialization between the private and the public, the emerging and the entrenched, the welcoming and the hierarchical, personal identification investment and collective emotional structure, and the marginalized and the mainstream's effects on women's place in society.

CULTURAL GENRE OF KOREA'S NEOLIBERALISM

As an interpretative allegory that contains a "deeper underlying, and more 'fundamental' narrative, of hidden master narrative" (Jameson 1981, 28), K-pop female idols are considered the dominant, popular genre of Korea's neoliberal culture industry. As a sociocultural text of the nation, they perform a "function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions," which is Korea's daunting post-IMF economy (79). Differently put, they are a synecdoche of the gendered nature of Korea's development, representing a neoliberal replacement of manual production by an immaterial service industry that is a feminized sector (Gonick, 2006). Thus, the idols embody a dominant *episteme* of Korea's contemporary sociocultural and politico-economic conditions. In this respect, I believe the idols are "semantic raw materials of social life and language . . . the historicity of structures of feeling and perception and ultimately of bodily experience, [and] the continuation of psyche or subject" (Jameson 1981, 147). To better understand their sociocultural functionality, which is established by neoliber-

al rationalities that advocate for unrestricted competition as *a priori* of possibility for development and prosperity, I analyze how the idols proliferate a neoliberal value system as a fundamental aspect of the Korean people's collective thinking and goals in the myriads of tokens and elements, typifcations, figures, and norms as cultural common sense or ideal.

For example, I infer that K-pop's dominant features like perfectly synchronized, military-style choreography, fast-beat hook sounds and lyrics are carefully calculated to appeal to Korean audiences already conditioned by residual legacies of Confucian patriarchy, military dictatorship, and fast industrialization. K-pop's emergent character stemmed from the Korean culture industry's response to the nation's shifting market conditions and demands that shifted from a manual sweatshop workforce to affective, service-oriented labor wrought by the nation's increasing neoliberalization. As an emergent structure of a new cultural genre, K-pop strategically rearticulated Korea's residual culture of patriarchal gender relations to a growing demand of the service sector economy. While reinterpreting the traditional Confucian code of ethics and disseminating a new set of entitlements in inclusion and exclusion, K-pop still retains the residual value of strict gender stratification that keeps young women at the bottom of the hierarchy. In this respect, K-pop female idols as a dominant cultural genre of neoliberal, patriarchal Korea can be better understood within a continuum between Korea's predominant legacy of patriarchy and developmentalism that forced female workers to be a docile, disposable labor force and the dominant modality of neoliberal, service-oriented market rationality since 1997. While K-pop idol girl groups ostensibly seem to promote female empowerment in Korean society, at least within the realm of the entertainment industry, via carefully calculated discourses of neoliberalism and patriarchism, they are only able to reproduce and perpetuate a dominant nexus between the traditional gender hierarchies and neoliberalism. In this grand scheme of neoliberal hegemonic construction, the idols' young, amicable, sexualized bodies convey "the political unconscious," exemplifying what is important, what to think, and how to govern oneself (Jameson 1981).

MOTOWN RECORD'S GIRL GROUPS IN THE 60S: PRETEXT

K-pop's signature attributes in musical vocabulary (catchy hooks and easy refrain), choreography, matching outfits, and their middle-class respectability are not unique, but were invented and utilized by Motown Records in its market strategy for girl groups in the 60s. Motown girl groups manifested conformity or uniformity by their physical appearances and sexuality, rather than artistic ingenuity or talent by merely enacting what male producers provided in the industry (Cyrus 2003). Decorated with ingredients for "mass

market success: fewer moving parts on stage, lots of well-crafted hooks and cute, carbonated lyrics" (Hirshey 2001, 50), The Shirelles pioneered the genre of physical and visual uniformity and aural homogeneity in 1961. Instead of artistic creativity or ingenuity, girl groups and their fans distinguish themselves from others by different colors, fashion accessories, dresses, and hairstyles. Along with an assembly-line training system, Motown implemented a formulaic approach to create songs: "never overdo the hook; make sure the song has a hummable melody, which means that it should be like something the public's heard before" (Early 1995, 56). Importantly, Motown first implemented the human capital management approach that trained members of girl groups to retain charm, finesse, glamour, taste, and grace. In Motown's "factory-type operation" where they relearned every mode of daily behaviors like, how to walk, talk, sit, dress, put on makeup, and smile, girls had to stay "docile, malleable, amenable to being taken in hand by a paternal company, hammered into a mold calculated, yea, guaranteed to please" (Pavletich 1980, 105). As a role model for adolescent female fans who constituted a major purchasing power that allowed teenage girls to form camaraderie (Douglas 1994), Motown girl groups were "the fairy tale ideal" that taught female audiences how to behave, decorate, please, and win the dream of getting the romance (O'Brien 2012). As an invitation to consumer participation, Motown girl groups' visual representation of sameness and belonging encouraged the audience to develop self-identification with characters and performers, and this affirmative visual message confirmed "what it means to be female, [and offers] messages about belonging, about possibilities for participation, about the possibility for success" (Cyrus 2003, 190).

As much as Motown changed popular culture, its girl groups were conditioned by various cultural and social contexts. Motown girl groups' success was conceived as a "personification of a broad and compelling black triumph, a symbol of black freedom, assertion, and achievement" along with the various progressive social movements in the 50s and 60s (Early 1995, 44). Likewise, the Korean counterparts were rendered within Korea's colonial or military subordinations: Korean girl groups with a synchronized choreography in matching uniforms were first introduced by the Japanese imperial culture industry in the 1910s, but saw new venues in American military camp towns immediately after the Korean War (1950–1953). Postwar girl groups like Kim Sisters, Pearl Sisters, and Arirang Sisters relied on their physical appeal in fashionable outfits like miniskirts, hot pants, and sleeveless tops, and legitimated the influence and preeminence of American popular culture. However, with the authoritarian developmental policies of Park Chung-hee (1961–1979) and new military regime of Chun Doo-hwan (1980–1987), female physicalities were redirected from the performance stage to factory floors to support and realize masculine nationalist develop-

ment. As briefly reviewed above, girl groups in both the U.S. and Korea were conformative in their sociocultural functions.

THE RESIDUAL: GENDER-BASED NATIONALIST DEVELOPMENTALISM IN K-POP

Korea's developmentalism has relied on its labor-intensive, export-oriented industrialization that was based on a constant, abundant flow of cheap, young, docile workers since the 60s (Lie 1992). As examined in chapter one, Korea's fast industrialization, epitomized as the Miracle of the Han River, was possible by concerted efforts between the state and the market through an active optimal combination of patriarchal gender hierarchy and masculine developmentalism. To be more specific, patriarchal nationalism played a major role in mobilizing female workers and was mainly utilized by the authoritarian military government (Kim and G. Park 2003). Planned out, assisted, and directed by the government, export is an integral part of national development, and has been systematically managed by providing comprehensive subsidies, exemplified in *chaebols*, mammoth conglomerates like Samsung and Hyundai created and guided by the state. Female workers are the vast majority workforce in the main engine of economic development, which is labor-intensive, in manufacturing goods like textiles, clothing, shoes, and electronic goods by cheapest wage (Monk–Turner and Turner 2001). Specifically, 80 percent of female manufacturing workers were employed in the export-oriented sector in the 70s, which accounted for 70 percent of total export revenue in 1975 (U. Cho 1985). However, these women suffered from dehumanizing "super-exploitation" characterized by strict, militaristic discipline, sexual and physical abuse, long working hours, high industrial accident rates, and low minimum wages on sweatshop work floors without basic humane working conditions, such as proper ventilation and lighting. Considering there has been a wide income gap consisting of 45.1 percent in 1972, 42.9 percent in 1980, 52.4 percent in 1989, 56.8 percent in 1994, 63.1 percent in 1999, and 64.2 percent in 2003 (Kim and I. Park 2006), exploitation of young, female workers is an integral part of Korea's "miraculously" rapid industrialization.

An important socioeconomic implication of the recent surge of K-pop idol girl groups can be found in the generally adverse employment conditions of female workers who were "first laid off during the 1997–1998 crisis . . . [and] remain concentrated in smaller enterprises and 'temporary' jobs" in post-IMF Korea (Hart-Landsberg and Burkett 2001, 423; Kim and Finch 2002; Kim and Voos 2007). While Motown girl groups exemplified how the industry commercialized the most vulnerable social subjects, that is African American teenage girls, K-pop female idols have been promoted by their

precarious social conditions in the Confucian gender hierarchy in Korea. To serve a post-Fordist regime of production, K-pop idols have proliferated and normalized neoliberal modes of flexible, mobile, immaterial labor in the service, information, finance, and culture industries, producing a neoliberal way of life and culture (Virno 2004). As an eventual result of the governmental policy that aims to revive the national economy, create new employment, and boost national morale to catch up with the ever-volatile neoliberal global economy (Pratt 2005; Scott 2012; Scott and Craig 2012), K-pop is a new industrial item produced by the Korean culture industry, completely reversing Adorno's (1991) lamentation on the commodification and marketeering of cultural artifacts. "K-pop is merely a brand, part of Brand Korea that has been the export-oriented South Korean government" (Lie 2012, 361). Thus, as exemplified by the impeached former President Park Geun-hye's inaugural speech, the current proliferation of K-pop female idols should be regarded as a contemporary version of patriarchal developmentalism through a systematic mobilization and exploitation of young, docile females in the neoliberal culture industry.

THE (PRE)DOMINANT: PATRIARCHAL GENDER HIERARCHY

While "capitalism, consumerism, and popular culture superseded Confucianism" in neoliberal Korean society (Lie 2015, 85), I maintain Confucian patriarchism has still been influential. Though there has been progress against a patriarchal demarcation of space between male public sphere and female domestic, the Confucian gender discrimination is still operative as a residual element. Specifically, sociocultural control over female bodies, which is based on strategic calculations of masculine political economic interests, is an active, effective mode of its functionality (T. Kim 2003). Although this cultural value has somewhat been washed off in society's official narratives, patriarchal gender discriminations/exploitations as the major pillar of traditional Korean society "have had to be incorporated if the effective dominant culture is to make sense in these areas" (Williams 1977, 123). In this respect, it indicates that K-pop female idols as a dominant cultural genre does not necessarily negate or overcome traditional gender discrimination. Just as the Korean state mobilized and deployed young, docile female workers into the bottom of the hierarchy of capital accumulation during its rapid industrial period (H. Kim 2001), through audition to training to debut, today's K-pop idols are conditioned as an obedient, disciplined, and sexualized labor force, directly manufactured by male corporate elites in the K-pop industry to serve the interests and needs of capital. In the "existing patriarchal relations of power and domination by securing anew the consent of women to existing social and political arrangements" (McRobbie 2008, 544), K-pop trainees/

idols are under the complete control of the industry, and have internalized and reinforced a subordinate self-image that is contingent upon the patriarchal desire of imagined femininity as witnessed by the rampant, explicit sexualization of female idols (Epstein and Turnbull 2014). Rather than exerting female power and emancipation, K-pop idols are suffering from the internalization of sexualized, fabricated images of femininity that mostly focus on emotion and sexuality as a response to patriarchal desire of imagined femininity. For example, SNSD's "The Boys" was manufactured and embodied by men, from its creative procedure to the stage production: SM Entertainment chairman Soo-man Lee, American choreographer and songwriter Teddy Riley, and Korean songwriter Young-jin Yoo. In this regard, K-pop female idols can be better understood in Korea's predominantly residual element of patriarchal sexism, and (re)production and proliferation of the dominant socioeconomic value system of capitalism.

While Korea has been modernized in a short period of time since the 1960s, there have not been significant improvements in women's lives in society. Constant eruptions of misogynistic, hate crimes, such as Gangnam Station Murder, exemplify a hostile condition of women's lives in Korea. Opposition to their progress in economic participation since the late 1990s, has forced them to remain subject to the traditional gender hierarchy, as "evidenced by the persistent deference by wives to their husband's status and role, son preference, and strong kinship bonds" (Park and Cho 1995, 132). While the recent surge of the female idols ostensibly overcomes the traditional demarcation of social spaces between a superior male public sphere and an inferior female domestic one, their success is still contingent on the patriarchal system in the industry and the public's rating. Under Confucianism, based on a strong patrilineal kinship system with emphasis on filial piety, female sexuality is confined to procreation purposes only, without allowing any room for pleasure; however, men are able to exploit it as far as their economic and political conditions permit (Deuchler 1992). In this double standard of sexuality, chastity and purity were the most valued feminine virtues as a part of women's devotion to men and the family. While this rigid dismissal of female sexuality has loosened up since the 1990s, Confucianism still exerts strong influence to the extent that Korea's feminist advocates have to use Confucian discourse, especially chastity ideology, to defend victims of sexual crimes (Y. Shim 2001). Rather, as seen in an explicit sexualization of K-pop female idols, female sexuality is actively commodified and exploited to serve patriarchal capitalism.

Women's incongruous status has been ingrained in the nation's pursuit of capitalist modernization. While female identity was "turned into a stage for politicizing national desire" since Korea's annexation to Japan in 1910 (Jager 2003, 44), the traditional gender hierarchy and expectations have not been entirely discarded, but updated and transformed to accommodate the nation's

changing needs. When dictator-President Park Chung-hee tried to accomplish a "self-reliant economy" through industrialization that "inevitably involves Westernization, which is at the same time perceived to be a threat to national [masculine] identity" (S. Moon 1998, 37), Korea's patriarchal elites, who consider women as subjectless bodies to reproduce offspring and provide labor power, mobilized them as a corporeal resource for rebuilding and proliferating the national prosperity. Up until the onset of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis that begot the K-pop industry, the nation's patriarchal authority maintained strict control over female sexuality (Choi 1998); however, post-1997 crisis neoliberal elites have incorporated American cultural hegemony, that is explicit sexualization of female bodies in the culture industry. In other words, while postcolonial nationalism vilified Westernized women as potential traitors to the "patriarchally constructed nation" (25), post-1997 crisis leaders set up a new national sentiment that female chastity is a disposable resource to advance the national economy. In other words, sexualized female bodies as a "suspicion of conspiracy against the already disempowered Korean men" (25) gave way to the neoliberal mantra of profitability in the hypersexualized bodies of K-pop female idols. Therefore, while there is a growing presence of female talents in the industry, it has less to do with their growing economic, political, and social rights than the nation's patriarchal strategy of turning them into a nationalist "agent politicizing love, loyalty, and family bonds for the nation" in crisis (Jager 2003, 56).

Likewise, patriarchy is still intact in K-pop's business practices. As much as Motown promoted a family myth that made talents feel that joining it was like being adopted by a big, loving family, the K-pop industry demands its idols to grant their loyalty and obedience to their agency that is presented as a "father, an older brother, an uncle, a coach, a teacher, a guardian, an authority figure motivated by something other than making money from his acts" (Early 1995, p. 31). This wondrous necessity of family myth was vindicated by Korea's nationalism that indicates society and state are an extension of family. Going through an intensive and extensive training period, the idols have internalized and enacted the most repressive notion of femininity that forces them "into corporeal experiences of femininity that sprang from the middle-aged" male decision-makers in the industry (Warwick 2007, 57). This behavioral, bodily gender script has not only regulated the idols themselves, but also conditioned the female audience by showing standardized visual images that tell what clothes, body shapes, movements, facial expression, and emotions are required to survive in the most Confucian, patriarchal society.

Themes of harmony in K-pop idol groups' signature collective choreography can be traced back to the Korean state conglomerate's manipulation of the Confucian values of harmony, solidarity, and cooperation during the nation's period of rapid industrialization. K-pop music videos are decorated

with highly skillful group choreography, sense of harmony, and coherence. Since dance is a corporeal pedagogy that delivers "symbolic gender meaning, punctuates phrases of the acquisition of gender knowledge, [and] instills discipline" (Hanna 1988, 75), K-pop female idols' hyper-synchronized dance choreography reproduces and reinforces the Confucian mantra of female conformity. This corporeal pedagogy of dance gets even more effective with K-pop's easy-to-follow choreography that allows audiences to enact it, and in turn fulfills a broader governmentality function in the population. Especially when fans gather in public places for dance flash mobs, the kinetic imposition of K-pop makes the audience entrain to the gestural hook of the music's conformative ideology. With "kinetic listening," in which individuals develop a muscle memory of the music's messages, "imagining what it might be like to play what they are hearing" (Keil 1995, 10), K-pop's behavioral, bodily script gets even more distinctive and effective. This flawless, synchronized group movement is a well-crafted commercial version of the Confucian worldview, which emphasizes fulfilling preconceived and expected role-playing in a hierarchical social structure based on gender and class in Korea.

The ubiquity of sexualized uniforms in K-pop further indicates a patriarchal demand on female bodies, that is affective, obedient, and corporeal. As a symbol of female workers' affective, immaterial labor and non-threat to the nation's patriarchy, the female idols in uniforms homogenize themselves as an erotic spectacle. As a sartorial symbol of conformity, the idols' matching uniforms apply a tangible regulation on the female performers' bodies, which is imposed by external authority by eradicating individuality and personality. Since the uniforms of K-pop female idols have been the major signifier of a given idol group, an idol is replaceable as far as an overall image/concept of the group can be maintained. With this interchangeability of K-pop idols, the subordination of individuality to the uniform not only regulates the idols, but further proliferates conformity to audiences by giving a false sense of membership and security when they buy the idols' paraphernalia. In other words, as a cultural police activity to re-claim masculine authority, a spectacle of the idols in uniforms is a repressive response to women's growing presence and influence from a sudden abundance of female workers.

As a residual character of Korean industrialization, K-pop idol girl groups have proliferated and naturalized gender discrimination in terms of pay and position: "It is ironic that discriminatory measures contributed to the country's rapid economic growth and, in turn, growth itself deepened discrimination" (K. Park 1993, 134). Therefore, a mere increase in female participation does not necessarily improve issues of gender inequality, as the structure of gender subordination based on global capitalism and Confucian constraints persists. Therefore, combined with a residual, Confucian gender hierarchy, the dominant cultural genre represents how Korean society has been preoccu-

pied with the unchecked desire of economic growth by systematic commodification of femininity, conditioned by the neoliberal ideals of economic capacity during the market-driven IMF's SAPs (Christensen 2013).

THE EMERGENT: NEOLIBERAL STRUCTURE OF FEELING/ EXPERIENCE

K-pop has become one of the most effective tools to capture audiences' attention, and in turn, has been an effective model of communication, decision-making, and labor relationship. As a dominant hegemony, K-pop is a powerful everyday pedagogy that shapes popular, public sentiments to accommodate the capitalist logic of profit-making. As Foucauldian governmentality, the idols are an effective presentation of the *modus operandi* in Korea's neoliberal capitalism. Thus, they should be analyzed with a social consciousness that "the 'human imagination,' the 'human psyche,' the 'unconscious,' with their 'functions'" are structured, realized, and experienced in affective and somatic ways (Williams 1977, 130). In other words, the music genre provides a "structure of experience" that constitutes "affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity" (132). Exploiting (male) audiences' expectations of sexualized female representations, K-pop female idols reconstruct and perpetuate patriarchal gender hierarchy as a "practical consciousness" for both male and female subjects' "thought as felt and feeling as thought" in neoliberal Korea. Therefore, what is an emergent neoliberal feature in K-pop female idols comes from the K-pop industry's systematic commodification of female sexuality and affective labor that conditions the idols to display sexuality and sensuality imagined by the male industry leaders.

As a primary realm of neoliberal biopolitics, affects or affectionated bodies, as either topic or optic, are constantly produced, circulated, and consumed as a mode of the microphysics of power at the content-specific level and in the discursive construction of K-pop. Considering affect as an "operational set of dispositions toward the self in the world given by sensory perception, emotion, and feeling" (Clough and Halley 2007, 69), the hypervisual nature of K-pop female idols is a cultural apparatus of neoliberalism that provides the audience with a somatic ensemble of discourse and regulations on their everyday behaviors. In this respect, with highly sexualized visuality, K-pop female idols are the latest and most effective reverse example of Theodore Adorno's (1990) insistence that female voice has to be present with the singer's physical body that carries it: While Adorno believes female voice could never represent the female self in the gramophone era, the spectacle-oriented K-pop and its music videos perfectly realize the physical

nature of femininity. As Roland Barthes (2012) indicates, the presence of the body is the most important aspect of music. In this respect, K-pop's visuality functions as an affective pedagogy that conditions audiences to learn and perceive the world by sensory stimuli: "Felt realities, sensed truths, guts that advise and hearts that remember, tears and smiles are what have begun to reconstitute social discourse along the semantic axis of affect" (Reber 2012, 68). In other words, considering affect is a cultural logic of market capitalism, and female bodies are commodified as sexual objects and regulated by the industry (Gill and Scharff 2011; Lieb 2013; McRobbie 2009). K-pop female idols are a form of cultural capital to redefine and evolve people's desire for sexy, attractive female images as a technology of sexiness in Korea's patriarchal capitalism (Frost 2005; Gill 2008). Considering that cultural text is imbued with different representations of the real, the imaginary, and the desired (Jameson 1981), cutthroat competition as a desired qualification of neoliberal personhood is epitomized by the female idols' sexualization, explicit nudity, and provocative gestures. In turn, this cultural manifestation has come from an increasing competition between idols, who are asked to further perpetuate a commodification of sexualized female bodies by the male-dominated K-pop industry. In this respect, coining "girl industries," Yeran Kim (2011) argues that the idols are constructed and consumed as a neoliberal brand and commodity.

Jane Caputi's (2003) notion of "everyday pornography" further explicates how K-pop female idols support an affective dynamics of the gender-based microphysics of power as neoliberal structure of feeling and experience in K-pop. Pornography does not only refer to an explicit, X-rated depiction of sexual intercourse, but more importantly indicates any representations that systematically and strategically objectify, exploit, and degrade female bodies and subjectivities. By supporting the "sexual politics of the status quo," everyday pornography not only legitimizes patriarchal gender hierarchy, but also "infuses practices of consumerism," aggression, and objectification (435). For example, how K-pop female idols always practice highly synchronized choreography should be understood as a sociopsychological confirmation of stratified social hierarchy between the idols and (male) audiences: Highly synchronized choreography *à la mode* of mass military games evokes pre-determined social positions of hierarchy, submitting young, appealing female performers as mere objects of the audience's visual consumption. In this respect, SNSD's successful music DVD for their Japan debut, *New Beginning of Girls' Generation*, which sensually thematized military uniforms, suggests how the group carefully appropriates subconscious and nostalgic celebrations of militarism in Japan and Korea. It was largely successful on two accounts: Their military uniforms granted the group symbolic empowerment, which combined the physical and mental strength of the military and the sexual sensitivity of female bodies as a cliché of female empow-

erment. On the other hand, the military uniforms provided male audiences with a sexual fantasia of subordinated femininity, which is guaranteed by the military's rank and file system. Alternatively, sexualized females idols in military uniform signify that, in order for women to gain power and influence, they still have to dress provocatively, even if they are in a position of authority like a military officer. Likewise, uniforms are one of the most popular or demanding props for male sexual fantasy, which is prevalent in pornography. In this respect, considering the historical background of Japan's total colonial exploitation for thirty-six years (1910–1945), SNSD's Japan debut strategy is accordant with how "sexualized hierarchy, not only between the sexes under male supremacy but also between [the] socially unequal—sexually fetishized, enslaved, and colonized" is actively exploited in the K-pop industry (440).

K-pop female idols' strategic deployment of cuteness further perpetuates a pornographic nature of male supremacy, since an infantilizaiton of women is an integral part of patriarchy: "In everyday pornography, sexually objectified women are shown in poses and clothing that suggests that they are little girls" (Caputi 2003, 441). Posing cute is a gendered biopolitics that conditions females to be weak and subordinate to the sum of male desires, influences, domination, and exploitation. For example, SNSD's first major hit music video, "Gee," illustrates how female subjectivity and sexuality can only be activated and realized through the male gaze and male affection. By depicting how female mannequins become animated and act cutely in both behavioral mannerisms and atmosphere, the music video objectifies the image of the innocent, good girl next door as an adult male sexual fantasy. By doing so, SNSD fetishizes a symbolic construction of childhood innocence as a mere sexual object, while its violation is regarded as a goal in the sexual politics of the patriarchal *status quo*. This glorified representation of submissive gender roles further normalizes the patriarchal ideology, since gender gets "tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts . . . in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (Butler 1988, 519). Thus, being cute is a gendered biopolitics that expects females to be weak, innocent, and subordinate to the sum of male desires, influences, domination, and exploitation.

As a sociocultural amnesia, K-pop female idols have perpetuated appealing, cute, sexy images, and distracted audiences from real problems around them. Just as a promotion of Kawaii helped alleviate social tension during the 90s' economic depression in Japan, the K-pop industry deployed female idols' cutesy sexuality in the wake of Korea's devastated economic status since the IMF crisis. In other words, giving a carefree, cheerful atmosphere of childhood nostalgia, cuteness appeals to emotionally depleted audiences who look for something that could satisfy their desire for affection-rich rela-

tionships. Thus the K-pop industry provides affective commodities so that consumers can satisfy what they are deprived of in the neoliberal economy that demands their affective, service labors. In this respect, creating a sophisticated ambiguity between cute and sexy, K-pop female idols appeal to both male and female audiences by providing the former with the sexual fantasy of submissive, yet sexually active, appealing female entertainers and the latter with a model to emulate in order to become successful within a set of conflicting gender expectations from patriarchy and neoliberalism. Thus, portrayed as self-determined, successful, and empowering entrepreneurial girls, K-pop female idols embody marketable, profitable human capital by "providing an image of the ideal new feminine subject demanded by neoliberalism" (Gonick 2006, 11), and in turn, interpellating audiences to choose a predetermined, gendered pathway as an obedient consumer-worker.

Consequently, as an example of Raymond Williams's structure of feeling/experience, the everyday pornography of K-pop female idols has actively served to (re)produce both the pre-dominant/residual culture of patriarchal sexism, and the dominant, hegemonic exploitation of female affect as a means of economic development. Through pornographic objectification, K-pop's symbol of female sexual empowerment is a mere excuse for the commodification of sexualized female bodies, based on the "myth that power is attained when one's body is on display" (Levande 2008, 302). Even if there is some sense of female agency when a woman shows off her well-toned, shaped body, her sexual power does not mean anything since the sexual empowerment does not constitute autonomous subjectivity. In other words, without negating or renegotiating patriarchal gender hierarchy, to claim sexual empowerment within the existing power structure is to deceive women to satisfy male desire by "compliance masked in defiance: taking your clothes off to be heard" (305). In sum, as "inalienable elements of a social material process . . . seen as the articulation (often the only fully available articulation) of structures of feeling which as living processes are much more widely experienced" (Williams 1977, 133), K-pop female idols are a dominant mode of contemporary Korea's social experiences that hegemonically legitimate and (re)produce semantic categories of what is necessary, desirable, and required in the name of economic success.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: K-POP IDOL GIRL GROUPS AS EPISTEME OF NEOLIBERAL KOREA

Considering popular singers promote ideas and issues that their audience is prepared to accept (Pavletich 1980), K-pop female idols have reinforced traditional conformative patriarchal gender ideals and norms, or given a false sense of female empowerment by explicit sexualization, which in turn up-

dates and perpetuates the dominant gender stereotype. By doing so, they articulate Korea's dominant mode of social dynamics, that is patriarchal neoliberalism. As a response to the 1997 Financial Crisis and the nation's subsequent neoliberalization, K-pop female idols are a culturally expressed structure of social experiences that systematically commodify young, docile female bodies in the process of transforming the social and material bases of Korean economy. According to Williams's (1977) notion of the structure of feeling/experience, K-pop female idols are "effective formations of most actual art [that] relate to already manifest social formations [i.e., patriarchal industrial capitalism], dominant or residual, and it is primarily to emergent formations (though often in the form of modification or disturbance in older forms) that the structure of feeling, as *solution*, relates" (134, emphasis original). In this respect, K-pop idols are a synecdoche of patriarchal, neoliberal capitalism that embody how "capital is constantly exploiting different forms of labor force, constantly moving between the sexual division of labor in order to accomplish its commodification of social life" (Hall 1997, 30). In sum, K-pop female idols, as the dominant cultural genre, are a popular representation of neoliberal Korea's "social formation, explicit and recognizable in specific kinds of art" (135). Within the exploitative managerial structure of Korea's culture industry, K-pop has implemented a neoliberal "political economy that enacts radical redistributions of capital upward through radical redistributions of development downward" (Elliott and Harkins 2013, 6). In other words, it is the industry's stakeholders who rake in large profits by forcing female performers to risk their safety and lives, as with the Ladies' Code tragedy, while spreading and perpetuating ruthless competition and self-entrepreneurship as a source for personal achievement in an audio-visually enticing performance of K-pop idols. In conclusion, as a dominant cultural genre, K-pop female idols are a cultural manifestation, or a symbolic embodiment of neoliberal developmentalism that is sustained within the nation's century-long Confucian patriarchy.

NOTES

1. A different version of this chapter was published in a special issue on Korea by *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*. K-pop Idol Girl Groups as Cultural Genre of Patriachal Neoliberalism: A Gendered Nature of Developmentalism, and the Structure of Feeling/Experience in Contemporary Korea. *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, 184(Fall 2018), 185-207.

Chapter Three

Between Hybridity and Hegemony in K-Pop's Global Popularity

A Case of Girls' Generation's American Debut

SNSD's January 2012 debut on two major network television talk shows in the United States warrants critical reconsideration of the current discourse on cultural hybridity as the basis of K-pop's global popularity.[1] Prior to Psy's "Gangnam Style" phenomenon, SNSD's "The Boys" was the first time a Korean group appeared on an American talk show. It marked a new stage in K-pop's global reach and influence. With a surge of other K-pop idols gaining global fame, especially in Japan, China, and other Asian countries, SNSD's U.S. debut is evidence of K-pop's global marketability by being presented in the U.S. music market, the heartland of pop music. Especially, since Korean songs have expressed, emulated, and/ or referenced to a "pleasure of, and the envy for, American modernity, symbolized by the economic and military strength" (Fuhr 2017, 45), the debut was more than just a cultural or media event, but also sociopolitical in its implications. In this respect, Young-mok Kim (2012), consul general of the Republic of Korea in New York, cheerfully maintains that K-pop idols are "really Korea's secret weapon" as its new emerging soft power "through a blend of Western tradition, Asian talents and their own investments" (n.p.). SNSD's breakthrough in the U.S. music market is symbolically considered as Korea's prowess in terms of cultural power. Thus, the debut should be reassessed in its wealth of social implications. In this chapter, to better understand the phenomenon, I examine how scholars have treated K-pop's global popularity in terms of cultural hybridity and then argue that one has to consider hybridity's broader sociohistorical and politico-economic contexts. In other words, understanding how

Korea's rapid post-IMF neoliberalization and culture industries "define and delimit the significance of cultural" production (Elliott and Harkins 2013, 2), I argue that SNSD's American debut discloses Korea's value transformations that entail a commercialization of popular culture, specifically, a commodification of sexualized young female bodies in their diagnostic relationship to the society.

As examined in the previous chapters, K-pop has become one of the driving forces of economic developments as well as a dominant cultural genre in post-IMF neoliberalized Korea. As a culture technology for boosting Korea's postindustrial, service-oriented neoliberal economy along with other strategic technologies, like ICTs (H. Shin, 2009), K-pop has been part and parcel of people's daily lives: K-pop and its idols are omnipresent from commercial films and TV dramas to political campaigns and governmental PRs to diplomacy. In this context, the existing K-pop scholarship explains the phenomenon through cultural hybridity theory (Ryoo 2009; Shim 2006). Overall, cultural hybridity is a counterargument against imperialist globalization. Rather than Korea's entertainment market being dominated by American popular culture, the K-pop industry is believed to successfully practice a counterflow of cultural production from non-Western countries to Western ones in its "indigenized and hybrid versions of *American* popular culture" (Joo 2011, 496, emphasis added), not only for domestic cultural consumption but also, more importantly, as an export item.

To prove an alternative perspective, since popular music has "created, circulated, recognized and responded to" (Negus 1999, 4) larger structural conditions, I investigate how K-pop has become a global phenomenon in its place within contemporary Korea's broader political, economic, and cultural histories. As a cultural manifestation of "general social, political, and epistemic shifts" (Stokes 2004, 48), in which "alliances between commercial and political factors [are] formed and dissolved as hybrid styles" (Allen 2003, 229), one must critically take into account the nation's broader structural transformations since the 1990s. In this respect, it is suggestive that K-pop began when Korea was subject to a massive socioeconomic neoliberalization mandated by the OECD in 1996 and the IMF in 1997, and its global popularity coincided with the country's aggressive neoliberal efforts to expand its economic territories by ratifying multiple free trade agreements, especially with the U.S. in 2007.

While the meaning of cultural hybridity is always in flux with multiple interpretations, I examine how it helps K-pop enjoy popularity and profit in post-IMF neoliberal Korea, where American hegemony has permeated in virtually every corner. Since hybridization is constituted and contested in a complex overdetermination of power, and local sensitivity should be the core quality of genuine hybridity with its "mutant result of fusion and intermixture" (Gilroy 1993, 6), I investigate whether K-pop exercises a cultural com-

mand of locality that is reflective of Korean people's everyday lives in its creative expression. In other words, since music is one of the most salient sites for hybridization as either cultural exchange or commodification (Hebdige 1987; Lazarus 1999), hybridity in K-pop must be discussed within concrete cultural, economic, political, and social backgrounds of production and by its actual content.

While Korea became a major non-Western country that commands exports of diverse cultural products since the 2000s (Jin 2016), whether or not K-pop contains local sentiments and creative characteristics is an open question that warrants critical examination. Moreover, considering that Korea is subject to the U.S.'s desires and influence and its popular culture has grown within American popular culture references since 1945 (Fuhr 2017; Lie 2015; Yoshimi 2003), the existing cultural hybridity discourse misses Korea's unequal relationship with the United States. With this asymmetry in mind, it is imperative to scrutinize cultural hybridity as a byproduct of cultural hegemony and a constitutive result of sociocultural and politico-economic arrangements between two countries. Concerning Aijaz Ahmad's (1995) correspondence between postcoloniality and hybridity, by neglecting historical realities of inequalities in resources and developments, hybridity in K-pop literature exaggerates a mere locality of cultural production: By doing so, it neglects that K-pop stays inside the *modus operandi* of Western cultural production to the extent that domestic and "metropolitan sections of [neoliberal] capital can be integrated" (12) culturally. In this respect, as examined in chapter two, K-pop should be understood as a specific site of emergence that bears earlier histories and experiences in the structural asymmetry of power, resource, and privileges.

To that end, I investigate whether K-pop fulfills the main purpose of cultural hybridization, that is, an active negotiation with global cultural hegemony for a creative alternative, 1) by historical and political economic analyses of the K-pop industry, and 2) by textual analyses of exemplary K-pop music videos, SNSD's "Gee" and "The Boys." By doing so, I strive to understand K-pop's cultural hybridity in terms of both its intrinsic quality and its content to test whether hybridity in K-pop creates new, local creative sensibility that "is free from U.S. domination" (Jin 2016) and within structural contexts of the culture industry. As Kellner (1995) advocates a multiperspective approach for more "comprehensive and inclusive approaches to culture" (174), this method helps overcome an increasing divide between descriptive studies of media texts and critical, systematic investigation into a structure of media production, circulation, and consumption. Thus, with a combination of political economy of the media, critical textual analysis, and investigation into socio-ideological effects of the cultural genre within the existing networks of power and domination, I endeavor to understand the genre as a cultural manifestation of Korea's extensive neoliberalization,

which plays a referential role in individuals' leisure activity, socialization, identity formation, and value system. Subsequently, I hope to provide constructive critique that helps further the growth of the K-pop industry and the quality of its content.

U.S. HEGEMONY IN THE FORMATION OF KOREAN SOCIETY

Korean society can be dissected through trajectories of Americanization because American military, economic, political, and cultural influences have been intertwined and have worked simultaneously since the U.S. Army landed to establish a military government in 1945 (Cumings 2005; Hart-Landsberg 1998). A majority of Koreans believe the U.S. is the national savior from the Communist invasion (the Korean War), from poverty through economic aid, and from premodernity through technology and industrialization. Accordingly, the U.S. has been considered more than just an advanced Western country, rather a mythical utopia, which becomes part and parcel of the Korean people's collective imagination, desire, and memory (Kroes 1999; Lie 2015). In this respect, Korean culture and society have been in a volatile process of "hybridization" with the U.S. to the extent that American culture, as a constellation of American values, identities, and traditions, permeates and is conceived as Koreans' recognition and expectation of a better world. In regards to emergences and successes of various Korean popular music genres and styles since 1945, when the nation was "liberated" from Japanese empire but soon occupied by the U.S., American popular music and culture, which sprouted from the U.S. military bases and camp towns, have constantly been influential, if not determining (Fuhr 2017). While popular music itself is a cause and an effect of the industrialization and commodification of music, the post-Korean War popular music in Korea was oriented to American GIs as the chief consumers who "avidly embraced formal and informal offerings of reset and relaxation, from sexual services to musical entertainment" (Lie 2015, 31). For example, Motown's girl groups, as a cultural icon of American affluence and global success, were replicated in Korea in the 50s and 60s while the Korean spinoffs were mainly available to American GIs who suffered from homesickness and were desperate for their native culture. While one could argue Korean girl groups could be a local or hybridized version of American cultural ingenuity, we should pay closer attention to whether or not Korea's local form has been successful in addressing its innate needs and tastes while maintaining cultural autonomy or identity against the still dominant cultural, economic, and political American hegemony. While local musicians/performers "dressed and comported themselves in line with American expectations . . . in the American zone of [economic, ideological, political, and militaristic] influence, not only in the

United States . . . but also across its informal empires—Japan, Vietnam" (Lie 2015, 32), Korean popular music, no matter how much it has been hybridized, has retain a fundamental asymmetric reliance on American hegemony.

Since U.S. popular culture has commanded global hegemony, for Korean culture industries, emulating American pop values and systems provides a better chance of success with less market risk. Simultaneously, a localization of cultural production has been efficiently promoted as a part of transnational media companies' strategy to mitigate local resistance against imperialistic practices of neoliberalism. In other words, localization strategy helps American hegemony deeply penetrate Korea's cultural domain by perpetuating and naturalizing American cultural and business values, structures, and practices (Jin 2007). While classical imperialism coopted local elites, today's transnational media conglomerates "rule through other local capitals, rule alongside and in partnership with other economic and political elites" (Hall 1997, 28). Rather than destroying local culture, they operate through it in their localizing strategies. Leaders in K-pop agencies can be regarded as an example of the "dominated group's internalization" (J. K. Lee 2010, 30) of transnational capitalism's business mantra. This is opposite to the growing recognition of peripheral countries' competence to produce and market their indigenous culture globally as countercultural imperialism (Chadha and Kavoori 2000; Sinclair and Harrison 2004; Sonwalkar 2001). Thus, Doobo Shim's (2006) appreciation of the surprising box-office success of *Shiri*, a local action blockbuster as an alternative to Hollywood, misses the important fact that the production of local films has become subject to Americanized, neoliberal financial speculation. It is a more sophisticated, effective way to control the local cultural domain with less resistance.

In line with America's ascendancy as the sole superpower and Korea's subjection to the IMF's SAPs, Korean society has increasingly been reformulated by neoliberalism, an American version of global capitalism (Park 2004). The IMF's all-out assault on the Korean economy allowed foreign speculative capital to ravage Korean capital and financial infrastructure to the extent that the latter's stability and autonomy become dependent on the former's mercy. However, the SAP is a matter of a more important "cultural problem—the problem of defining identity of how to redefine the concept of 'we'" (Park 2004, 154). It is my contention that, while dealing with the identity crisis, neoliberal canons like commercialism and competition have infiltrated into the psyche of Koreans, and popular culture is the most effective tool to spread neoliberal governmentality. For example, BC Card, a Korean credit card company, caused a national sensation with its 2001 advertising campaign with a slogan of "Ladies and gentlemen, you all get rich!" Considering that Korea's industrialization process coincided with its modern identity formation, the advertisement sums up how Korea's sociocultural value is morphed into crude desire of financial success. In this grand value

transformation, we witness a growing commercialization of culture, in which the rise of K-pop is one of the most telling examples.

Regarding cultural production as a mode of transnational capitalism (Hannerz 1997; Nordenstreng 2001), I examined in previous chapters how K-pop was a part of Korea's neoliberal strategy that marketized cultural commodities as an export item when the local economy was devastated by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. This strategy is similar to the way in which the Korean popular music industry began in the post-Korean War era, when local musicians performed at various clubs for U.S. soldiers (P. H. Kim and Shin 2010; Lie 2015). K-pop stemmed from when Korea's industrial demands had shifted from a manual workforce to affective, neoliberal service labor in the 1990s. By the industry's aggressive replication of the traditional business strategies used by Korea's labor-intensive manufacturing conglomerates in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the contemporary K-pop industry produces quickly profitable, homogenized, disposable cultural commodities from a highly concentrated, hierarchal production system that integrates in-house procedures of artist recruiting, training, image making, composing, management, contracting, and album production. By discipline through years of training, especially docility-utility (Foucault 1995), the industry colonizes its talents by controlling and subordinating their individualities and characters to its entrepreneurial goals. Idols, especially female idols, are under an agency's perennial control to the extent that they are forced to go on an extreme diet, surrender any use of personal communication devices, and even endure corporal punishment in a dormitory training center. To maintain an appealing image to the public, female idols are strictly prohibited from having romantic relationships. Through audition and an extraordinarily long trainee period to debut, K-pop female idols are conditioned as an obedient, disciplined, and sexualized labor force, directly manufactured by male corporate elites to serve the interests and needs of capital. Rampant, explicit sexualization of female idols is a case in point.

Thus, K-pop delineates how hegemony employs an ideological double play in local culture production. As much as it allows "counter-hegemonic" practices on a local level, it masks and perpetuates the dominant hegemony by sophisticated predatory labor conditions in K-pop production and, in turn, establishes the local culture industry as a cultural hegemon. In this respect, exerting cultural hegemony through exporting cultural products is an old version of cultural imperialism; rather, in neoliberal globalization, indirect ways are a more effective and "sustainable" practice of controlling local cultural production, instituting cultural hybridity as a code name for a new phase of cultural hegemony. Practiced through local elites' voluntary internalization of American hegemony in consumerism, commodification of culture, and sexualization of femininity (Schiller 1996), the K-pop industry complicates the evasive characteristic of Americanization. With mechanistic

interpretation of cultural hybridization that fetishizes local cultural production, the dominant K-pop scholars mask neoliberal hegemony.

HYBRIDITY: THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF TRANSNATIONAL CAPITALISM

According to Homi Bhabha (1994), hybridity comes from the in-betweenness of elite emigrants' national and cultural identities. They have to constantly (re)negotiate themselves, engaging in a mutual, simultaneous reconstruction and destruction, a process that nullifies a canonical, essentialist notion of cultural authenticity. Literature on K-pop's hybridity focuses on its dexterity in mixing the ideal of American pop culture with what is considered to be Koreanness like *Han*, a centuries-long pent-up feeling of remorse, high sensibility, and Confucian family values, as an alternative for Asians to seek emotional and cultural closeness. While K-pop takes the dominant American pop canons, Woongjae Ryoo (2009) indicates that K-pop retains a "fuller affinity for the region's character" (140) in terms of its capacity to express soulfulness. Since American culture is too foreign and Japanese culture carries colonial connotations, Asian people's enthusiasm for K-pop is rooted in their desire for shared temporal, historical, and cultural values and experiences (Iwabuchi 2001).

Concrete hybridity is a result of local agency's dialectic interaction with the hegemonic power of transnational forces by "mitigating social tensions, expressing the polyvalence of human creativity, and providing a context of empowerment in which individuals and communities are *agents in their own destiny*" (Kraidy 2005, 161, emphasis added). As much as colonialism reproduces or sustains itself through hybridization with the colonized, hybridity is not only an integral part of colonial discourse but also the colonized's chance to resist the colonialism (Parry 1994). In this respect, rather than a mere existence of hybridity, a manifestation of critical agency and cultural locality in hybridization is the most important qualification (Brah and Coombes 2000). Since cultural/aesthetic practices "develop and emerge as types of implicit (i.e., nonpropositional or nonverbal) knowledge [which is] created in response to lived experiences in a particular social location," appreciating cultural works without paying due attention to dominant institutional structures of cultural production results in "epistemic violence" (James 2016). Put differently, to correctly understand how cultural hybridity is rendered within the global structure of cultural, economic, political, and military hegemonies, one has to scrutinize a concrete set of cultural production structures that engender different qualities of hybridity and in turn whether a concrete hybridity reflects or overcomes the dominant hegemony.

However, I indicate that there is an embryo of theoretical complicity in consumerist capitalism in Bhabha's (1994) fallacy, which replaces imperialist connotations with a mere semiotic practice of cultural consumption. Like Janice Radway (1991) celebrates the symbolic, individual pleasure of resistance from reading romance novels without practicing any real-life struggle against patriarchal structures, Bhabha exults in the subversive power of the subaltern's cultural practices against the imperial domination of cultural, economic, and political ideologies. Thus, to avoid this empty, illusory celebration of cultural consumption, one must critically dissect the political economy of local culture production structured or motivated by transnational capitalism so that we do not fall into "endorsing the cultural claims of transnational capital itself" (A. Ahmad 1995, 12). To correctly reinscribe the social imagination and "cultures of *postcolonial contra-modernity*" (Bhabha 1994, 6, emphasis in original), one must address a changing mode of transnational capitalist cultural production. Otherwise, cultural hybridity that originally is colonial subalterns' transformative political project loses "revolutionary potential since it is part of the very discourse of bourgeois capitalism and modernity" (Van der Veer 1997, 104). With the undebatable fact that American pop culture has gained global dominance, no matter how innovative or creative K-pop can be, it is still referenced to American pop as an archetype of global pop styles and genres (P. H. Kim and Shin, 2010; Lie 2012, 2015). In this respect, Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1995) maintains that relationships of "power and hegemony are inscribed and reproduced within hybridity . . . [and] hegemony is not merely reproduced but refigured in the process of hybridization" (57). Thus, to correctly appreciate how K-pop is culturally hybrid, one must understand how the music genre has exerted its local, critical *agency* within its concrete contexts of production, promotion, and consumption.

In other words, for cultural hybridity to be successful in articulating local sentiments and agency, K-pop must reconfigure and represent lived experiences of the local population. While the music's look and style are sophisticated and cosmopolitan, they do not necessarily represent "local melodies, current township lingo, and topical subject matter" (Allen 2003, 237; Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000). Put differently, while K-pop has excessively incorporated American popular music genres, such as electronic dance music, rap, and R & B, it is doubtful whether the musicians have maintained their cultural autonomy against the neoliberal business imperative of the industry. As the consistent rampant practice in K-pop, dissociation between creative production of the music and the singers/performers who put on a show indicates a negative perspective on the meaning of hybridity in the music genre. In this regard, rather than a dialectic, critical, and expressive response to sociocultural and politico-economic changes since the 1997 Financial Crisis, K-pop is a vernacular articulation of the hegemonic culture industry's *modus*

operandi, which marketizes the previously unmarketable. With fundamental asymmetries and dependencies, as much as the K-pop industry promotes its locality of musical production, which aims for exports/global consumption, ironically it deepens cultural dependence on American hegemony (Guilbault et al. 1993). In turn, the current discourse on hybridity in K-pop "ideologically justifies, naturalizes and cements the hierarchical and exploitative relationships . . . [and] continues to mediate Northern metropolitan hegemony" (Stokes 2004, 60; Waterman 1990).

Therefore, the current hybridity literature retains what Aijaz Ahmad (1995) criticizes postcolonial intelligentsias for: a "characteristic loss of historical depth and perspective" to "rapid realignments of political [economic] hegemony on the global scale" (16). Without critical agency, hybridity in K-pop means "voluntary" subsumption into the American popular culture hegemony, which is already determined by histories of asymmetries (Araeen 2000). Otherwise, this blind celebration only confers an "unlimited freedom of a globalized marketplace . . . [where] commodified cultures are equal only to the extent of their commodification" (A. Ahmad 1995,17). In this respect, without any reference to Korean people's common aspirations, experiences, feelings, and lives, K-pop reduces them to lowest common denominators, that is, addictive beats and rhythms, and explicit sexualization of female bodies for a universal neoliberal market transaction.

However, the dominant scholarship (Ryoo 2009; D. Shim 2006) celebrates K-pop's global popularity as an amelioration of fear from Western cultural imperialism, and considers hybridity a major tool for cultural counterbalance to Western cultural hegemony. Claiming that there are multidirectional cultural productions from conventional peripheries, Woongjae Ryoo (2009) boldly maintains that the phenomenon is a "clear indication of new global, and regional, transformations in the cultural arena" (147) as a sign of overcoming American cultural hegemony. Furthermore, while neglecting the politico-economics of K-pop production that has been disproportionately conditioned by American cultural and technical criteria, Ryoo admittedly attributes the K-pop industry's implementation of the American standard of media liberalization and culture industry to K-pop's success. In this respect, Ryoo's (2009) dramatization of local production should be regarded as what Arjun Appadurai (1990) criticizes as "production fetishism," an illusion of local cultural productive power in contemporary transnational capitalism, disguising "translocal capital, transnational earning-flows, global management and often faraway workers" (306). Likewise, while the original use of *Hallyu* indicated how local Chinese audiences enjoyed Korean popular culture, its current usage romanticizes and fetishizes the place of production, which is concerned more with the local site of production than a genuine local sensibility in the hybridized cultural production and concrete individual appreciation of K-pop overseas.

For Doobo Shim (2006), K-pop's hybridity was epitomized by the emergence of Seo Taiji and Boys, who mixed various Western music genres and invented a unique Korean flavor. Appropriating American genre formulae, the band successfully exemplified how to exert local agency's active, creative capacity to express local sentiments, issues, and traditions and in turn engendered a broad practical transformation in Korea's soundscape. In retrospect, at the band's astronomical debut in 1992, no one would prove a plagiarism allegation of its single "I Know" from a German band, Milli Vanilli's "Girl You Know It's True." However, over artistic innovation, Shim's cultural hybridity focuses on industrial transformation: expanding Korea's music market scale, boosting album sales, fortifying record company's roles and, most importantly, heralding a birth of Korea's talent agencies and the manufacturing of current K-pop idols. This industrial nature of hybridity is consummated by Lee Sooman, the founder and CEO of SM Entertainment, who invented K-pop's star-manufacturing industry. Determined to "transplant" MTV-style American pop music to Korea after encountering Bobby Brown's "My Prerogative" in the early 1980s (Seabrook 2012), Lee has extensively researched and experimented on a financially profitable idol group project, exerting a total control on idols' personal and professional lives. And this factory model of K-pop production achieved market success, culminating in SM Entertainment's accomplishment by being listed on the KOSDAQ stock market as the first time of its kind (D. Shim 2006). Thus, K-pop is a new economic model that procures a faster, higher profit margin than the traditional manufacturing industry (e.g., automobiles) as a "distinct spatiotemporal configuration" of Korea's neoliberal economy.

In this respect, the current K-pop scholarship on hybridity is severely "limited to describing the Korean mainstream media's co-opting of a hybrid strategy" (D. Shim 2006, 40) and an exemplar of transnational capitalism's strategic rhetoric that "actively and systematically seeks to capitalize on cultural fusion" (Kraidy 2005, 90). Likewise, rather than an "unpredictable, fluid, and creative form of *hybridization* that works to sustain local identities in the global context," (Ryoo 2009, 114, emphasis in original), current K-pop idol groups, as a systematically administered, factory-produced commodity, are formulaic by using American cultural hegemony, which is a hypersexualization of (female) bodies and glorifies consumerism to catch audiences' attention to create economic profit.

Under this economic imperative, K-pop idols are deployed into a broad spectrum of different commercial activities, such as endorsements based on their assigned imageries and perceived fan demographics. Having multiple members in K-pop groups is not so much for artistic necessities as for profit-making imperatives. For this reason, K-pop idols are both corporeally visual, which comes not only from their skillful choreographies but also their manufactured physical attractiveness to commercialize girlish, fair, delicate, cute,

sexy faces and tall, slim, and well-toned bodies. If some members do not score expected commercial profit, they are either replaced with others or forced to undergo more harsh tasks, including plastic surgery. In this grand scheme of neoliberal hegemony, K-pop female idols' young, amicable, sexualized bodies convey "the political unconscious" (Jameson 1981, 142), exemplifying what is important, what to think, and how to govern oneself. With Asia's rapidly growing consumerist appetite, especially in China, K-pop has profited from applying the hegemonic industrial practice of market research and commodity development by "talent management, financing and marketing, including such characteristics as quick and sensational sell, wide promotion, youth appeal, corporate synergy and cross-promotion" (Nam 2013, 218). SM Entertainment's SM Town Concerts in Los Angeles, Paris, and other Asian countries are a case in point.

As an aesthetization of neoliberal market frenzy, which omnivorously searches for anything profitable, hybridization in K-pop is a celebration of boundless market expansion in diverse markets. SNSD's music videos indicate its trajectory of localizing marketing strategy targeted to various profitable audiences, using the temptress troupe to appeal to American audiences as the marketing strategy of "The Boys." However, with its failure in both Asian and American fandoms, SNSD now tries to recapture its traditional Asian fan base with a tried and true mixture of good, innocent girl imagery and temptress imagery in "I Got a Boy," exemplifying that the group is a synecdoche of hegemonic globalization that "cannot proceed without learning to live with and working through difference" (Hall 1997, 31). In sum, K-pop's hybridity in neoliberalism is a slick business strategy to market pseudo-Koreanness that is stylized, packaged, and commodified for global consumption, which has less to do with real lived experiences, feelings, imaginations, inspirations, or histories of Korean people. However, the main purpose of this book is not to blame SNSD for its failure to truthfully represent Koreanness in K-pop, but to indicate sociocultural phenomena caused by the industry's factory-style manufacturing, which is strategically determined by financial interests of industry elites, and in turn alienates musicians and audiences alike.

Therefore, K-pop's hybridity has to be understood not as a cultural term, but as an industrial strategy. Also, it is congruent with the post-IMF Korean government's cultural policy that aims to promote a commercial competitiveness of the cultural, while the pre-IMF one aimed for mitigating the negative impacts of Western culture such as commercialism, materialism, violence, and sensuality (Yim 2002). Thus, if there is anything about K-pop's hybridity, it would be the industry's capacity to produce hybrid cultural commodities that appeal to global consumers (S. Lee 2012; H. Shin 2009).

SNSD'S AMERICAN DEBUT: STRATEGIC MARKETING OF ASIAN FEMALE SEXUALITY

Analyzing SNSD's stylistic and thematic developments in terms of Kristin Lieb's (2013) life cycle model for female popular music stars, I reconsider that SNSD's debut fully embodies American cultural hegemony and conforms to patriarchal capitalism. To satisfy and further consolidate the patriarchal gender hierarchy indicated in Laura Mulvey's (1975) notion of the male gaze, SNSD has maneuvered its gendered looks and behaviors:

> In order to become and remain a dominant female popular music star, one must start off as a *good girl*; "cute," "innocent," "stable," and "fun." From these she cycles into a *temptress* phase, where she and her handlers make her sexuality and "hotness" more salient in her public image. (Lieb 2013, 90, emphasis in original)

Actually, with "The Boys," SNSD's original image as pure, innocent, and cute teenage girls evolved into a collective image of an aggressive subject/object of sexual temptation, donned with sexually provocative and form-fitting clothes. SNSD commodifies female bodies by carefully crafting eroticized cuteness and playful sexualization, meeting expectations from both a patriarchal gender hierarchy and neoliberal commercialization of sexuality: Being innocent and sexualized at the same time is a hallmark of K-pop female idols' positionality.

With SM Entertainment's transnational pool of composers collecting the most marketable songs for international audiences, SNSD's American debut project had an in-depth degree of foreign intervention from its production stages, such as American composers Teddy Riley and Busbee. Entering its temptress phase, SNSD's U.S. debut was deliberately constructed to market sexualized Korean females to various U.S. audiences: an older demographic of men on *The Late Show with David Letterman* and women of various ages on *Live with Kelly*. The main rationale to use those talk shows was based on successful Korean experiences with K-pop idols' guest appearances on variety TV shows, which have successfully served their promotional efforts. Strategically, SNSD attempted to market the traditionally strong purchase-power audience segment in the U.S., just as its previous mega hit, "Gee," was possible mainly due to obtaining adult male fans. Thus, Letterman's show, as one of the longest running late-night talk shows, would be a nice American venue to further SNSD's global market reach.

Comparing SNSD's two music videos, "Gee" and "The Boys," I analyze SM Entertainment's strategic manipulation of SNSD's image from the good girls into the temptresses to the point that it might become applicable to the American audience. As SNSD's first major hit and emblematic of the

group's cute looks, "Gee" was originally intended for local consumption in Korea, but spontaneously became an international hit through SNSD's online fandom and YouTube. While "Gee" appeals to Korea's traditional model of *aegyo*—submissive, vulnerable, and erotic femininity—the most prevalent theme in SNSD's American debut is the Dragon Lady, an aggressive, visibly sexual (and sexualized) domineering female as the temptress. An examination of BoA,[2] SNSD's direct predecessor, and her U.S. debut with the music video for "Eat You Up," further supports my argument that SNSD's American debut was a result of SM Entertainment's strategy of marketing Korean female bodies to the extent that American cultural "symbols and myths have been translated into an international iconographic language, a visual lingua franca" (Kroes 1999, 470). Even after experiencing failure in BoA's 2008 U.S. debut, SM Entertainment's strategy to fit the Western imaginary of Asian women is still evident in SNSD's debut, since it is structural in the K-pop industry's formulaic business strategy. Emulating the Japanese idol-manufacturing system, which prioritizes appearance and visuality, SM Entertainment is obsessed with making the idols attractive and appealing to American audiences. Furthermore, as the Japanese culture industry strategically disposed of its local cultural characteristics to market to Western audiences (Lu 2008), K-pop has also de-Koreanized its content for its global marketing ploy (E. Y. Jung 2009; Lie 2012). Thus, both BoA and SNSD could not provide American audiences with unique Koreanness as a creative hybrid experience while emphasizing a superficial adaptation of hegemonic American genres and styles; however, this seeming hybridity was not created by the idols (or performers), but manufactured by K-pop industry leaders' desire to expand the business territory and their imaginaries of the idols' marketability to American audiences.

SNSD's "Gee" music video was released on January 5, 2009. The song, dance, wardrobe, hand motions, and facial expressions of the girls conform to the Korean concept of *aegyo*, or infantilized cuteness and eroticism, decorated by the members' dexterous exercise of girlish behaviors, like clenching their fists around their cheeks combined with shy smiles and shrugging shoulders. By using patriarchal female decency and coyness, the "Gee" music video was able to appeal to pan-Asian audiences. For instance, "Gee" shows no direct contact between the girls and their crush, and their dance and outfits are subtly sexy in a delicate, girl-next-door way without showing any cleavage or excessive bare skin. *Aegyo* in "Gee," as an example of cultural proximity in Confucian Asia, retains broader socio-politico-economic implications. For example, there are parallels between *aegyo* and Japanese *kawaii*, since both are gendered performances executed by women and girls for the benefit of male affective and sexual needs. As a symbolic compensation for Korean males' depressed self-confidence, *aegyo* has been promoted in gender relations, expression, and style since Korea's economic devastation in

1997, similar to *kawaii* during Japan's economic depression. In this respect, SNSD's other hit, "Genie," whose theme is based on a Disney cartoon character—Genie, the royal servant who realizes its master's dream—symbolically soothes adult male fans' depressed morale in Korea's post-IMF economy.

Produced by famous American singer-songwriter and producer Teddy Riley, "The Boys" was released by SNSD on December 19, 2011, in Korean, followed by the English version on December 20, 2011. The music video is devoid of any storyline and instead focuses on the visuality of the idols' dance moves. Also, the video's monochromatic scheme and cold colors, like cobalt blues, silver, and black, play an important role in projecting SNSD's mature, sophisticated, and sexy aura. It is my contention that SNSD's U.S. market strategy hinges on its embodiment of Western racial fantasies, that is, the Dragon Lady image of an aggressive, visibly sexual (and sexualized) and domineering female (a temptress) with a hint of the China Doll image, a submissive and vulnerable female with a wholesome, erotic aura (the good girl). By incorporating nuances of American individualism through various outfits and close-ups, SNSD deliberately attempted to relate the video to the American audience, focusing on sexualized bodies through sexually suggestive dance moves and flirtatious behaviors, such as batting their eyes, winking, caressing their faces, and tilting their pelvises to the side and backward, which highlighted their curved body shapes. Undulating, maiden-like body movements objectified their bodies as an object of male gaze and fantasy. Its emphasis on slim, elongated legs, highlighted by signature short pants with arms akimbo, fetishizes female body parts as a commodity that invites a sexual fantasy of male audiences to the extent that SNSD strategically uses hot leather pants, associated with sadomasochistic sexuality, accentuating sexual power or independence. Using English lyrics as an instrument to reconstruct Asian female singers' sexual identity (Benson 2013), SNSD implemented a more active, sexualized femininity. Compared with more submissive lyrics in Korean such as "You are my hero" or "Show your power," an English version retains an assertive, subjective femininity as the song's chorus repeats, "Girls bring the boys out." Conformity to U.S. cultural hegemony is most evident in the video's "packaging" and production by Teddy Riley. The differences between its Korean and English videos highlight SNSD's overall U.S. debut strategy, which focused on the girls as sexualized (and racialized) objects rather than individual artists. The most significant difference between the videos occurs at 4:17, as the English version changes perspectives, zooms in more, and applies a lighter filter so that the girls' clothes appear more provocative.

Thus, cultural hybridity in SNSD's U.S. debut was a subjugation of the Korean female artists to the sum of the Western imagination of submissive Asian femininity as "phantasms of orientalness" (Shimakawa 2002, 17).

Rather than each member's musical talent, SNSD promoted lively, sexual imagery of appealing, beautiful young ladies, as "looks are actually the most important aspect of a female pop star's [success]" (Lieb 2013, 102). Considering the group's formation with nine young girls with different image and talent profiles, SNSD realizes Negus's (1999) term "portfolio management," or flexible branding for an open interpretation as a risk diversification strategy to reduce market uncertainty.

However, somewhat divergent features suggest that SNSD is not a mere replica of hypersexualized Asian women in Western media, as indicated by Shimizu (2007). As a representation of high-class femininity, characterized by their slim, well-toned bodies and fancy dresses, SNSD is strategically positioned to market elegant and chaste Asian femininity with a hint of active sexual appetite as a new cultural commodity in the American market. While the girls are wearing different outfits and shades of color, there is a unifying sexual, yet modest, subtle, and elegant, seduction theme that occurs by retaining conservative Korean values. For example, proclaiming themselves as the goddess Athena, SNSD is proud to help male counterparts with power and wisdom, reaffirming the submissive, subordinate nature of traditional, patriarchal femininity.

As examined so far, hybridity in SNSD's American debut exists in SM Entertainment's market strategy that appropriates cultural components from diverse localities. While the life cycle model is a strategic adaptation over female singers' age, SNSD's American debut indicates how the K-pop industry deploys a different ethnicity and nationality as an appealing point in pursuit of earning the American male gaze, replicating tried and true American cultural hegemony. By marketing an all-English song with a guest performance on the *Late Show with David Letterman*, SNSD attempted two things at once: breaking into the U.S. pop music market by using stereotypes of Asian female sexuality, and marketing the event as a symbol of their popularity and talent in an effort to further consolidate their domestic market share.

For this vapid, formulaic practice of cultural hybridity that is indistinguishable from hegemonic American popular music, SNSD's debut received a lukewarm reception from U.S. media, as opposed to SME's statement that it was critically acclaimed. A similar pattern occurred when Korean media claimed a "success" of the SM Town Live World Tour in Paris in June 2011 as K-pop's foray into Europe; however, French local media were skeptical or ignorant of the event. Analyses of various U.S. media between February 1 and March 31, 2012, revealed that the prevailing sentiment views SNSD through racial and sexual stereotypes of Asian women's bodies, as seen through the Western male gaze. For example, an article from the *International Business Times* features a picture of SNSD with famous actor Bill Murray taken right after SNSD's stage performance on the *Late Show with David*

Letterman. This feature is not about the group's musical talent or performance, but a glorification of their sexualized bodies. As a simulation of a man's womanizing fantasy, Murray is posed in the midst of nine attractive, young, exotic Korean women who are presenting cute, intimate, and tempting body language around and with Murray. *The Wall Street Journal* covers SNSD's live performance on *Letterman* by focusing on SNSD as uniform sexual objects, characterized as sexualized and alluring Asian temptresses. In this regard, quite contrary to the notion of hybridity as a quintessential result of local agency's dialectic interaction with the hegemonic power of transnational forces, SNSD's U.S. debut suggests that the group used the Western fantasy surrounding Asian women's racialized sexuality and fetishism.

While the Western media focused on SNSD's debut by portraying its members as sexual objects, Korean counterparts focused on the group's achievement in the U.S. as a result of their hard work and genuine talent. This disparity may be SME's intentional marketing strategy to appeal to the Western audience by capitalizing on the culture industry's "ever more voracious desire for all things 'different'" (A. N. Ahmad 2001, 80) while maintaining that SNSD, as Korea's national girls, earned their success on the world's biggest music platform through cosmopolitan "motivation toward upward mobility in transitional society from Asian or developing economies to modern and Western economies" (Jang and Kim 2013, 95).

Therefore, whether it spotlights *aegyo* in "Gee" or girl power in "The Boys," SNSD is a commercial entity of Korea's patriarchal neoliberalism that exemplifies an important set of interactions between the commodification of female sexuality and the industrialization of popular music. Specifically, the *modus operandi* of SNSD revolves around how female bodies and appearances have constantly been redefined and updated by commercial media's marketization of sexy, attractive female images (Frost 2005; Gill and Scharff 2011; McRobbie 2009). In turn, Korean media's promotion of "girl power" or "female sexual empowerment" is a type of hegemonic manipulation that defines how a sexual subject should look and provides a technology of sexiness in the given patriarchal capitalism (Gill 2008). In this respect, SNSD represents a comprehensive marketing package of young, attractive female talents that has transformed each member's personality into a neoliberal commodity targeted to various audience segments, from teen girls to middle-aged men (Y. Kim 2011). Consequently, rather than cultural hybridity, SNDS's American debut is an embodiment of American hegemony through "Western technology, the concentration of capital, the concentration of techniques, the concentration of advanced labor . . . and the stories and the imagery of Western society" (Hall 1997, 28). What makes SNSD's U.S. debut noteworthy comes not from its cultural, performative contribution, but from its marketing strategy that conforms to how transnational capitalism has implemented globalization.

FROM "GEE" TO "THE BOYS": SURROGATE OF U.S. CULTURAL HEGEMONY

In fact, Korea has become one of the strongest producers of local culture by a deft exercise of hybridity—blending the global and the local. The total revenue K-pop has generated from exporting to various countries proves its success as a new powerhouse in the cultural counterflow. However, the industry has not overcome a stark asymmetry of cultural, economic, and political resources and influences between Korea and the U.S.; rather, it keeps conditioning K-pop to further perpetuate American hegemony. Still, K-pop is not a mere replica of American pop culture; rather, it is the product of a systematic value structure that has conditioned Korean society to consider anything American as the most desirable ideal to be emulated. In this respect, Dal Yong Jin (2016) aptly maintains that "transnational cultural flow of local popular culture [itself] should not be an explanation for the flow of culture from Korea" to other countries (59).

Therefore, a superficial analysis of cultural hybridity misses important structural issues, like the political economy of the local media industry and the highly elusive nature of hegemony within local sites of cultural production. The neoliberal logic of commodifying the cultural, the growing transnational flow of cultural commodities, and the governmental deregulation of the media industry are major factors contributing to the K-pop phenomena. In this respect, an uncritical, descriptive notion of cultural hybridity in the current K-pop scholarship, for example, Doobo Shim (2006) and Woongjae Ryoo (2009), is

> placed at the service of a neoliberal economic order that respects no borders and harbors no prejudice toward cultural and ethnic difference that can be harnessed for [economic] growth . . . [by] a profit-driven strategy that actively and systematically seeks to capitalize on cultural fusion and fluid identities. (Kraidy 2005, 90)

Consequently, within the context of the asymmetrical relationship between two countries, the recent global popularity of K-pop should be understood within Korea's position in the U.S.'s model of neoliberal capitalism, suggesting K-pop's global popularity is a "detoured 'return' to the United States" (J. K. Lee 2010, 31) by the Korean culture industry. In other words, the popularity of K-pop in Asian countries can be described as an indirect consumption of American pop music with Korean cultural embellishments: "It is precisely because there isn't very much 'Korean' in K-pop [that it] can become such an easy 'sell' to consumers abroad" (Lie 2012, 361). As a kind of self-Orientalist cultural production, cultural hybridity in SNSD's American debut case indicates the industry leaders "consciously or uncon-

sciously make [their talents or idols] into, or see themselves, [as] the objects of Western desire and imaginations" (Tobin 1992, 30) and have not been able to (re)claim cultural sovereignty or autonomy that enables them to create unique cultural hybridity in their music and performances by subjective, critical, and creative reconstitution of Korea's local imaginaries, sentiments, and realities. Therefore, the biggest implication of SNSD's U.S. debut is twofold: K-pop is an active surrogate of American cultural hegemony and hypercommercialism that rapaciously commodifies anything marketable, and Korean society has become exponentially more Americanized while confronting and adapting neoliberal doctrines since the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis.

NOTES

1. A different version of this chapter was previously published in the *International Journal of Communication*. Kim, G. (2017). Cultural Hybridity and Hegemony in K-pop's Global Popularity: A Critical Examination on Girls' Generation's American Debut. International Journal of Communication, 11, 2367–2386.

2. BoA's single, "Eat You Up," represents two different racialized and sexualized fantasies of Asian women. BoA's American debut music video, which initially focused on aegyo qualities, received negative feedback from American audiences. SME remade the video, but the sexy imagery was out of character with BoA's previous Korean and Japanese videos; it emphasized the Dragon Lady imagery of aggressive, domineering female sexuality to accommodate and appeal to Western fetishization of Asian women. However, BoA's Asian fans criticized the American version as too "Americanized" and focused on her dancing ability, and was more wholesome (E. Y. Jung, 2009). Thus, SME's abrupt attempt to market BoA in a different and more sexualized way failed to attract the American market and alienated her existing fans.

Chapter Four

Genealogy and Affective Economy of K-Pop Female Idols

From Cute and Innocent, to Ambiguous Femininity, to Explicit Sexualization

As a follow-up to chapter three, which structurally examined a trajectory of hybridization in K-pop female idols' representation, this chapter traces how the idols have evolved in terms of their visual themes as a result of specific cultural, economic, historical, and social events and backgrounds. Music is an expression of sociopolitical (un)consciousness, and it helps us find out what is going on in a given society. In this respect, Murray Schafer (1994) maintains music is an "indicator of the age, revealing, for those who know how to read its symptomatic messages, a means of fixing social and even political events" (7). With this diagnostic function, music is a symbolic manifestation of the conditions of cultural, economic, and political possibilities in society. Like the sound of a mill represented an engine of economic growth in an agricultural society, K-pop as the latest economic device for Korea's national economy plays the "centripetal sounds; they unify and regulate the community" (56). From this point of view, I examine what messages K-pop delivers to a general audience, how its meanings are constructed in the society, and how we can better understand the nation through examining the dominant cultural genre. As an important guide to "studying shifts in aural habits and perceptions" as a condition of cognitive and cultural possibilities (103), K-pop's signature fast-paced, bombarding dance beats are a commercial mix of aural brutality and fashionable refinement to the extent that it overwhelms the nation's other music genres as an aural monopoly. In this respect, I examine how representational tonality of female idols has changed

over time. Examining how female idols are (re)presented as an icon of the music genre's *modus operandi*, this chapter tries to map out how representations of female idols are corresponding to the changes of society's given norms and values.

With Dierdra Reber (2012), the current focus on affect over reason is a manifestation of neoliberal *episteme* that "validates the bourgeois body public as the new site and source of economic and political power" (63). As a primary realm of neoliberal biopolitics, affects or affectionated bodies, as either topic or optic, are constantly produced, circulated, and consumed as a mode of the microphysics of power at the content-specific level and in the discursive construction of K-pop. With the affective turn (Clough and Halley 2007), music videos of K-pop have largely formulated individuals as cultural consumers who are driven to satisfy their affective needs and wants, which are produced and promoted by neoliberal popular culture. Considering affect as an "operational set of dispositions toward the self in the world given by sensory perception, emotion, and feeling" (69), the hypervisual and affective nature of K-pop music videos is a strategic device that encompasses "the said as much as the unsaid" on how neoliberalism works in society (Foucault 1980, 194). By doing so, as an ensemble of discourse, institutions, and regulations over cultural production, they serve a "dominant strategic function" to address an "urgent need" of neoliberal Korea (195). In other words, what K-pop videos do to individuals is a pleasurable pedagogy of neoliberal governmentality that conditions them to learn and perceive the world by sensory stimuli such as emotions: "Felt realities, sensed truths, guts that advise and hearts that remember, tears and smiles are what have begun to reconstitute social discourse along the semantic axis of affect" (Reber 2012, 68).

In other words, considering affect is a cultural logic of hyper free-market capitalism, I argue that a hypersexualization of female bodies in K-pop music videos is a specific mode of its operation. With affect as an "independent epistemic modality—a full-fledged mechanism for the reinterpretation of knowledge of self and world" (Reber 2012, 92), the biopolitics of affect works seamlessly in the visual language of the bright, lively atmosphere of K-pop music videos, which mainly deliver bodily feeling, emotion, and affect as a way of knowing the world, and in turn acts as a means of sociobehavioral control. With fast beats and salient rhythms that do not allow audiences to contemplate, K-pop instigates people's desire to be rich and successful as an ideological pitch, just as neoliberalism jolts people by its neck-breaking speed of transforming society into a grand marketplace. In other words, like neoliberalism mesmerizes people with an unrealistic valorization of market logic that is a utopian promise of competition, K-pop has captivated audiences by seamless, breathtaking choreography and the appealing, sexy appearances of K-pop performers, and has coaxed them to appear, behave, and move like the idols.

In this regard, I analyze how K-pop epitomizes neoliberal governmentality by modeling idol singers as flexible, competitive, and entrepreneurial agents of neoliberalism. As George Yúdice (2003) indicates, music is a contested terrain where different cultural, economic, political, and social interests compete to make an efficient use of the medium in order to perpetuate, maintain, or challenge the *status quo*. Stated differently, in this chapter, I analyze how K-pop, as a cultural manifestation of neoliberalism's marketing the unmarketable for financial success, has represented an *episteme* of post-IMF neoliberal Korea. To this end, I reexamine Foucault's notion of *episteme* in its capacity to explain how understanding certain ideas, thoughts, genres, and/or discourse is an essential and effective tool to analyze culture and society in a given time. As an empirical tool to substantiate this claim, I analyze three music videos from the three most representative K-pop female idol groups, S.E.S. (1997–2002), SNSD (2007–present), and Stellar (2011–present). Based on Foucaultian genealogy, I create a taxonomy of K-pop female idols that corresponds to major social, economic, and political events in Korea in 1997, 2007, and 2010, respectively.

AFFECT AS NEOLIBERAL EPISTEME IN K-POP: TAXONOMY OF K-POP FEMALE IDOLS

With the notion of "*homo economicus*," Foucault (2008) maintains that neoliberalism universalizes economic logic as the general matrix of people's daily behaviors in everything that human beings endeavor to realize based upon a meticulous calculation of cost for benefit. Thus, neoliberalism is not only as the political economy of marketization in society, but also, more importantly, a biopolitical subjectification of individuals (Foucault 1995) in an effort to internalize particular forms of responsibility produced by market imperatives and practices (Nealon 2008). In this biopolitical procedure of neoliberalism, K-pop plays a role on a micro-technological level, where audiences learn how to govern themselves by naturalizing neoliberal rationalities as the basis for their conducts (Binkley 2007; Lemke 2001; Rose et al. 2006). As a means to win individuals' hearts and minds, popular culture has been an integral part of this neoliberalization by recontouring cultural imaginations of social well-being, providing "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1971, 153). In this subjectification process by popular culture, individuals are constantly asked to adjust their subjectivity and identity to the neoliberal ideal of flexibility, adaptability, and transformation. As a synecdoche (Barry et al. 1996) of neoliberal Korea that implies particular mentalities and governing manners, which are realized and practiced in individuals' concrete thoughts, feeling, behaviors, habits, and perceptions, I maintain K-pop idols tell how people understand

and articulate social values and practices through specific lexicons of media spectacle. In this respect, like Binkley (2006), I argue that the recent popularity of K-pop has played a microphysics of power that conditions individuals to naturalize neoliberal governmentality and become active, voluntary agents of neoliberalism. In this regard, the three videos that I analyze show exactly how neoliberal Korean society demands females conform to changing ideals of femininity.

Since an *episteme* is an ensemble of "signs and similitudes . . . [that reveal] the relations of microcosm to macrocosm" (Foucault 1994, 32), it reveals a historico-empirical dimension, which provides a changing condition of possibility of experience and knowledge in a given time and place, as opposed to Kantian transcendental *a priori*. Put differently, *episteme* as empirical *a priori* sets up a various kinds of knowledge and codes of conducts for individuals to be recognized as legitimate members of society. In turn, it makes a certain discourse possible, which is a condition and a product of sociopolitical practices in a given historical epoch. In other words, as the "mentality or the 'framework of thought' of any given period" (158), *episteme* conditions possibilities of experience, world-view, and value-system in a specific epochal and local context. In this regard, as historical *a priori* of contemporary Korean people's expectation and perception, K-pop female idols allow us to understand disciplinary practices, sociopolitical mechanisms and apparatuses, regimes of truth, and normative rules and values in society.

Specifically, since "passion overpowers reason in neoliberal discourse" (Chaput 2010, 3), the emotionally charged, visual nature of K-pop videos helps sustain a socioeconomically fragmented, divided population stay together in a "dynamic affective experience" of market capitalism (Vivian 2006, 15). In turn, this affective public (Cloud 2003), since it is not based on reason, is subject to unstable passions or emotions, which are excessively fabricated and promoted by the neoliberal culture industry. In this respect, individuals are mobilized by affective energy that inspires one-dimensional desires like being popular and rich: Thus, I argue that K-pop audiences are affectively connected masses. With the sheer amount of K-pop idols and their music videos, K-pop exerts a dominant affective power since "signs increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become" (Ahmed 2004, 45). In turn, due to its increasing energy of affect which transmits between individuals (Brennan 2004) and its capacity to precede one's conscious decisions, K-pop's sheer volume conditions individuals' mindsets and behavior to conform to socio-politically constructed norms and values. In other words, as an "invisible glue that holds the world together" (Massumi 2002b, 217), affect as *episteme* envelops individuals' physical as well as psychological domains of social lives.

As Foucault (1984) indicates that genealogist effort is not "to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities," or to presuppose an "existent of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession" (78), I strive to understand contours, fissures, and fractures, and a topography of K-pop female idols. Since S.E.S.'s debut in 1997, many K-pop female idols have come and gone with different concepts, images, and appealing points. While examining "the form of the elements, the quantity of those elements, the manner in which [the K-pop female idols] are distributed in space in relation to each other, and the relative magnitude of each element" (134), taxonomy exhibits an *episteme* as a magnitude of the female idols' dominance in the music genre. To be more specific, with genesis analysis that reveals a beginning of a concept in K-pop female idols, taxonomy articulates and classifies identities and differences amongst them. By establishing "orders on the basis of empirical series," taxonomy provides a systematic understanding on female representations in K-pop from "their proximity and their distance, their adjacency and their separateness—and therefore the network, which, outside chronology, makes patent their kinship and reinstate[s] their relations of order within a permanent area" (Foucault 1994, 73). Therefore, in order to better understand how those idols are similar or different, I map them out by taxonomy based on their major characteristics: Generation I with innocent, cute concepts, Generation II with ambiguous femininity, and Generation III with explicit sexualization. As an analysis on a "certain continuum of things (a non-discontinuity, a plentitude of being)" (72), I examine how a taxonomy of the idols can reconstitute discontinuous representations through temporal reconstructions in neoliberal Korean society since 1997.

VOLATILE NEOLIBERALIZATION OF THE NATION: 1997, 2007, AND 2010

Since the 1997 Financial Crisis, the Korean government has deregulated economic and industrial policies in order to promote private industrial sectors. With the IMF mandates that took control over the Korean economy in December 1997, the state ended or abated its decades-long control over industrial conglomerates' investment decisions, financial market regulations, transnational capital transactions, and so on. While the crisis stemmed from the government's lack of adequate regulation on the finance sector during its aggressive globalization and liberalization policy since the early 90s, the IMF's intervention exponentially exacerbated the problem by further eliminating essential governmental controls by maximizing a flexible labor market, and completely opening financial capital market to foreign firms (Crotty and Lee 2005). Despite the IMF's dramatic intervention, Korea's postcrisis

economic performance has been lower than that of the precrisis era mainly because there was not enough investment and spending from the government. Moreover, the country's economic dependence on commodity exports has grown larger than at the precrisis period, putting the nation into more precarious conditions since its manufacture industry became virtually obsolete due to rising labor wages and price competition with other developing countries. What is worse, due to an insecure job market and skyrocketing income disparities, there is growing social fragmentation with high socioeconomic inequalities and an increasing poverty rate. With extensive deregulation on transnational capital transaction, the Korean financial sector has "become a gambling casino for foreigners" (Crotty and Lee 2005, 421).

Despite growing socioeconomic discontents of neoliberalization, the state has not taken enough measure to mitigate problems caused by the 1997 Financial Crisis and the subsequent IMF intervention. Rather, the government accelerated neoliberalization by officially initiating the Korea–U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) as an apex of postcrisis neoliberal economic policy in February 2006. While the state maintained it had acknowledged growing predicaments of the neoliberal economy since the 1997 Financial Crisis, the state was groundlessly optimistic, insisting that the agreement would strengthen its national economic competitiveness and enlarge economic territories where Korean companies do business freely. With little more than a year of negotiations, the two parties reached a conclusion in April 2007. Service sector industries such as education, health care, finance, logistics, and legal services expected to benefit most; however, once considering the U.S.'s far advancement in those sectors, on top of the preferential terms it receives, Korea's prospective performance looks dim if not negative. According to a governmental study on possible mid- to long-term profits, the FTA would bring Korea $7.1 billion surplus while bringing $12.2 billion to the U.S. (Lim 2006). Thus, it is skeptical that the KORUS FTA will bring any positive contribution to developing or upgrading Korea's service industry, if not entirely pessimistic. A more troublesome fact was that the government neither conducted sound research nor prepared for the plights of the trade pact: In this respect, the FTA was driven "more by high politics than by economics" (177). Since the FTA entailed a preferential trade agreement that integrates the state's regulatory disciplines on service, investment, intellectual property, governmental provisions and so on (Lim and Torrent 2006), the KORUS FTA required Korea to adopt American regulatory rules since the U.S. has far more complex sets of trade and service statutes. On the other hand, the U.S. conceives of the negotiation as easy and preferable for its economic and strategic interests based on the fact that 1) Korea has been militarily and politically dependent on the U.S., 2) the FTA would counterbalance China's growing influence in the region, and 3) the U.S. financial industry can dominate the market (Hart-Landsberg 2011).

Overall, the government's propaganda that the KORUS FTA would elevate the nation's economy from a manufacturing industry to a service one sets political and institutional supports for service industry sectors. Ironically, this governmental support for the neoliberal service industry is itself antithetical to the fundamental mantra of neoliberalism, that is deregulation and privatization. In other words, the KORUS FTA, along with the Korean government's subsequent support for the service industry, sets up a neoliberal *episteme* of cut-throat competition that numerous K-pop idols originate from and rely on at the same time.

In this ideological and political manipulation of the FTA, the Korean government hosted the G20 Summit talks in 2010 as a symbolic consummation of the country's neoliberalization. As a holder of the 2010 G20 Presidency, Korea hosted the fifth summit and was responsible for preparing summits and other meetings on November 11–12, 2010. It was the first time such a summit was held in Asia and in a non-G8 emerging global economy. The G20 Summit was established in September 1999 as an effort to ward off the negative impact of economic globalization in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. However, with the 2008 global financial and economic crisis, the G20 Summit, which was held in Washington, D.C. on November 15, 2008, became globally recognized (Cho and Kelly 2012). As top economic or financial officials, participants are from the G7 advanced world economies: Australia, the EU, the BRIC, and seven other emerging economies. The G20 economies accounted for 83.4 percent of global GDP in 2009.

The 2010 Summit rendered sizeable economic benefits for Korea as high as $20.6 billion on top of consumer and tourist spending of $16.2 billion (D. Lee 2010). However, more than just a monetary achievement, Korea was able to symbolically capitalize on the G20 Summit as a restoration of the country's reputation as a global economic power, which it used to enjoy before the 1997 Financial Crisis, and an establishment of a proud and competent member in the global market economy. In this respect, while it did not provide any alternative to the current neoliberal capitalism (Kalinowski 2010), according to Judith Cherry and Hugo Dobson (2012), the 2010 G20 Seoul Summit was believed to make some degrees of success on important agendas like "providing leadership on both legacy and new issues, reconciling tensions in order to ensure the summit's effectiveness, [and] bolstering the solidarity of the summiteers" (376). Coining a term, the "G20 Generation" at the President's New Year address to the nation (Gowman 2010), the government preached neoliberal mantras, like financial success and personal competitiveness, as an ethical code of conduct for Korean people. Thus, as an allegorical manifestation to keep up with a rosy prediction of the G20 Summit's success and the nation's symbolic stride as one of the global economic powerhouses, K-pop female idols' adaptation of explicit sexualization, that is the dominant *modus operandi* of American pop music after the Telecommu-

nication Act of 1996, should be considered as a cultural correspondence to the state's neoliberal agenda as *episteme*.

TAXONOMY OF FEMALE IDOLS: INNOCENCE, AMBIGUOUS FEMININITY, AND EXPLICIT SEXUALIZATION

As the very first K-pop female group, S.E.S. is a trio band formed in 1997, and was a female counterpart to H.O.T., which was the first K-pop idol band in 1996. From many perspectives, S.E.S. has set standards to follow for female idols, especially in the manufactured nature of their talents. S.E.S.'s debut song, "I'm Your Girl," in November 1997 was an instant success with a conformative, traditional image of innocence, cuteness, and modernity. As manufactured or assigned talent by the agency, SM Entertainment, the group emphasized the visual nature of the music genre: Except for the main singer, Bada, two other members, Eugene and Shoo, do not make major musical contributions to the group except for their physical attractiveness and beauty. Equally, the agency and the group focused on glossiness in music videos: Their single "Love" made another parameter for later K-pop female idols. Rather than the musical talent of the members, the music video explicitly focused on their physical attractiveness, mainly that of Eugene and Shoo. Likewise, while Bada sang most of the songs, she was the least popular member of the group, and subsequently underwent several rounds of plastic surgery. Particularly, the music video set another standard, that is, to look Americanized. Spending more than one million U.S. dollars, the music video glamorized Western, to be more precise, American looks of the members with a lot of makeup, dyed or bleached hair, and edgy fashion items such as a beanie hat, all set against signature skyscrapers of Manhattan.

Like Kristin Lieb (2013) indicates that female singers adopt more mature and sexualized imageries as they grow old, S.E.S. followed the same trajectory over their career, however, to no avail. With their fourth album in December 2000, they tried a mature, sophisticated image by wearing suits. Likewise, their music moved away from bubbly cute pop songs to jazzy ones. "Show Me Your Love" was the first single of the album, and it was a slow ballad with jazzy instrumental sounds and beats. With their comeback album, *Choose My Life-U* in 2002, the sound had strong beats accompanied by dominant imageries of the members. However, their popularity was not as high as it used to be, especially when they portrayed innocence and images with bright primary colors.

As part of Generation II of K-pop female idols, SNSD is an eight-member band (used to be nine members until September 2014), which made an official debut in August 2007. The introduction of SNSD in 2007 was more than just an expansion of K-pop idol inventories challenging the domination of K-

pop male idols that lasted between 2002 and 2007. While it was considered as a reinstatement of female idols' popularity which S.E.S had before, SNSD's debut was far more than just the launching a female idol group: As its name represents, it was the beginning of a new paradigm or era: a simultaneous intensification of commodifying girly, cutesy images and the beginning of explicit sexualization of female bodies. Decorated with primary colors and skinny jeans, SNSD's first major hit song, "Gee," mesmerized the country with cute, uplifting crab-leg dance moves that emphasized elongated legs, which are later bared in a following single, "Genie: Tell me Your Wish." With the instantaneous success of "Gee," SNSD not only became the most popular K-pop female idols, but more importantly set a representational standard of femininity for a mushrooming number of female idols shortly afterwards. Furthermore, with its successful debut and popularity in Japan, SNSD became more than just an idol group but a poster child of the neoliberal Korean economy, which savors extensive and intensive attention from the media, the government, and the audience alike. With the Japanese success of "Genie: Tell Me Your Wish," *Nikkei Business*, a Japanese economic weekly magazine, ran a cover with SNSD that was equated with Korea's neoliberal business acumen in general (*The Chosun Ilbo* 2010).

For John Lie (2015), the year 2007 provides a watershed moment in which K-pop endeavors to emulate the mainstream American popular singers who mainly deploy sex appeal, while previous female idols like S.E.S. followed the formulaic construction of J-pop idols. Ushered in by Wonder Girls' 2007 hit song "Tell Me" that restaged Motown girl group musical sensibilities, Generation II of K-pop female idols began to extensively utilize what became K-pop's key features: addictive hooks, integration of lyrical/musical hooks, easy-to-follow dance moves, and extensive sexualization of female bodies. As a prototype of Generation II idols as mannequin-like dancing dolls, SNSD has provided music tunes that the audience found easy to sing along and dance to together. While male idols tend to show off their exclusive dance skills and vocal talents, SNSD has supplied the audience who are suffering from intensifying neoliberal competition with something psychologically and emotionally affordable. Ironically, it was exacerbating neoliberalization that made Korean people seek for something that can recompense for personal, financial, and social problems caused by the country's rapid neoliberalization. However, it is SNSD as one of the most neoliberalized entities, with its colorful, lively, and cute images, that the audience uses to try to heal themselves.

While there are many factors contributing to their success and popularity, in this chapter, I discuss the manipulation of the members' imageries, that is, a deft utilization of ambiguity between the traditional cute, innocent girl next-door and neoliberal commodification of sexualized female bodies. For this purpose, as the signature model of its musical style and image, which

brought most success and fame, I will focus on the "Gee" music video. Peppered with spritely, cutesy electropop and bubblegum pop tunes, SNSD's lively yet ambiguous femininity has characterized the neoliberal propaganda of a rosy perspective of the market economy to the extent that the group has been named as the "Nation's Girl Group" or the "Nation's Idol." The lyrical theme of SNSD's songs is mainly teenage dance or slumber party, and represents an infantilized and sexualized femininity that seeks male attention and protection.

As part of Generation III, making a debut in August 2011, Stellar is a four-member idol group whose concept is a sexual provocateur. Releasing a controversial single, "Marionette," in February 2014, Stellar has pushed the envelope in sexual representations which shed cutesy and innocent images away in K-pop music videos. In leotards, the idols' body parts are fetishized in an extreme close-up shots, accentuating explicit sexual innuendos, especially gyrating, bouncing, and rubbing buttocks in the video. As a teaser advertisement of the song, the group staged a promotional event, "Guys, I will do whatever you tell me to do—Marionette" that is basically a stripping game to get its members naked on Stellar's Facebook page (*Seoul Shinmun* 2014). Clad in lingerie that is to be removed by "like" buttons, the idols' bodies are reified as a prize to be won by affective as well as attentive investments. Erotic facial and bodily expressions such as pouty lips and provocative dance moves are exchanged for the audience's Facebook likes. Despite harsh criticism, the music video achieved financial success and audience's recognition.

TRAJECTORIES OF SEXUALIZING FEMALE IDOL BODIES: VISUAL ANALYSES

With an increasing number of TV channels designated to popular music videos in the post-1997 Financial Crisis, which meant an intensifying competition amongst singers/performers to win the audience's attention, sexualization of female idols is exacerbating. Due to this increasing competition, "survival of the sexiest" has become a common strategy for commercial success in the music industry (Andsager and Roe 2003). Specifically, female singers use sexualization of their bodies as a marketing strategy by fulfilling the audience's sexual fantasies. Actually, there is a growing tendency of being lascivious among Korean television programs, according to a study on the nation's three major network TV stations' music programs between 2006 and 2010 (Kim and Yoon 2011). The dance moves and outfits of female idols, much more than those of their male counterparts, are getting sexualized and provocative. Considering the main audience of these music programs is teens, an impact of female sexualization can cause self-

sexualization or self-objectification amongst female adolescent viewers by internalizing or naturalizing the audiovisual messages in K-pop. In this respect, since female self-sexualization dehumanizes the already marginalized, if not oppressed, subject socio-culturally and politico-economically, an implication of sexualization is far reaching in Korea, where gender inequality is highest in the world. Reification or commodification of female bodies in music videos further perpetuates and maintains sexism and gender-based hierarchies in society, while indoctrinating gender-stereotypes in adolescents (Gill 2003; Szymanski, Moffitt and Carr 2010; Turner 2011).

In "I'm Your Girl," their debut song and first major hit, members of S.E.S. look innocent, cute, natural, and lively in hip-hop themed baggy, urban-style clothes with little skin exposure. With a "girl next door" look, deployment of primary colors such as blue, yellow, or red in their outfits and in the background reinforces a sense of innocence, playfulness, and energy in their personalities. With an extreme, close shot of the members' faces, the music video begins with members dancing in an all-white room, which symbolizes the group's concept of purity, innocence, and happiness. The colors of the background are mainly yellow and blue, which stand for joy, energy and happiness, and a sense of health and stability, respectively. Moreover, the bright, upbeat melody and sound make the members look happy and carefree as their faces are covered in smiles. Different hair dye colors symbolize different personalities of the members; however, they are still natural and wholesome with little to no facial makeup. The choreography is energetic, playful, and collegial with synchronized hip-hop-themed dance moves. Their bodies never bend forward enticingly with an emphasized body part, but in big and bouncy dance moves, which invite viewers to feel just as jolly and dance along. Even outside of the structured choreography, the girls playfully and innocently dance around by themselves. Their facial expressions reflect the mood of their moves.

As a visual tool to signify each member's individuality, close-ups on the singers' faces are ubiquitous, with occasional extreme close-ups on the eyes, where many glimmers of light come and go. A visual preeminence of the eye grants an illusion that the audience looks directly into the singers' eyes and knows them personally. Considering a steadfast emphasis on the eye as a window to the mind or the heart in Korean culture, the extreme close-up shots on the members' already big eyes further accentuate their innocence, purity, or warm personality to the extent that they are reified. While emphasis on the eyes is a means to characterize the members' lively personality rather than sexual objects, extreme close-up shots still focus on the body part out of the whole body, and in turn reifies it. Since "[h]appiness becomes purely discursive, covering up a diametrically opposed reality of ever increasing ill-being" due to the 1997 Crisis and subsequent SAPs mandated by the IMF (Reber 2012, 87), the lively and happy feeling in SES's music video

is a popular application of neoliberal positive psychology. In doing so, the video perpetuates an imaginary, neoliberal worldview of a perfect equity of happiness, liveliness, love, empathy, and joy in market capitalism, staving off the harsh reality of economic and social inequalities plagued by poverty, pain, and despair in perpetual crises of capitalism.

In its beginning stage, SNSD donned a uniform: They declared themselves high school students in their debut single, "Into the New World." After sporting skinny jeans with spritely primary colors in their first major hit, "Gee," SNSD proficiently fused teenage-like innocent gestures and facial expressions with sexualized, especially elongated, navy uniforms in "Genie: Tell Me Your Wish." Exclusive focus on female idols' legs is one of K-pop's unique characteristics used to sexualize female bodies, which is equivalent to revealing cleavage in the U.S. In this respect, SNSD, especially salient in "Genie: Tell Me Your Wish," skillfully exploits sexual ambiguity through appealing, young girls who are simultaneously innocent, cutesy, happy, and spritely on the one hand, and sexually seductive and provocative on the other (Jung 2013; Seabrook 2012). SNSD's "Genie" music video is ambiguous or represents a double standard of female sexuality. With a lyrical message of love and romantic relationships that basically satisfy their partners' affective desires, "Genie" retains SNSD's signature bubblegum pop. The choreography is still bouncy with lots of limb movements, which create cuteness and playfulness and revering body parts in enticing hook melodies.

Compared to S.E.S., SNSD members are obviously sexualized with tighter, revealing clothes on a dance stage; however, they still exhibit cuteness and innocence in different bedroom or party-room settings. With constantly changing, flashy color tones—mainly with red and pink—a heart-shaped light with flickering strobes emphasizes the romantic and sensual sentiment of the video. In between the flashing lights, pink is a constant color throughout the music video, representing youthfulness, excitement, and fun. With a complicated and extravagant choreography that focuses on the members' elongated legs, the video tries to underscore a collective sense of female empowerment in synchronized moves and outfits. The idols move their bodies at a slower pace and emphasize their curves within the moves. They put emphasis on their lower bodies, especially legs, pushing them outward slowly. With extreme short pants that reveal the idols' thighs and direct the audience's attention to their crotches, SNSD sings and dances seductively into the camera, while deploying suggestive gestures like winking eyes, gently resting their hands on their chests, or waving their fingers into the camera. Specifically, with elongated and revealed legs, carefully coordinated, excessive leg dance-moves further accentuate seductive uses of the idols' body parts.

SNSD's outfits are the main tool that sexualizes the members: a military uniform with shorts and high heels. Considering that these fashion items

conflate female sexuality and empowerment with post-feminism, sexualized military uniforms symbolically maintains female sexuality as what provides women with power and agency. However, a hint of innocence is still persistent with teenage-like cute behaviors and paraphernalia such as pink bedroom materials and ponytails. As visual and lyrical message indicate, the members are still confined to serving patriarchal gender norms that make females subject to male sexual fantasy, or willing agents who voluntarily satisfy sexual and affective demands of male counterparts. In this respect, the seemingly contradictory representation of the members, between sexualized catwalking mature women on the stage and pillow-fighting teenage girls at a birthday/slumber party, reaffirms female servitude: The music video begins by presenting a member as sex fairy behind a genie lamp. As the perfectly synchronized choreography symbolizes, the members are over-manufactured to appeal to the audience's diversifying cultural, yet fantastical appetite over femininity, to the extent that body parts or images are more important than other personal qualities.

As part of Generation III, K-pop's latest development, Stellar's music video of "Marionette" represents a charged sexuality from the beginning. Without any hint of cuteness or innocence and ambiguity, the music video is full of wild, sexual materials such as naked singers in the bed and the bathtub. Its choreography begins with immediate sexual dance moves: The music video itself begins with nudity. Their first dance move requires them to place emphasis on their hind parts and move in large circular motions. As this happens, their hands are behind their backs, as if they are engaging in sexual intercourse. Immediately following that, they drop their butts to the floor. Throughout the song, much of their dance moves requires them to touch themselves on their bottoms, thighs, breasts, and stomachs. They even dance as bluntly as shaking their buttocks in the camera.

The music itself is not upbeat or lively. With highly revealing outfits, the idols are portrayed as sex dolls that are fair, tall, skinny, and undressed. The video begins by showing a naked idol who is barley covered by white sheets in bed, and she tosses and turns as if she is in distress or in deep thought. As the woman moves around in the bed, the camera follows her moves with different angles to cover different parts of her body. As the video goes on, the idols and back-up dancers begin their choreography, which places an exclusive emphasis on their buttocks. In body suits, panty hose, and high-heel shoes, they swirl their hips with their hands behind their backs as if they are having sex in bondage. Once the aforementioned naked woman wakes up, she goes to take a white milk bottle out of a refrigerator in which there are many pink ones. While drinking it, she spills it from her mouth to neck, chest, and breasts. Following the liquid over her body, the video exposes the idol's cleavage extensively, which was unprecedented in K-pop music videos before it.

Clad in tight leotards, the idols' bodies are closely scrutinized as they exercise in highly provocative dance routines. Much of the choreography requires the idols to touch their own bodies, while swaying their hips seductively and caressing their chests. They sometimes bend over and touch their own thighs, going so far as to shake their butts and drop them down to the floor. The previously naked woman who spilled milk over her body is now in a bathtub, throwing her legs up with such sexual appeal. All of the choreography is based around the idols' bodies, with a lot of rubbing, caressing, thrusting, and gripping of the body. The video is full of racy tones from nudity to seductive dancing. The idols do not smile but are serious in their highly sexualized behaviors. Intense white as the video's most prevalent color helps accentuate the idols' explicit sexuality, making a high contrast to backup dancers in black. With extensive uses of close-ups or extreme close-up shots, the video portrays the idols as mere moving body parts that aim to arouse the audience's sexual desire.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: FEMALE IDOL BODIES AS NEOLIBERAL COMMODITIES

Since MTV's birth, music videos have become an ingrained core element of contemporary culture. Obviously they send many different messages with various props, outfits, dance moves, and atmospheres in a given time period. While tracing a general mode of representations in the videos as *episteme*, I extrapolate a broader cultural and societal change over time since 1997. As examined, representations of K-pop female idols have changed from a cute, innocent girl next door (S.E.S.), to an ambiguous femininity that has both cute innocence and sexualization (SNSD), to an explicit sexualization or commodification of sexuality (Stellar). These changes have corresponded to general changes in the Korean government's political-economic challenges and subsequent policies: the 1997 Financial Crisis, the KORUS FTA in 2007, and G20 Summit talks in 2010, respectively. The videos are each from a different era and appear to be a reflection of the times or *episteme*. As time progressed, women in pop videos became more sexualized. Everything about their being became increasingly used for sexual purposes.

Considering Dierdra Reber's (2012) argument that "feeling *becomes* 'thought' in a knowledge of self and world" in a neoliberal episteme (68), a general affect of liveliness, happiness, and innocence in S.E.S. and SNSD partially, perpetuates and normalizes a cultural affirmation of joy, pleasure, purity, warmth, and positivity in consumer capitalism. S.E.S. is an episteme of neoliberalism that sells what was once nonmarketable, which is innocence, purity, happiness, and liveliness. With the group, the neoliberal Korean economy has extensively and systematically marketed the traditional notion of

femininity as a commercial commodity. As the 1996 Telecommunication Act, a neoliberal deregulation of media ownership, directly caused the proliferation of aggravating pornographic media representations of female pop stars in the U.S. (Levande 2008), Korea's two voluntary neoliberal policies, the 2007 KORUS FTA and 2010 G20 Summit, have ushered in a skyrocketing intensification of sexually explicit portrayals of K-pop female idols as a cultural symptom of Korea's intensifying neoliberalization. As Korea's neoliberalization intensifies and the number of K-pop female idols multiplies, the idols' escalating competition to grasp audiences' attention has led to the images of women becoming increasingly suggestive. Consequently, taxonomy analyses of K-pop female idols have successfully investigated how the K-pop industry as Korea's signature neoliberal industry has incorporated and perpetuated neoliberal rationalities at a given time.

Chapter Five

Elusive Subjectivity of K-Pop Female Idols

Split-Personality, Narcissism, and Neo-Confucian Body Techniques in Suzy of Miss A

While chapter four examined how representations of K-pop female idols have changed over time toward explicit sexualization, this chapter analyzes how a lingering legacy of Confucian patriarchy still requires that the idols retain the traditional ideal of femininity in their already sexualized bodies. In other words, this chapter investigates how seemingly contradictory personalities of female idols, that is a co-exhibition of innocence, purity, and wholesomeness and explicit sexuality, became a major trend in female idols beyond Generation III. With a surge of female idols in the industry, competition between them gets intense, and in turn, there have been various attempts to win the audience's attention. Explicit sexuality has been salient since K-pop became one of the most lucrative cultural commodities since 2010 at the Generation III stage. However, one of the most successful female idols to date, Suzy, a member of Miss A, has exhibited an interesting character: She has been praised as an exemplar of innocent and pure femininity and a sex symbol simultaneously. While she looks innocent, cute, demure, and submissive to the extent that she is infantilized, Suzy is still sexualized and provocative: The former image was solidified by her role in a popular movie, *Architecture 101*, and the latter as a member of Miss A, whose appealing point is sexual provocation.

Contrary to a growing number of female idols and their increasing influence in society, there is a dearth of scholarly efforts to explicate intricate female sexualities in K-pop. In my preliminary research in Philadelphia and

Los Angeles, as puzzling it sounds, none of my informants was able to understand how Suzy's ambiguous personality was even possible. While there are celebrities, like Miley Cyrus or Britney Spears, who transformed themselves to sexualized, mature women from their cute, innocent girl next-door images, there is no American equivalent to Suzy, who simultaneously manages two contradictory personalities and commands fame and success. To address this seemingly inconceivable character of Suzy, I critically consider cultural and social backgrounds that led to a success of schizophrenic female subjectivity. Along with textual analyses, I examine the issue from a broader, structural condition of female subjectification in the most Confucian country in the world. In turn, I maintain Korea's patriarchy has updated and maintained its centuries-long gender relations in representations of K-pop female idols, adapting to changing social conditions since the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis.

While Roald Maliangkay (2010) once claimed K-pop lacks profanity and sex, and therefore suits the Confucian morality that led to its pan-Asian popularity, time has long changed and there are too many female idols exploiting their sexualities as a selling point. Interestingly enough, this sexualization still retains Confucian gender norms in a different guise. While sexualization is a sign of a "perceived lack of authenticity" in K-pop female idols (Unger 2015, 27), due to escalating competitions in a neoliberal society (Kim and Lowry 2005), the recurring theme of female innocence, purity, and cuteness within their sexualized bodies is an idiosyncratic feature of K-pop. Since the visual representation is conditioned by a constellation of cultural, economic, historical, and ideological forces behind the scenes by the industry's strategic planning and implementation, it warrants a critical, systematic examination to understand the K-pop's historicity and locality. While Unger (2015, 29) maintains visual appearance as "the determining factor for their commodification" is the only realm that the idols control, I maintain their appearance itself, especially their split-personality between innocence and sexuality, is designed and implemented by the industry. While girlhood is invented as a social being by consumerism (Tiqqun 2012; Weinbaum et al. 2008), the proliferation of the female idols symbolizes the two contradictory systems are converged to fulfill a new set of socioeconomic interests. In this regard, I examine how K-pop female idols, as an Althusserian ideological state apparatus, perpetuate a hegemonic appropriation of the female body as an imagined gender relationship in society. As a system of gender representation that interpellates the audience to take it as self-representation, the idols' manufactured personalities should be considered as a discursive text from which one can infer how Korea's contradictory social configurations have infiltrated in the idols' identity and representations. Since today's women "present themselves and the reactions to such presentations are among the most candid indicators of the values and mores of a generation" (Latham

2000, 1), the idols' schizophrenic personality further inscribes the country's dominant cultural and economic imperatives onto female bodies to the extent that seemingly norm-defying displays of sexualized female bodies are still in service to the *status quo*.

To this end, I dissect a "multiplicity of discourse, positions, and meanings which are often in conflict with one another and inherently (historically) contradictory" (de Lauretis 1987, x), by interrogating the concrete visual narratives behind the idols' schizophrenic representations. By recontextualizing them within the country's two most influential systems of thoughts, practices, and policies, that is patriarchism and neoliberalism, I probe the issue as a manufactured impersonation of hegemonic femininity, designed to address the society's changing needs, as Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (1981) indicate sexuality/gender is always already imbricated in society's political and economic conditions. With Susan Bordo's (1992) statement that regards the female body as a site of social control where the "central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitment of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete [corporeal] language" (13), I maintain that K-pop has embodied Korea's contemporary ideal of femininity. Focusing on the dazzling sensory effects of K-pop, which perpetuate neoliberal "narcissistic, and visually oriented culture," I examine how the culture industry is an integral part of "reasserting existing gender configurations against any attempts to shift or transform [gender] power-relations," which have grown especially with women's increasing socioeconomic participation, especially since the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis (14).

Differently put, with a powerful interplay of these two dominant ideologies that configures power relations, I examine whether the idols' split-personality carves out an alternative way to contest the condition of traditional gender domination, or still "endorse the terms of their subordination and [make them] willing, even enthusiastic, partners in that subordination" (Scott 1990, 4). Focusing on the idols' sartorial and bodily practices and their accompanying sociocultural implications, I reveal how neoliberal imperatives have infiltrated in the idols' articulations of gender and sexuality, while inculcating them to be "expected sexual personae" who are available on male sexual demand (Cook and Kaiser 2004, 223). As a concrete manifestation of different effects on a physical body, specific behaviors, and corresponding social relations (Foucault 1990), the idols "enthusiastically perform patriarchal stereotypes of sexual servility in the name of [female] empowerment" (Tasker and Negra 2007, 3). In that regard, I shed critical light on cultural politics behind the idols' split personalities, which can "train the broadest mass of people in order to create a pattern of undreamed-of dimensions" in conformative social behaviors (Kracauer 1995, 77). By doing so, I provide a better understanding of the idol's female subjectivity as a sociocultural con-

struction of multiple, contradicted interests in their spectacularly intelligible bodies.

K-POP FEMALE IDOLS: CORPOREAL REPRESENTATION OF GENDER RELATIONS

The split-personality of the female idols is a persistent subtext of the country's master narrative of gender hierarchies, which reflects a "fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies" about it (Jameson 1981, 34). Since every representation is a reconstruction of political fantasy that arises from actual and potential social relations (Jameson 1995), and more specifically, "construction of gender is both the product and the process of its representation" (de Lauretis 1987, 5), K-pop female idols are a sociocultural text that manifests their condition of existence in the nation's political-economic and historical contexts. In other words, since sexuality is constituted by power, and power is maintained by the practice of sexuality (Foucault 1980, 1990), the idols' split personalities should be understood through the nation's dominant power structure, which is a nexus between patriarchy and neoliberalism. However, since any imagery is a product of an "ongoing contest of representations between opposing social forces" (Kellner 1995; 2002, 85), its polysemy can be both transformative and a sophisticated disguise, and in turn, should be critically examined in its cultural, economic, and political contexts of production. While the idols can promote female empowerment through creating their own styles and subjectivity, they must be understood in their artificiality manufactured by the industry.

For example, analyzing the Tiller Girls' synchronized choreography, Kracauer (1995) indicates the female performers' precision, regularity, orderliness, and extravagancy in movements are mass ornaments that materialize the instrumental/technological rationality of capitalism, which "reflects that of the entire contemporary situation" (78). In this respect, as much as the "hands of the factory correspond to the legs of the Tiller Girls" (79), K-pop female idols' split personalities embody how their subjectivity has been conditioned by the society's changing needs in a continuity between Confucian gender hierarchy and neoliberal commodification of sexuality. Thus, I claim the idols are a neoliberal mass ornament that performs the "aesthetic reflex of the rationality to which the prevailing economic system aspires," that is total commodification of female subject (79). In other words, visual representations of K-pop female idols host a set of contradictions and ambiguity; thus, reading them as cultural texts in either an incompetently positive or negative manner will risk being trapped in the industry's commercial strategy of selling the image or neglecting their active, hegemonic nature.

As examined in chapter two, women's place in Korea is still subject to the to traditional gender hierarchy, and their incongruous status has been ingrained in the nation's pursuit of capitalist modernization. In this context, K-pop female idols' schizophrenic personality is a hegemonic mode of femininity caught between patriarchal gender hierarchy and neoliberal commodification of female sexuality. A schizophrenic structure of female identity thus exhibits the social condition of female lives under the two distinct worldviews at the same time: They are required to be innocent, cute, and submissive patriarchal women, and active, hypersexualized practitioners of neoliberalism. In turn, this rigid, double confinement of female identity does not grant any room for Korean women to construct their own autonomous subjectivity: At one limit, failing to achieve individual development, a woman behaves obediently, submissively, and subjectlessly like a little girl, and on the other, she acts as a temptress and preaches neoliberalism. Thus, the schizophrenic character of K-pop is a symptomatic revelation of the K-pop industry's sociocultural side-effect as a neoliberal update of an old Confucian formula that takes advantage of female bodies and sexuality in the name of national development.

SPLIT PERSONALITIES OF FEMALE K-POP IDOLS

Using Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatari's notion of schizophrenia for a deconstructed identity to trespass patriarchal capitalism, feminist scholars endeavor to claim alternative sexual identities (Baker 2010; Braidotti 2003; 2006; Griffin 2004; Griffin et al. 2013; Renold and Ringrose 2011; Walkerdine 2003). While agreeing with their purpose, I argue advocating schizophrenic deconstruction as social discourse is one thing, and suggesting it as a "psychological proposition underlying the existence of the self and the political space" is quite another (Eagleton 2008; Glass 1993, 14). Neither does it provide any transformative tool to dismantle the unified patriarchal subject, nor do schizophrenic selves have anything "in common with selves deconstructed in texts" (Glass 1993, 14). Rather, schizophrenics suffer from insurmountable physical and psychological pain to the extent that they are "encumbered by abandonment, isolation, coldness, and death" (13).

To address this misconstruction, I reposition the schizophrenic female sexuality as a hegemonic construction to reproduce the traditional gender identity in neoliberal capitalism. Considering subject and its identity are a concrete product of an *episteme* that is a constellation of discourse, knowledge, and power (Foucault 1980, 1984, 1990, 1994, 1995, 2008), I examine how the schizophrenic personalities of K-pop female idols have simultaneously incorporated multiple modalities of social controls. As a cultural commodity produced by specific sets of economic and social interests, the idols'

split personalities are an embodiment of the industry's response to increasing economic, political, and social challenges since the 1997 Crisis.

In other words, considering female subjectivity is configured through a complex interaction between symbolic and material conditions in society (Braidotti 2003, 2006), I attribute the idols' schizophrenic personalities to Confucian gender hierarchy and neoliberal sexualization. While femininity has been configured in the "deployment of standardized visual images" (17), Bordo's (1992) notion of "'double-bind' that legislates contradictory ideals and directives" between being obedient and self-mastery (18) has been appropriated to address Korea's patriarchal locality that demands the idols be sexually innocent, cute, and demure, and play hypersexual and provocative roles simultaneously in the K-pop industry. This dual, contradictory demand has intensified patriarchy's "totally other-oriented emotional economy" (18) to satisfy male affective and sexual needs. By doing so, the patriarchal affective economy exhausts and appropriates the counter-hegemonic potential of women's increasing economic and social participation since the 1997 Crisis into the service of maintaining the patriarchal *status quo*. In its double-bindedness, which is traditionally Confucian and contemporarily neoliberal, pure/innocent and sexual, as a marketing strategy for commodified differences in the industry, the schizophrenic female personality further constrains a possibility of alternative thoughts and behaviors in women. As a popular agent of daily gender experiences in the country, the idols exercise a new set of sexual norms and values, which renew the traditional ones. In this "schizoid double-pull" (Braidotti 2006) of femininity, K-pop female idols are marketed as a result of the industry's commodification of the previously concealed in the domestic domain while keeping the established patriarchal code of female conducts and mainstreaming neoliberal sexualization. Thus, contrary to Emma Renold and Jessica Ringrose (2011) finding that teenage girls' trespassing consumptions of sexualized media culture are "schizoid pushes and pulls" (403), I redirect a critical attention to neoliberal consumer culture that conditions female audiences to practice schizophrenic gender norms in their daily lives. In this industry-induced schizophrenic female sexuality, women have less room to navigate "girls' more porous molecular movements which permeate and trouble molar lines" (403).

In reality, the female idols' split personalities are a corporeal representation of "sexualized territory offered to the gaze of the dominant power" (Choi 1998, 26). It is a reaffirmation of Korean patriarchy by legitimizing female subordination, being innocent, cute, and submissive, and naturalizing neoliberal imperatives that female bodies are commodities. Thus, the K-pop female idols' schizophrenic personality is a strategic outcome of the K-pop industry for its instrumental functionalities. It boosts neoliberal affective economy that monetizes an imaginary feeling of male superiority, which audiences achieve by watching the idols play innocence, cuteness. Simulta-

neously, it updates and reinforces a gender-based, exploitative human relationship under capitalism. As much as female bodies and sexuality were mobilized to accumulate foreign capital for national development since the Korean War (Jager 2003; K. Moon 1997), they are still manipulated fashionably to legitimate masculinist development. The more the idols' cute and innocent behavior are highlighted, the more their sexualization is visually salient: The further female bodies are displayed as a neoliberal commodity, the further they need to validate traditional gender norms and expectations to maintain the dominant cultural and social *status quo* in the nation. In sum, as Teresa de Lauretis (1987) indicates a female subject is formulated by a "multiplicity of discourses, positions and meanings which are often in conflict with one another" (x), the split personalities of K-pop female idols are a carnal imprint of a cacophonous negotiation between the traditional mode of gender oppression and the current economic hegemony of neoliberalism.

NARCISSISM AND EXPLICIT CORPOREAL VISUALITY IN THE FEMALE IDOLS

Considering Annie Reich's (1960) contention that there is a connection between narcissism and low self-esteem, for the former results from arrested self-development that leads to the latter, the idols' hypersexuality can be understood as a visual note of their "compensatory narcissistic self-inflation." Likewise, Stanley Coen (1981) indicates sexualization is a narcissistic defensive mechanism that is "extensively elaborated defensive use of sexual behavior and fantasy" whose goals and functions are not geared to subjective sexual pleasure or satisfaction (893). However, since hypersexuality is due to low self-esteem, they tend to push hypersexuality even further in order to compensate their damaged self-esteem when they fail to get due recognition from others. From an obsession with sexual innocence due to lack of a cohesive, well-developed subjectivity, women can turn to hypersexuality to disguise themselves as matured female subjects and receive others' recognition. This vicious cycle drags the K-pop female idol into a humiliating stage enactment of pornographic dance moves, which results in "voracious [narcissistic] absorption in self needs and the block of their fulfillment" (Sennett 2017, 10). In turn, this somatic dimension of female narcissism distorts a notion of sexuality by "enshrining of the body as an absolute sexual state" and in turn reifying sexual experiences as a mere "market exchange of intimacies" (11). In this regard, a neoliberal commodification of female sexuality works well in patriarchal Korean society, where woman are insecure and ask "obsessive questions of whether I am good enough, whether I am adequate" to conform to the trend (T. Kim 2003; Sennett 2017, 14). However, the most devastating social implication of narcissistic women who exer-

cise a never-ending search for immediate gratification is that their restlessness not only "prevents that gratification from occurring" (Sennett 2017, 274), but also makes them further conform to and remain uncritical of the *status quo*. A social toll of being women carries a burden of constantly observing others' outfits and behaviors to conform, and furthermore, being aware of being watched by others. This double gaze, or internalized gaze, keeps women vulnerable to changing imperatives of society's cultural, economic, and political needs. For this reason, instead of coming up with their own sexuality and subjectivity, the female idols just practice the industry's demand and their lack of voice and opinion further put them in a narcissistic mental status, which can only be overcome by others' attention (Lasch 1979).

While women have to continuously refashion themselves to achieve an autonomous, self-invented subject in this vicious subjectification (Rose 1998), a phenomenal success of K-pop female idols should be reconsidered in the context of women's precarious socioeconomic conditions where "upward mobility becomes a central trope of . . . building upon the long-established incitement to women to become producers of themselves as objects of the gaze" (Walkerdine 2003, 242). Pathologically speaking, women who fail to develop subjectivity, they tend not to be able to control their sexuality, but face an unending split between childish sexual innocence and hypersexuality. While they had to be "modest and submissive [in sexuality], but also strong and responsible" for domestic matters in a traditional society (Deuchler 1992, 259), the idols now have to be sexually provocative as well as cute and innocent in their public images. In this regard, the idols are classified largely as either conforming to or rebelling against this new stereotype, just as traditional women were "remembered either for their perfect enactment of [Confucian] roles or for their rebellion against them" (281). In this perplexing schizophrenic bifurcation, both the idols and the audience get trapped in an unavoidable gap between the ideal and the reality, which leads them to daily conflicts in coming to a sense of their identity and subjectivity. For this reason, there are many K-pop idols who have developed psychological disorders (Allkpop 2017).

In traditional Confucian Korea, where sons virtually monopolize parents' attention and care, a daughter receives parental supports as far as her talent is recognized and appreciated for upgrading the family's reputation and wealth. With her responsibility for filial piety, she tends to do her best so that she can retain their attention and support. However, since the traditional realms of power and success such as business, politics, and government are not open broadly enough to them, girls are prone to exploit opportunities in entertainment and service sectors to advance their status. By the same token, as a condition for success and popularity, K-pop female idols have to internalize and embody the patriarchal principle for serving the authorities and elders.

For example, Sejeong Kim of a female girl group, I.O.I., received a big applause when she mentioned she would attribute her success to her mother and grandparents so that she could honor their care and support in her family's difficult past (Y. Baek 2016). Likewise, Suzy of Miss A has also been complimented on her filial piety by paying off her parents' debt and buying them a house and a car. In this respect, in addition to their physical appeal, K-pop female idols have to exhibit their conformation to the patriarchal order. Furthermore, female idols have to always show their best respect to their fans and audiences no matter when and where: otherwise, they become subject to public outcry and criticism for their "inconsiderate" behaviors (Hyun 2013). When Yerin of Girl Friend caught a hidden surveillance camera on a male fan's eyeglasses, she had to make a formal apology for offending his feelings (S. Baek 2017). However, male idols are immune to this criticism even when they are not respectful to older female fans or the audience. Furthermore, in order to confirm the public's demand for their conformity, the female idols have to show their earnest efforts and sincerity to exhibit their talent no matter what stage conditions are. Showing the public that they are doing their very best is a mere condition to win their attention. On the other hand, when a girl idol does not seem to show her commitment to the show or makes a mistake during the performance, she becomes subject to audience's bullying: On YouTube, when one searches for keywords involving K-pop dance failure or accidents, the results are mainly about female idols.

SEXUALIZED BODIES IN K-POP: FEMALE BODY TECHNOLOGY IN NEOLIBERAL PATRIARCHY

With a changed focus of economic activities from manufacturing industry to affective, service businesses, sexually provocative representations signify how the culture industry capitalizes the personal attributes of affect and sexuality by taking them to the public sphere of work and productivity, as examined in chapter four. In the K-pop industry, the sexual and the economic coincide and correspond each other to (re)produce and proliferate a patriarchal order of economic development: The female idol's split personality is a result of it.

While girlhood itself has been commodified in late capitalism (Cortese 2016), the K-pop industry pushes an envelope by not only sexualizing underage female idols but also presenting adult females as sexualized little girls. While women's "value" decreases as they grow old (Cook and Kaiser 2004), they, in a competition against underage idols, have to look like little girls who can sell a submissive image to male audiences. In that respect, as a mode of neoliberal gender technology, the idol's split personality "unsettle[s]

or even overthrow[s] the contrast between normative feminine respectability as an aspirational category and the 'sluttish' agentic sexuality" (Griffin et al. 2013, 198). They were presented as if they exert hypersexuality as a means of self-fulfillment and as if they enjoy being cute and innocent as a means of expressing inner selves. This is how neoliberal body technology regulates women by instilling a false sense of agency, as though being free to choose her own identity occludes structural conditions (Rose 1990, 1998).

While Confucian education used rigorous regimens to inscribe "the ideals of a male-oriented society" (Deuchler 1992, 258), neoliberalism exploits the glossy visual dimensions of the idols' performances to achieve the same pedagogic goal. The female idols' sheer ubiquity is likely to consume people's attention and consciousness, "while the production and mindless consumption of the ornamental patterns divert them from the imperatives to change the reigning order" (Kracauer 1995, 85). Furthermore, since the most desirable female code of conduct is conformity (T. Kim 2003), K-pop music videos' ample affective power interpellates the audience to conform to what is shown attractively. Pairing seamless choreography with well-matched outfits between members, the idols visually represent the Confucian canon of female conformity and harmony in their designated places, as examined in chapter two. Considering women are subjectless bodies, whose existence mainly lies in their physicality, a "synchronization of body movement in choreographed routines" (Unger 2015, 33) is a corporeal visualization of their conformity to and internalization of Confucianism *en masse*. This obsessive visualization of harmony combined with hypersexualization of female bodies further conditions women to internalize the patriarchal demand of being sexually available and being aware of being observed. With easy, repeated moves to follow, such as moving to hooks and beats in a synchronized manner to the extent that the fans "incorporat[e] the music into their bodies" (33), the idols' choreography further facilitates audiences' internalization of patriarchal conformity when performed at clubs or producing dance cover videos on YouTube.

Uniforms fulfill disciplinary functions on bodies by addressing a society's needs in a given time as well as exhibiting masculine authority, power, and sexuality (Craik 2003; Wills 2000). Likewise, a ubiquity of sexualized uniforms in K-pop further indicates a patriarchal demand on female bodies that is affective, obedient, corporeal, and symbolic. As a symbol of female workers' affective, immaterial labor in the neoliberal country, the female idols in uniforms aim to homogenize female subjectivity. The purpose is to regulate them as an erotic spectacle, because female bodies in uniforms must not be threatening to the nation's patriarchy. In other words, as a cultural police activity to reclaim masculine authority, a spectacle of the idols in uniforms is a reactionary response to women's growing presence and influence from a sudden abundance of female workers.

ELUSIVE SEXUALITY OF SUZY: FROM "GOOD GIRL, BAD GIRL" TO "HUSH"

As an optic that allows a critical investigation into "otherwise concealed or forgotten connections with the past" (Jager 2003, xi), I examine whether or not, the representation of Suzy's split personality contributes to a "subjective construction of gender . . . [opening] a possibility of agency and self-determination" (de Lauretis 1987, 9). To that end, I reconsider the three most important moments in her career as one of the most successful K-pop female idols to date: her debut as a member of Miss A with the song "Good Girl, Bad Girl" in 2010, her movie debut with a surprising box-office performance in *Architecture 101* in 2012, and her comeback success in the K-pop industry with the song "Hush" in 2013. Each contributed to her increasing fame, expanding her opportunities to exhibit her split personality between pure, innocent, and cute femininity, and explicit sexuality.

Considering that female bodies in Confucian Korea used to be fully covered and confined to the domestic sphere, dancing female bodies in tight, revealing clothes like bodysuits, shorts, and short skirts decorated with laces display their changed status nowadays. This transformation is distinctive in "Bad Girl, Good Girl," where the idols dance in a school setting. Donning all black or black/white clothes with natural-looking makeup as a symbol of their effort to defy expectations of traditional femininity, the idols assume an aggressive attitude toward a male counterpart in their acts: They hit a boy student in the shoulder, brush off the contacted area with contemptuous looks, and then step on his fallen books. The choice of color in their outfits indicates their desire for power, authority, or dominance over the male counterpart. While female affects used to be channeled to address male emotional demand, the idols do not show any facial expressions, showing that they do not care about the male gaze on them. Rather, claiming how they look does not represent what they are, the idols declare their own (sexual) subjectivity. Dancing in a provocative manner in a ballet studio where "good girls" normally practice the feminine arabesque in classical music, Miss A appropriates the conventionally perceived womanly behaviors and proclaims they are "bad girls" who do not conform to traditional femininity. Making direct eye contact with the camera, the idols look stern and strong while emitting a sense of rebellion against the patriarchal gaze. The song's lyrics blame men for judging girls by their looks: The lyrics read "On the outside, I'm a Bad Girl. On the inside, I'm a Good Girl. You don't even know me well, you only look at me from the outside." In sum, while still sexualized, the idols' powerful dance routines seem to convey a visual message of female empowerment.

While the video ostensibly depicts the idols as a sexually assertive subjects, cautious analyses of the outfits and choreography reveal a different

layer of meanings behind their audiovisual seduction. They promote a *dubious* practice of female liberation from the patriarchy: They promote an unexplained aggression or bullying toward a fellow male student, which falls back into a traditional characteristic of masculine behaviors. The seamless, well-synchronized choreography in a line format indicates a dominant rationality of control and manipulation in patriarchy. While there are occasions of individualized dance moves, all the group members eventually come to conform to a pre-determined, collective theme of corporeal arrangement and exhibition, which is conditioned and determined by their agency. To be more specific, when an individual member is spotlighted in a given shot, she is highly sexualized with more provocative outfits and even more provocative dance moves. In other words, either individually or collectively, the idols reproduce the dominant patriarchal gender hierarchy through sexualization and group *conformity*. While their abrupt, dramatized dance moves could symbolize their desire to depart from oppressive gender norms, these moves give way to sexually charged actions, such as groping their own bodies, dropping down, rolling on the floor, and thrusting and gyrating their bottoms, and in turn contribute to perpetuating and maintaining the male-oriented female sexual conduct to satisfy male corporeal desires. Certain body parts rather than the whole body are emphasized, especially the idols' bottoms and bosoms that shake, swing and gyrate; they have been emphasized to reify the idols' physicality. In this respect, their unconventional choreography is not to liberate their sexuality but update and reaffirm the male-oriented dominant sexuality.

While the message of the lyrics seems to represent a female perspective of male hypocrisy, they do not present an alternative notion of their femininity other than indicating that males do not know them. To be more specific, the lyrical message that the members of Miss A are simultaneously good girls and bad girls seems to admit they perform schizophrenic subjects who have to address male demand situationally. In other words, without manifesting why and how their "bad girl" behavior promotes a subjective female sexuality, Miss A rather capitalizes on male sexual hypocrisy by indicating they are "bad girls" who serve the male sexual fantasy as a means of achieving their fame and popularity. Since their effort to claim their subjectivity is still confined to physicality and seductive action, which were conditioned by patriarchal industry practices and structure, the idols' endeavor unfortunately feeds back to the dominant, hypocritical sexuality in a reverse-benefit mode. The lyrics read: "I'm something new. Why can't you see? . . . Drop it like a bad girl. Love like a good girl." This is exactly how Suzy of Miss A has been celebrated for her elusive identity that simultaneously retains a symbol of purity, innocence, and whole-heartedness as the nation's First Love and a sexy queen of K-pop. As for coordination of outfits and makeup between the idols, there is still an ambiguity between the black clothes that aim to repre-

sent female empowerment or dominance and light makeup which retain a symbol of purity and innocence. While dance moves and lyrics try to promote aggressive female subjectivity, the general tone of the music video is rather soft and gentle with the warm color temperature of the setting. Consequently, in the affective economy of K-pop, the idols take advantage of the neoliberal logic of marketing the nonmarketable, which demands that sexualized femininity survive in today's hyper-capitalism.

Shortly after "Good Girl, Bad Girl," which established Miss A's fame through aggressive female sexuality, Suzy was introduced to the movie industry. Playing a role as a piano major freshman in the movie, *Architecture 101*, she became a national sensation with her "staged" image of innocence, purity, and wholesomeness as the national icon of First Love, and contributed to the movie's success. Actually the movie is full of patriarchal messages in a high production value: In the movie, Suzy was abandoned by her First Love, who thought she lost her virginity to another college student. Whether it was true or not, her First Love's suspicion was good enough for a breakup. Since the movie became a national sensation, the nation's obsession with female chastity and decency got renewed. Now, Suzy became an exemplar for the nation's pure, wholesome female subjectivity.

With the surge of Suzy's fame and success, Miss A released a new music video, "Hush," in 2013, and it is much more carnal in its visual and lyrical message, in which the idols unapologetically manifest they are "bad girls." The song is all about a "secret party" that insinuates sexual activities. Opening with a flood in the room, insinuating that the idols are fully mature to the extent that they are "wet," the video visually lavishes sexual allusions and references. In risqué sartorial materials such as body chains, tight leather pants, and high heels, the idols wear drastic makeup with eye-catching red lipstick on their game-faces. With many occasions of touching themselves, bouncing, pumping, and crouching in sexual poses, the choreography is explicitly filled with sexual messages. The idols claim a direct, demanding sexuality: "Kiss kiss kiss baby. Hush hush hush baby. Hot hot make it hot, and melt me. Give it to me, give it to me oh." Their bodily and lyrical messages further complicate and perpetuate the dominant sexuality that reifies females as sex objects.

In K-pop, what the idols can claim for female empowerment is to push an envelope further to the extent that they shock the audience to create an illusion of power and autonomy. In other words, the idols reproduce the patriarchal hegemony of female empowerment as long as they stay within the dominant gender hierarchy. While it is obvious that Miss A presents a rather aggressive femininity in their lyrical, physical, and visual measures challenging conventionally quiet, obedient, passive, and chaste femininity, they are still within a safe realm of the patriarchal discourse or desire of femininity and sexuality. Despite a hint of individuality with varied hair dye and colors

of clothes, visual conformity to femininity is evident to the extent that all four women have slender bodies of a similar height and fair skin. The idols do not have their own sexual subjectivity; it can only be fulfilled by a male presence or male sexual desire: "Hurry hurry boy. I want you." The idols' aggressive sexuality feeds the male sexual ego, and the lyrics reaffirm the hegemonic, passive femininity in a guise of aggressive sexuality: "I can't stand it, I can't take it, my heart palpitates, I can't keep straight." It is in this very ambiguity that the video further perpetuates hegemonic patriarchy while giving a false sense of female subjectivity and empowerment.

When "Good Girl, Bad Girl" was released, Suzy was fifteen years old and the youngest female idol at her debut, and has been one of the most successful idols with her ambivalent image mixed both with innocence/purity and sexuality. In "Good Girl, Bad Girl," she wears a tutu-like skirt, and seems to be less revealing than other members. However, since she has elongated legs, the skirt does not cover her body well, but attracts more attention to her body whenever it waves and exposes her thigh. Especially when combined with her milky, porcelain skin, the black dress accentuates Suzy's physical attractiveness. This visual contradiction gets more salient when her ponytail hair with bangs, which is typical to teenage girls, is incorporated in the sexualized visuals, especially with explicit sexual moves, such as holding buttocks and swinging them sideways, and a pelvic thrust on the floor. This is how her slippery image gets solidified when her wholesome physical attributes retain sexual connotations and attractions by being propped in "Good Girl, Bad Girl." Later, in a similar manner, Suzy harks back to a visuality of purity and innocence in the hypersexualized theme of "Hush." Especially in the subway car scene of "Hush," Suzy holds a giant lollipop and wears a white long-sleeve turtleneck sweater, which gives another layer of reified innocence and childhood purity, and this fetishism is revealing when Suzy sits upright and stiff with no facial expression, like a china doll. While Suzy bites to break the candy tuned in a lyric, "I can't hold it in any more," she becomes fully sexualized, inviting male sexual fantasy of violating innocence. In "Good Girl, Bad Girl," Suzy is the most sexualized in a sophisticated and teasing way; however, she is the most innocent and wholesome in "Hush" for the exact same reason—that is, her elusive sexuality.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: SECOND SEX FOR K-POP FEMALE IDOLS?

As examined so far, the female idols are simultaneously empowered and disempowered in the K-pop industry. As much as they are enabled by their presence in the K-pop industry, they are still subject to the traditional gender norms, albeit updated and ameliorated by neoliberal market logic. The

schizophrenic personality is a salient example that materializes how their subjectivity has been distorted to conform to the patriarchal gender values and expectations and to market to an ephemeral taste of consumers in neoliberal hyper-capitalism. Cuteness makes the idols weaker than the (male) audiences, and allows consumers to enjoy their imaginary power while assuming sexual gratification. By doing so, it perpetuates the patriarchal value system which demands women be kind, gentle, decent, delicate, and in need of care as well as sexually available. The old formulas of Confucian gender hierarchy do not work as they used to nowadays due to modernization: With neoliberal market imperatives as a strange bedfellow, the old formula conspires to create a marketization/commodification of everything as far as it is sellable in the name of national and economic development. Thus, the schizophrenic personality of the idols is an emergent allegory of patriarchal gender exploitation in neoliberal *modus operandi*.

In this respect, the K-pop industry fashionably complicates Simone de Beauvoir's classic lament on women's subjectless ontological condition in patriarchal capitalist society: "Humanity is male, and man defines women, not in herself, but in relation to himself" (2015, 7). In the capital and labor-intensive industry where all the decisions are made by male business leaders, the female idols are enacted. No matter how capable, independent, flashy, and desirable the female idols appear, their astronomical ascendance is no more than "symbolic agitation; they have won only what men have been willing to concede to them" (11). De Beauvoir claims that bourgeois women lack solidarity with female proletarians to transform the patriarchy but ally with male bourgeois: Likewise, rather than taking an action against the industry's slave-like contracts and harsh treatment of trainees and idols, Korean mothers contribute to a surge of wannabe girls who provide the industry with raw resources and an excuse for unjust treatment. Due to a long habituation with patriarchy, many women have assumed and exercised men's point of view on female realities in society, and K-pop female idols are a recent exemplar that further reproduces the gender *status quo* that conditions women to internalize a patriarchal female ideal who is frivolous, infantile, inferior, subjugated, and demure. In this adverse ontological condition, the idols are to perform schizophrenic femininity conflated between innocence/purity/cuteness and explicit sexuality in a narcissistic manner.

Being successful as K-pop female idols seems to promise they can live both like a man enjoying stardom in the industry and like a woman devouring fashionable glamour of facial beauty and fancy clothes that feed their narcissistic indulgence. As pseudo subjectivity, the idols' split personalities are a visual representation of women's place in the neoliberal affective economy of K-pop in the patriarchal nation, where they have to capitalize on their manufactured appearance and personality, that is, "narcissistic defects: [they] will appear vain, touchy and a phoney; [they] will treat the whole world as a

stage" (de Beauvoir 2015, 57). As a mass ornament that exhibits a functional dynamic of society and intermediates a narcissistic nature of appearances, they perpetuate a sterile vanity of female subjectivities that does not construct herself, but maintains clichés and stereotypes. While conformity is the most desirable female quality in patriarchy, representations of the idols as a culmination of male fantasia that is visually pleasing and sexually arousing is depleting the female sociological imagination for gender equality and justice. This fake or empty entitlement of the idols originates from a barbed process of female subjectification where they are not allowed to "stand in front of man as a subject but as an object paradoxically endowed with subjectivity . . . as both *self* and *other*" (75, emphasis original).

Chapter Six

Resilience, Positive Psychology, and Subjectivity in K-Pop Female Idols

Evolution of Girls' Generation from "Into the New World" (2007) to "All Night" (2017)

As a continuation of chapter five's argument that female subjectivity has been manipulated to conform to patriarchal gender values and expectations, this chapter examines how K-pop promotes resilience as governmentality that asks women to endure their misfortune, troubles, pains, and other adversaries under neoliberalism. Since the onset of the Reagan administration with its neoliberal deregulation drives, and especially with a recent financial crisis of 2008, resilience has become a common stock of individuals' knowledge and common sense. Defined as the capacity to recover quickly from crisis or difficulty, resiliency has been integral to a neoliberal reconstruction of society. Along with a deregulation of state policies and growing economic and security uncertainties, especially since the 2001 terrorist attack, the resilience discourse has become a code word for a "strategy of permanent, open-ended responsiveness, integrating emergency preparedness into the infrastructures of everyday life and the psychology of citizens" (Walker and Cooper 2011, 154). In other words, perpetuating resiliency as individuals' ideal code of conducts in the face of ever-deteriorating living conditions, neoliberalism tries to complete its transformative project that aims to permeate market value and rationality into every realm of human life, as Harvey (2005) indicates. When a crisis "constitutes a new ontology of life, then resilience has become a monotonous characteristic of *everything*" (Duffield 2012, 481).

While resilience discourse has been a staple subject in various disciplines like international relations, socioeconomic policies, business management

(especially to justify financial deregulation), urban planning, public health, and national security, to name a few (Brassett, Croft, and Vaughan-Williams 2013; Duffield 2012; Walker and Cooper 2011), there is a dearth of literature that deals with how popular music promotes it in individuals' everyday lives, except for James's (2015) study. A theme of resilience is pervasive in popular music videos, and disguises subjugation and oppression as a necessity for individuals' growth and development: "*Resilience discourse is what ties contemporary pop music aesthetics to neoliberal capitalism and racism/sexism*" (James 2015, 6, emphasis original). In a reactionary application of Nietzschean self-mastery through hardship, neoliberalism has appropriated resilience as a rite of passage for individuals to become neoliberal subjects, *homo economicus*. With a therapeutic narrative of overcoming a damage/obstacle that will increase human capital, resilience becomes an ideal personal quality that helps construct a self-reflexive, actualizing, and enterprising neoliberal subject.

With the birth of MTV, popular music videos have become one of the most influential tools to spread and normalize the dominant ideology. By their ubiquity and entertainment properties, they have been an effective means of neoliberal biopolitics. On the other hand, compared to a growing scholarly attention to K-pop's impact in Korea and other countries, there is *no* research on how the music promotes neoliberal governmentality in a pleasurable, affective manner. To fill this intellectual void, I investigate how the K-pop music video carries visual messages of resilience, and how K-pop female idols perpetuate governmentality via their affect-charged visuality and in turn help audiences construct their resilient subjectivity.

As one of the most successful K-pop idols (the most among the female idols) to date, SNSD has been ubiquitous from performance stage, to commercial endorsements, to governmental events, and in turn influential in many aspects of individuals' lives (Ahn 2011). Under the theme of female empowerment, SNSD made a debut in 2007 with "Into the New World," which fantasizes a promise of female success as far as they maintain the goals and keep trying. While SNSD enjoys fandom evenly from various demographics, female audiences in their teens and twenties are the most avid followers of the group. While commercializing traditional feminine characteristics such as cuteness, playfulness, and modesty, SNSD has been influential in a subjectivation process of both female adolescents and young women. In the music video of "Into the New World," SNSD valorizes resilience as a key to success, replacing institutional/structural issues with a matter of individual attributes/character traits, brushing off the concerns, troubles, and struggles of the majority of women in Korea. Interestingly enough, female students of a local women's college in Korea used the song as a protest agitation song in 2016. After decorated successes as the "National Idol" of K-pop, SNSD released its 10th anniversary album on August 4, 2017. In "All

Night," SNSD members nostalgically share their experiences, thoughts, and appreciations regarding their ten-year careers. The music video provides the audience with emotional or imaginary gratification by showing how girls who used to be told to be passive, obedient, and inferior get over all the obstacles and become successful in their careers.

Considering emotion is an essential element of the neoliberal economy (Vrasti 2011) and what Elaine Campbell (2010) indicates involves "emotionalities of rule" as technology of the self that is enacted and realized on and by emotional terms and stakes, I examine how SNSD's music videos emphasize emotional dimensions of the idols' resiliency as a normative sensibility of neoliberal female subjectivity, and legitimate the *status quo* of patriarchal capitalism. As a cultural mechanism to reproduce female complacency and subjugation, the female idols instigate audiences' desire to be successful as an emotional technology of self-realization. In this respect, the videos can be considered as a popular mode of "affective technologies for constituting [neoliberal] subjectivities" (Campbell 2010, 51). In this regard, I investigate how the videos normalize neoliberal "feminine subjects [who] are expected to overcome the burdens traditionally associated with femininity . . . [in] emotional and affective labor on oneself and one's corporeal schema" (James 2015, 82). By doing so, I examine how visual messages of female resilience as a cultural embodiment of governmentality naturalize a neoliberal order, a privatization of systematic problems in society, since female resilience discourse shifts one's consideration from a "dynamics of systems to emphasising individual responsibility, adaptability and preparedness" (Joseph 2013, 40).

FEMINISM IN NEOLIBERAL SOCIETY: RESILIENCE, POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY, AND CULTURE INDUSTRY

In this section, I elaborate Catherine Rottenberg's (2014) commentary on why neoliberalism promotes feminism by examining how resilience discourse maintains and perpetuates an exploitation of female workers in precarious labor relations. Despite unjust treatments in employment, compensation, and promotion opportunities, women have become an integral part of capitalism, especially the neoliberal service economy. Defined as a "systematic, widespread, organizational, structural and personal strengthening of subjective and material arrangements" against any disequilibrium or disturbance (Lentzos and Rose 2009, 243), resilience is not only a technology of the self, but also an organizational rationality of society. As a historical outcome of structural conditions like cultural traditions, social conventions, and governmental policies (Walsh-Dilley and Wolford 2015), resilience has been "forged and sustained through the repeated [mundane] exercises" of

individuals' everyday lives (Zebrowski 2013, 161). As a hegemonic ploy to keep female workers in the unfair labor market by perpetuating their positive imageries (Humphreys 2015), popular culture has perpetuated a dramatic success story of the oppressed, as exemplified by Oprah Winfrey's case. In this respect, women's "being resilient is to accept responsibility for one's individual position in a complex social fabric that is insecure by design" (Evans and Reid 2013, 94). As Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatte (2002) indicate that resilience is "the basic ingredient to happiness and success" (1), resilience has been promoted as a desirable attribute of underpaid, precarious workers: The more she is vulnerable, the more she has to be resilient to survive. Therefore, resilience is "most concerned with those deemed most vulnerable," and a key strategy "in the creation of contemporary regimes of power which hallmark vast inequalities in all human classifications" (Evans and Reid 2013, 92).

As a regulatory mechanism of governmentality that intersects microtechnology of subjectivation and macro-technology of institutional and structural subjectification (Dean 2010; Foucault 1991; Rose 1998, 1999a), resilience discourse aims to condition individuals as self-responsibilized neoliberal subjects. With its emphasis on individuals' adaptability, tenacity, and perseverance against externally imposed changes like economic crises, resilience has been promoted as an ethical ideal of neoliberal subjects and their self-governance (Brassett, Croft, and Vaughan-Williams 2013; Chandler 2013; Duffield 2012; Evans and Reid 2013; Joseph 2013; O'Malley 2010; Walker and Cooper 2011; Zebrowski 2013). The neoliberal illusion of autonomy, freedom, and self-help conceals structural and institutional constraints against women since they are "required, to a greater degree than men, to be engaged in improving and transforming the self" (Baker 2010, 188). With resiliency, individuals are asked to be responsible for the quality and success of their lives, embracing and overcoming risks and uncertainties by adapting and exploiting to their advantage in situations of uncertainty. On the other hand, by "emergency opportunities that disorder inevitably creates" (Duffield 2012, 480), resilience discourse normalizes what Naomi Klein (2008) calls disaster capitalism. In this respect, as an "optimized technique of the self" (O'Malley 2010, 500), resilience is a part of neoliberalism's grand marketization of society, by naturalizing unstable and risky economic, social, and political environments and asking individuals to deal with them by themselves (Lentzos and Rose 2009). Put differently, resiliency is promoted in the face of growing economic inequalities and injustices in neoliberal capitalism, and in turn, functions as a contemporary technology of self-government.

As an attribute to resilience, a proper emotional state is promoted and legitimated during a governmental process of "producing certain desired [subjectivation and subjectification] effects" (Rose 1999b, 52). As a productivity optimization tool, resiliency aims to capitalize on individuals' most

favorable coping mechanism, that is, positive mentality: "Happiness of individuals is a requirement for the survival and development of the state" (Foucault 1988, 158). Femininity, to be more specific female subjectification, has been concurrent under somatic intelligibility with a binding characteristic of emotion that "mediate(s) the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective" (Ahmed 2004, 119). In this respect, emotional/affective female subjectivities are rendered in a neoliberal biopolitics of free choice and self-government (Campbell 2010), and popular music videos exert governing influence to female audiences. By this emotionality of female subjectivation (Dawney 2013) and an embeddedness of emotion in power relations, women "become emotionally attached to regimes of [patriarchy] that [are] disadvantageous or even hurt them" (D'Aoust 2014, 271).

To be more specific, being happy or positive has been promoted as an ideal feminine attribute under the banner of the positive psychology movement (Banet-Weiser 2014; Davies 2016). Problems caused by institutional inequalities and injustices are reduced to a matter of individual choices and psychological status, and can be resolved by "tapping into [individuals' psychological] positivity" (Fredrickson 2009, 179). Individuals' positive mindsets are the most important factor for their success: For example, it is young girls' self-conditioning in positive thinking that affects their academic performances, and in turn determines their professional and personal success (Seligman 2012). Since it confines a concept of happiness to individuals' psychological choices and consumption, not what they achieve, positive psychology further legitimates neoliberal consumerism (Cabanas 2016; Sugarman 2015). On the other hand, any transformative efforts such as social movements are considered a waste of individuals' energy, and in turn contribute to their "needless frustration" (Seligman 2004). Thus, individuals are asked not to think about or question any problems in the past, but to emphasize how to make the future more bright and positive (Seligman et al. 2016). Or individuals are asked to regard current problems as good opportunities to improve and "actually emerge stronger afterwards" (Seligman and Tierney 2017, n.p.).

As a psychological defense mechanism, individuals tend to resort to psychological retreat to soothe themselves against overwhelming external problems (Berlin 1990). However, the media's promotion of mindfulness training for individuals to focus on inner peace so that they can stay resilient irrespective of their surroundings is a neoliberal ploy to distract individuals' indignation against structural injustice. Instead of mending structural uncertainties and insecurities, neoliberalism demands individuals be more self-affirmative, reliant, effective, and responsible for all the problems (Harris 2004). In this respect, more than a cultural fad, neoliberal positive psychology has become a mainstream social discourse: *Time* magazine's special issue

in 2016, "The Science of Happiness: New Discoveries of a More Joyful Life," is a case in point. A theme of mindfulness has become dominant since the financial crisis of 2008: There were more than 3,000 scholarly publications about it between 2008 and 2016, and industry has extensively incorporated mindfulness, yielding more than $1 billion in 2015 (Cabanas and Illouz 2017; Rusk and Waters 2013).

Likewise, promotion of an "authentic you" is a part of neoliberal personal branding that aims to increase human capital through commodity consumption. The more unique and singular, the more you are attractive to your employers or audiences, and in turn the more you will be successful in the neoliberal service economy. In this context, psychological negativity such as low self-esteem, vulnerable feeling, and victim mentality is what women have to stave off (Baker 2010). However, this makeover subjectivity can only be possible by consuming post-feminist commodities marketed for boosting their value and self-confidence, and requires a plethora of affective, bodily, financial, and psychological efforts in a "depoliticized, straightforward self-governing venture of rational choice and active appropriation" (Favaro 2017, 287). In this consumerist rebranding of the self, women become capable producers/consumers of themselves by a neoliberal notion of *homo economicus* who sees themselves as self-reliant and efficient human capital while eradicating notions of socioeconomic justice (Brown 2003; Foucault 2008; Lemke 2002; Rose 1993). As a human capital by themselves, women have to allocate proper resources (personal strengths) to a strategic field of investment and prepare any potential loss in a self-management business based on meticulous calculation of costs and effects, performing micromanagement of their bodies and minds in their everyday lives, such as gratitude reflections or repeating affirmative mantras. However, this neoliberal self-help transformation effort throws women into a more insecure, conformist state that requires them to scrutinize and correct their everyday behaviors so that they can keep themselves abreast of what is current or dominant in society.

As a pleasing tactic to circumscribe women's collective anger from their frustration in neoliberalism that puts them into ever more precarious living conditions, resilience discourse with neoliberal positive psychology aggravates what Sara Ahmed (2010) laments about an abject state of the "feminist killjoy." A therapeutic narrative of overcoming obstacles at the core of resilience discourse dissipates women's collective anger or indignation as a transformative power to change the *status quo* by redirecting their attention from structural problems to their inner conditions. Thus, it confuses a personal dimension of psychological positivity with the structural conditions of women's success in their financial, political, professional, and social realms. By doing so, it co-opts women's desire to be successful into commercial interests of neoliberal industries by perpetuating neoliberal mantras like self-scrutiny, self-development, self-realization, and human capital (Rottenberg

2014; 2017). In this respect, neoliberal discourse of resilience exerts an ideological function of collective amnesia that directs the public's attention from what caused the problem to how to survive. To that end, the neoliberal culture industry's systematic proliferation of positive images of women "plays a crucial role in [neoliberal] feminism" (Rottenberg 2014, 429). Consequently, while Sara Ahmed (2010) indicates a "consciousness of unhappiness" must be a guiding principle for critical consciousness to encounter institutionalized sexism and racism in society, the resilient, neoliberal subject is only to "permanently struggle to accommodate itself to the world" (Evan and Reid 2013, 85). In sum, resiliency as governmentality substitutes any need for systematic or institutional changes with depoliticized promotion of self-help, improvement, and responsibility (Stringer 2014), and in turn privatizes lingering social problems women face everyday in society, such as income gaps, glass ceilings, and commodification of sexualized female bodies, to name a few.

As for SNSD's music videos, resilience discourse particularly works well with traditional gender expectations and values of Confucian patriarchy in Korea. Because conformity has been the most important female code of conduct under centuries-long Confucianism (T. Kim 2003), Korean women have long practiced what resilience discourse demands. Moreover, positive psychology in SNSD's music videos further proliferates the biopolitical function of female resiliency by "sticking figures together (adherence), a sticking that creates the very effect of a collective (coherence)" (Ahmed 2004, 119). On top of common ingredients of female success in patriarchal society like being obedient, SNSD's music videos mandate women nowadays have to be resilient under an ever-precarious and exploitative neoliberal service economy. As a capitalist biopolitics that produces neoliberal female subjects who are self-reliant, effective, and responsible for their own survival, SNSD's music videos help update traditional patriarchal gender norms and expectations in the neoliberal culture industry.

"INTO THE NEW WORLD" (2007): PRESENTING RESILIENCY AS IDEAL FEMININITY

As a K-pop version of Sheryl Sandberg's (2013) bestseller book, *Lean In*, which inspires women's professional ambition, the "Into the New World" music video provides the audience with a guide for career successes, representing a social condition of neoliberalism (uncertainty), an ontological mode of individuals (vulnerability), a neoliberal center of gravity in individuals' activities (competition), and an imperative of their mindset (resilience). As an internal revolution in women, resilience keeps them making earnest efforts by conditioning their mindset to be confident, something Sandberg

(2013, 8) believes that women do not have "by not raising our hands, and by pulling back when we should be leaning in." In a series of quasi-personal anecdotes of overcoming obstacles and achieving successes, the music video aims to motivate audiences to keep trying until success, showing how members of SNSD find their place as a graffiti artist, amateur aviator, motorist, dancer, or coffee barista. As a life lesson for young people, the video shows how the members slowly reclaim their agency by overcoming problems. Preaching that self-determination and perseverance are most important for their success, SNSD, as a group of nine high school students, sings "the unknown future and obstacles we can't change, but I can't give up." While female victimhood is "associated with self-pity, insufficient personal drive and a lack of personal responsibility for one's own life," the idols are represented as autonomous, conscious decision-makers and pursuers of their careers in the industry: In turn, there is no "space available for articulating any sense of unfairness or oppression" in the world (Baker 2010, 190). The message of resilience is evident throughout the video with its therapeutic narrative of overcoming obstacles with a right attitude that will bring light to their unknown world. Despite problems they deal with, the idols decide to smile, stay optimistic, and be joyful. By doing so, the video tells the audience to change their mindset to overcome their internal obstacles as the real barrier to their success by mental and physical resilience. In turn, the video diverts the audience's attention away from women's struggles against continuing exploitation and oppression, that is, Korea's centuries-long patriarchal gender hierarchy and institutional barriers. Thus, according to the music video, when you change yourself, you will individually go "Into the New World," magically bypassing social inequalities by structures of male dominance and power.

Positivity is the central theme of the music video, and present in its overall color tone, melody, and the idols' facial expressions and choreography. This sense of optimism is manifest even when the airplane is out of order: The teenage idols magically get it fixed and fly into "the new world." While the video ostensibly suggests an alternative to dominant gender roles, its bottomless optimism rather fantasizes and fulfills audiences' imaginary satisfaction only. So among career choices shown in the video, waitress or bartender is the only realistic option for girls to choose without worrying about institutional barriers in society. The idols' embracive gestures further reinforce a message of being a recipient of the reality. While the music video tries to convince that women are owners of choice and in charge of their dreams and lives, a narrative of choice that determines everything in one's life is an easy way to get away with broader, institutional problems that prevent others from making their own choices for themselves.

A traditional value of conformity is legitimated as an ideal quality of the female subjects. Staying side by side with other suffering women is celebrat-

ed as an ethical behavior for the women, who sing "now and forever, we'll do it together in my new world." As much as traditional female subjects were told to endure all the hardship under the Confucian gender hierarchy, contemporary women are to put up with all the economic and social injustices by resilience. However, there is no indicator of solidarity for a collective effort to change the structural condition of their suffering or at least unfavorable social conditions. While the members understand they face adversarial conditions for which they cannot expect any help, they have to rely on their personal commitment to resiliency: "Don't wait for an exceptional miracle. There's a rough road in front of us." Whether they come up with a positive mindset, staying together with other females, or trying their best despite the entire problem, their action is confined to their isolated problem-solving capacity and they are solely responsible for the result.

In this regard, SNSD's "Into the New World" is a visual poetics of neoliberal governmentality that "mould[s] the self to become self-fulfilling and more positive, more flexible and enterprising, more responsible and more communicative, more innovative and enterprising, and thus also more able both to withstand the shocks and grasp the opportunities presented in the risk society" (O'Malley 2010, 505). While neoliberal discourse on female success revolves around a personal responsibility in which "obstacles and disadvantage are likely to be responded to through arduous self-invention and self-transformation" (Baker 2010, 193), "Into the New World" is a visual vindication of the neoliberal myth of female success through self-determination while presenting disadvantageous circumstances as opportunities for self-development and improvement: Anything can be overcome with the right attitude and a right goal. Thus, as a rationality of governing the self, SNSD's success story in the music video is a cultural manifestation of neoliberal privatization of everything social while it redirects women's strategic domain of transformative activity from the public to the personal, and in turn atomizes collective forces of women's anger (Gordon 2002).

Therefore, the "Into the New World" music video is a visual narrative of justification of patriarchal capitalism's gender-based exploitation in which good female subjects are required to prove their resiliency. Any damage or harm inflicted on women by the patriarchal system is an opportunity or resource to be utilized in augmenting their human capital. In turn, resiliency discourse maximizes a women's productivity in domestic, unpaid labor, and furthermore, updates the exploitation in the affective neoliberal economy by making "women marketable sexually (as femme), ethically (as 'good'), and commercially (as productive laborers)" (James 2015, 86).

"ALL NIGHT" (2017): WHAT PAID-OFF FEMALE RESILIENCY WOULD LOOK LIKE

Released on August 4, 2017, to celebrate SNSD's tenth anniversary, the "All Night" music video vindicates the idols' mental and physical resilience which led them to stardom in a nostalgic manner. Produced by SM Entertainment's in-house producer Kenzie, who also produced "Into the New World," the video is SNSD's self-tribute to their success, in which each member shares recollections and appreciation for their activities in the past ten years. Opening with a claim, "I like to party" in a high-pitched vocal sound, "All Night" shows off the glamorous, flashy lifestyle the idols enjoy, filled with sporadic pleasures in a vintage dance hall. Their extravagant outfits with feathers and fringe add a feeling of achievement and pride. The visual theme of retro accompanied by aural reminiscence of disco music and props, such as vintage tinsel and glitter backdrops, adds another layer of the video's romanticization of the idols' past ten years of hard work. Maturity and growth are present in the idols' appearance, demeanor, and dress, which includes low-cut or cropped shirts and short skirts or shorts. Their facial expressions are more serious in heavy makeup, which accentuates the idols' pale skin. In a mini-interview format that ends by showing SNSD's 2007 stage debut of "Into the New World," the video is nostalgic in a visual theme of elegance by various props, such as sequin dress with curly hair and blurry backgrounds with warm color temperature.

The idols' intricate emotional status between absent-mindedness, fun, and upbeat indicates their complicated feeling when they recollect past hardships, their success, and their unpredictable future. However, the video emphasizes positive emotions that emit from a relaxing and lively atmosphere of partying with friends. Disco-related props and backgrounds like colored lighting, streamers and confetti, sparkles and sequins emphasize the playful, positive psychology of the music video. While SNSD's previous music videos focused on a unified theme with a synchronized choreography and uniforms, "All Night" spotlights individual members and their nostalgic, celebratory sentiments in close-ups. A member indulges by watching herself in the mirror where she sees others come in and go out of the bathroom. Another member is seen hiding in a hallway outside the dance floor, presumably too shy to immediately enjoy the party. They eventually join together and dance seductively.

Considering that "All Night" is SNSD's allegedly last music video while its members prepare their solo debuts without renewing contracts with the agency, a nostalgia feeling of the idols in their twenties is rather decadent to the extent that it is confined to what challenges and difficulties the idols have coped with for survival without a hint of their better future. With suspicion for their survivability in ever-increasing contingencies and competitions,

each member of SNSD just celebrates what they have achieved, remembering their ceaseless endeavors and efforts to stay marketable in the industry. Unlike in the "Into the New World" video, and devoid of any utopian ideal or imagery that opens up a possibility of transformative capacity (Jameson 2004), the "All Night" music video is a cultural and historical symptom of a neoliberal society that does not allow individuals to envision anything other than a survival strategy for an immanent crisis. In the hopes of being able to survive the way SNSD did for the last ten years, the idols sing their willingness to fall in love with an ex-boyfriend again, indicating the members would go through an intense management process even under "slave-like" contracts as far as it guarantees them success or survival: SNSD sings "keep doing this meaningless kiss / Like a lie, we're falling in love with each other."

Mini interviews within the music video highlight a benefit of their being resilient. Yoon-Ah, SNSD's most famous idol, asserts that being resilient was the main driving force for her to endure hardship and to achieve success with eight other members who support each other. Tiffany maintains that SNSD itself has been an emotional support for her since the group's central message is "you can do anything you want as far as you strive to get it," and she has relied on other members who think and strive the same way. Taeyeon feels SNSD is like a country to her, where she originated from and will eventually go back to. Sunny is honest about her experience in the past ten years: She had to endure all the hard work assigned to her, but enjoyed being in the group that is the main reason why she made it. Sooyoung mentions it was mainly the emotional support she received from other members that kept her enduring all the hardship, because other members had the exact same emotions and difficulties stemming from the same situations she has been in. In this respect, Yuri maintains that she has the same feelings about the situation; all members will forever be a SNSD member, just as they always have been. Hyo-Yeon remembers that the members practiced the performance too much—to the extent that she doubts whether it is OK to exercise that much or not. And this over-preparation and practice gets the members to be confident for their debut performance. For Seohyun, the last ten years were not that long a time when she thinks back, but she is sure that every single aspect of her has changed through influencing and being influenced by other members to the extent that they have come to look like each other. She is glad and proud of having been a member of SNSD. Lastly, Seohyun, the youngest member who made a debut at the age of fifteen, has grown up in SNSD with a lot of experiences. As testified, being a member of the idol group requires a total transformation of the self, and being resilient with a hope of success has been the main psychological mechanism of self-endurance and perseverance in the precarious neoliberal culture industry.

In their testimonies, the idols indicate that their success in the industry was possible due to their physical and psychological resilience and mutual

supports between the members. While they did not agree with what they had to do as a group, the idols had to endure and try their best to stay popular in the industry. The idols merely endured all the hardship that was assigned to them in the hopes of being successful, and managed to deal with it only by conforming to other suffering colleagues. In this respect, not as an independent subject, the idols are passive performers of the industry, who do not question their working environment but just do their best to complete whatever is assigned to them. Therefore, neoliberal feminism in SNSD's music videos blames "those who are not 'strivers'" (McRobbie 2013, 120) for their lack of success. In this transformative project of neoliberalism, female resilience is a necessary component of self-investing human capital activities through individuals' physical, emotional, and mental endeavors that increase " their capital value in the present and enhance their future value" (Brown 2015, 22).

What is noteworthy in SNSD's music videos is that they pleasurably visualize various neoliberal interventions and manipulations like a moralization of individual responsibility (Brown 2003; 2006), a normalization of self-help as personal empowerments (Rimke 2000), and a promotion of positive psychology in terms of governmentality (Binkley 2011). In other words, these videos with a high production value promoting positive emotions provide audiences with a neoliberal ideal of female subjectification as a condition of reproducing and legitimating the *status quo*. In their "moral legitimating structure" (Vrasti 2011, n.p.), the music videos effectively fulfill governmentality functions that encourage individuals to perform neoliberal ethos voluntarily and passionately. Considering the sheer ubiquity of K-pop female idols and their music videos in Korean society together with their power to create "affective resonances independent of content and meaning" (Shouse 2005, n.p.), their biopolitical power gets more widespread: "The more they circulate, the more affective they become, and the more they appear to 'contain' affect" (Ahmed 2004, 120). In other words, the videos are an exemplar neoliberal cultural means that delivers an ethical justification for being resilient to stay intact in the "'cold' mechanism of competition" in the industry in a "set of 'warm' moral and cultural values [of positive emotionality] that could compensate for the otherwise mechanistic and alienating consequences of economic rationality" (Vrasti 2011, n.p.). In this moralization of resiliency together with individuals' desire to be successful, neoliberal feminism in K-pop female idols ends up contributing to reproducing and maintaining patriarchal neoliberalism.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: RESILIENCE AND SUFFUSION OF GOVERNMENTALITY

As examined thus far, SNSD's music videos are extravagant spectacles of neoliberal fantasy of female agency and empowerment by resiliency discourse. The two music videos "Into the New World" (2007) and "All Night" (2017) display a utopian narrative of individual success based on resiliency and commitment. While the former is to "generate, amplify, and transmit damage so that we can *hear, see and feel* the damage we (or the characters we watch and identify with) ought to overcome," the latter is an affective, therapeutic spectacle of overcoming the problem, which makes audiences feel good and relieved (James 2015, 101). In other words, "Into the New World" projects a promise of personal success as far as one never gives up despite all the adversarial circumstances, and in turn the music video conceals all the institutional and structural impediments under neoliberalism. On the other hand, "All Night" is a glamorized spectacle of a promised success as far as individuals are psychologically positive and behaviorally resilient, and in turn it obscures brutal competitions and slave-like working conditions in the industry. In this respect, SNSD's success by resilience intends to beget a broader governing effect while "the spectator feeds the performer's individual overcoming into a second-order therapeutic narrative: our approbation of her overcoming is evidence of our own overcoming of" the current dire survival conditions under neoliberalism (James 2015, 89).

In a broader sociopolitical ramification of the visualized governmentality, SNSD's music videos for public consumption normalize the problems caused by neoliberal economic injustices and inequalities, and blame insufficiently resilient subjects for their misfortunes. While the videos dramatize a neoliberal rhetoric of self-reliance, efficacy, and development, they actually justify and relegate systemic injustices to personal responsibility. By the neoliberal fantasy of being successful by resilience which covers up "one of neoliberal rationality's most vulnerable fault lines in the present" (Rottenberg 2017, 345), the industry has exploited numerous K-pop idols, trainees, and wannabes who surrender personal freedoms and basic human rights. By doing so, neoliberal feminism consumes a large number of women who are "rendered expendable, exploitable, and disposable," while glamorizing a few "aspirational subjects who self-invest wisely and augment their capital value" (345). As the K-pop industry's propaganda, the music videos re-affirm a myth of the industry's contribution to advancing female empowerment: SNSD, as a popular preacher of female resilience and *homo economicus*, fashionably embodies and performs the industry's rules of the game (McRobbie 2013), or proclaims what Zillah Eisenstein (2013) calls corporate feminism.

Consequently, the videos are disciplinary measures for the audiences to pleasurably accept and internalize a neoliberal script of success. In other

words, as governmentality, K-pop female idols help perpetuate and legitimate a traditional yet updated code of female conduct that demands them be obedient, diligent, strong-willed, and resilient in the exploitative neoliberal culture industry. In this respect, "what appears to be an expanded, liberated space is actually a normative minefield, one that requires continual self-monitoring, impression management, and a full complement of defensive and offensive maneuvers" (Bay-Cheng 2015, 286). In this governmentality of resilience, feminist agendas of agency and empowerment are co-opted by the industry that capitalizes on dreams and aspirations of countless K-pop idol wannabes and trainees. By doing so, the videos celebrate SNSD's success due to their choice and freedom through determination and resiliency, while they are "more likely to foster blame and divisiveness than empowerment and liberation" to those with less success or fortune for their ineptitude (283). On the other hand, the more female idols (workers) are committed and resilient, the more the industry sweeps profits, and in turn the more effective it is to brush off an accusation of gender-based inequality and exploitation. Consequently, the music videos of SNSD effectively condition female subjects congruent with the ethos of neoliberal capital, and in turn, their "resilience doesn't fight back against patriarchy, but feeds it" (James 2015, 6).

Chapter Seven

The 90s, the Most Stunning Days of Our Lives

Retro K-Pop Music, Nostalgia, and Positive Psychology in Contemporary Korea

As an effort to extend chapter six's perusal of how K-pop advocates positive psychology on a broader social level, this chapter examines how certain K-pop musicians and songs are promoted to maximize a biopolitical power of the music genre. To that end, this chapter focuses on the sociocultural implications of the recent popularity of the 1990s' retro K-pop music, and how popular TV programs in Korea amplify the trend. Korea's most popular and influential TV program since its first episode on April 23, 2005, MBC's *Infinite Challenge*, ran two special episodes devoted entirely to 90s' popular music, and raked an unprecedented rating of 37 percent in December 2014 and January 2015 (*KyungHyang Shinmun* 2015). Prior to *Infinite Challenge*'s "Saturday, Saturday is Singers" (hereafter, ToToGa), there was no TV program on the topic on major national network stations. These episodes restaged and revived top singers from the 90s in episode number 410 on December 27, 2014 and episode 411 on January 3, 2015. With ToToGa's success, there is a surge of TV programs that exclusively deal with 90s pop music, such as MBC's *Radio Star*, a popular talk-show program, which aired a special episode on 90s pop musicians, named as "Radio Star—Wednesday, Wednesday is *Radio Star*" on January 28, 2015. While there have been marketing ploys aimed at nostalgia, ToToGa is one of the most successful cultural "sewing machine[s] that quilts personal memory onto recorded music, stitched together by emotion and feelings" (van Dijck 2006, 364). However, there is no scholarly investigation into how 90s pop music is strategi-

cally deployed on major network TV: Existing literature examines the cultural meaning of consuming 90s popular music at private flashback dance parties in the Netherlands (van der Hoeven 2014). In this dearth of academic attention to network TV's uses of retro music, I examine the extra-musical conditions of ToToGa, and analyze why and how it became popular with regards to its referential roles to audiences' emotions and socioeconomic environments under neoliberalism.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, Korea has been obsessed with rapid industrial modernization. Specifically, the 1990s was a crucial period that changed the overall characteristics of Korean society from its cultural, political, economic, and social aspects. Thanks to people's struggles and sacrifices during almost thirty years of military authoritarianism, the first civilian government in 1993 guaranteed a procedural democracy. Culminating with an inclusion of global economic organizations such as OECD in 1996, industrial and economic developments were realized according to people's desire and endeavors in previous decades. However, as much as there were good contributions, the decade left painful memories of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and its aftermath, which was epitomized by neoliberal SAPs mandated by the IMF. In other words, while the period provided individuals with a utopian outlook for progress, the 90s ended up putting Korea into an unprecedented abyss of economic crisis and entailed the dissolution of family, welfare society, and most importantly the "unrealized dreams of the past and visions of the future" (Boym 2001, xvi). In sum, Korea's 90s "began with a futuristic utopia and ended with nostalgia" (xiv).

However, even with the 1997 IMF Crisis, the country's obsession with economic development has not waned, while, simultaneously, there are growing numbers of concerns, doubts, and discontents. Occasional demands to slow down and contemplate arose after man-made disasters, such as the collapse of the Sungsoo Bridge and Sam-Poong Department Store in 1994 and 1995, respectively, and, most recently, the capsizing of the Sewol Ferry in 2014. Korea remains infatuated with speedy modernization, thus conceiving nostalgia as a matter of personal indulgence. It is against this sociocultural backdrop that nostalgia has suddenly become a major trend in Korean people's cultural lives since the 2000s. This trend began with the onset of the SAPs' side effects, such as a surge of precarious, temporary workers, soaring income inequality, a demise of social safety nets, a dissolution of traditional values and mores, and a high suicide rate.

In this context, by considering nostalgia as degenerate, delinquent, and downright disgraceful at times (Lowenthal 1998), the current proliferation of 90s nostalgia on Korea's major network TV stations warrants a serious scholarly investigation. Among cultural commodities, popular songs are particularly dominated by the "re" prefix: revival, reissues, remakes, restorations, retrospectives, and rearrangements (Reynolds 2011), formulating a close re-

lationship with feelings of nostalgia (Bennett 2009; Kong 1999; van Dijck 2006). Since the late 90s, there are a growing number of retro-themed TV programs that deal with popular songs from the 70s and the 80s, such as *Concert 7080*.[1] In this increasing attention to retro music, there has recently been an interesting development in 90s retro programs. For example, *Reply, 1997!* focuses on 90s popular music and fandom culture for real K-pop idol groups. *Reply, 1994!* uses music in the background so deftly that the audience believes they are watching an hour-long music video. *Architectures 101*, a popular film of 90s nostalgia turned national sensation by skillfully using the decade's popular music. Ultimately, *Infinite Challenge*, Korea's most loved and popular TV show, hosted the decade's ten most iconic popular singers. Right after its airing, there was a soaring sale of 90's popular culture goods, such as fashion accessories and clothing, and popular songs from that decade. Moreover, after ToToGa, there has been a surge of karaoke customers, even teenagers, singing 90's popular songs (K. Kim 2015).

Infatuation with the 70s and 80s in the 1990s came from people's confidence in their sociocultural and politico-economic achievements. This functions as an indicator of the development of the Korean culture industry, which monetizes people's growing purchase power on through their memories. This newfound confidence gives people a moment of self-complement on their hard work and perseverance. However, since the rosy promise and expectations of the 90s went astray with the 1997 Financial Crisis and the subsequent series of neoliberal degradations of people's living standards, the 2000s' nostalgia for the 1990s retains qualitatively different features. In other words, 70s and 80s nostalgia in the 90s was an expression of the then-present economic prosperity as major audiences, in their 50s and above, wanted to remember their youth (Nam 2015). However, 90s nostalgia in the 2000s can be viewed as a cultural manifestation of regressive desire for the decade's unfulfilled dreams and promises.

Politics has been the most active realm where nostalgia is evoked and, in turn, exercises an overarching impact in Korea since the 90s. As a realm of struggle over the meanings of the past, memory is a fundamental basis of politics in its potential for opposition and resistance, as well as domination (Foucault 1975). Questions on "what, when, and how [something] is remembered, by who and for who" are a crucial part of hegemonic struggle in society. A former impeached President, Park Geun-hye, like many politicians before her, was the most obvious beneficiary of a political aesthetization of nostalgia. With the preceding President, Lee Myung-bak, Park Geun-hye manipulated a political nostalgia of her father's developmental dictatorship in order to blame their political opponents for the economic downturn since 1997, and to consolidate supporters under the expectation that she would bring another economic boom to Korea. In this respect, she declared that she would restage the Miracle of the Han River by *Hallyu* during her inaugura-

tion speech. In this respect, nostalgia in Korea should be understood as a political economy of recycling the past, and a proven strategy for political manipulations.

Here, nostalgia plays into cultural politics. When produced and proliferated by a mainstream media institution like MBC, nostalgia plays an ideological role by provoking reminiscence for a specific period that has a constructed and glorified sociocultural meaning and definition. For example, ToToGa declares the 90s as the "most stunning, beautiful days of our lives," although there were many different, contradicting evaluations on the decade, especially concerning the IMF crisis. While a feeling of nostalgia mainly evokes a sensibility of loss for a certain past and contrasts with contemporary life, ToToGa helps manipulate a personal memory of the decade as a golden age through certain music genres and singers that implicate particular emotions. In this respect, as Botstein (2000) indicates that "neither listening nor the historical function of music is an normative analytic or descriptive category," one must pay critical attention to how specific genres and musicians are selected and broadcast, since they contribute to reconstructing the "historical experience of music, the patterns and objects of presumed memory, and the essential content of cultural nostalgia" (535).

As briefly reviewed above, it is important to examine how ToToGa, as a cultural politics of memory on the 90s, selectively navigates and repackages contradictory memories, conferring new meanings onto the 90s and making its memory bearable. Since remembering the past is fundamentally based on the necessities of the present, I seek to answer why there is a boom of 90s pop music at this moment. By considering remembering and forgetting as an active, self-preserving processes to protect against the "unpleasantness of continuing painful memories" of the past (Hoskins 2001, 335), it is important to examine how the 90s is reimagined and reconstituted by ToToGa. To this end, I analyze how ToToGa reconstructs and represents hegemonic discourse on the decade's sociocultural and politico-economic meanings.

RESURGENCE OF 90S POPULAR MUSIC: K-POP AND ITS MARKETING STRATEGY

The recent surge of retro K-pop music is an inevitable result of the culture industry's adaptation to the audience's longing for authentic musical talents of the 90s. Compared with the current K-pop scene, the soundscape of the 90s was more diverse and different popular music genres coexisted. For example, while fast-beat dance music mixed with electronic music and rap dominates K-pop, the 90s was replete with hip-hop (Seo Taiji and Boys; Deux), dance (Cool; Lula; Two-Two), hard rock (BooHwal; NExT), rock ballad (Kim Jong-seo; Kim Kyung-ho), ballad (Shin Seung-hoon; Lee

Seung-hwan; Exhibition), reggae (Kim Gunn-mo), trot (Hyun Cheol; Joo Hyun-mi; Kim Soo-hee), and so on, all of which equally appeared on major network TV stations. Unlike K-pop's current domination by giant talent agencies, like SM Entertainment, 90s musicians were relatively autonomous, challenged conventional mores, wrote their own songs, and published albums as an independent unit for musical completeness. In this respect, the 90s soundscape was characterized as a dialectic coexistence between musical authenticity/ authorship and commercialism by an extensive musical contribution of singer-auteurs.

However, since H.O.T.'s debut in 1996, the Korean soundscape has been monopolized by K-pop idols. K-pop originated when Korea was in the middle of a state-led aggressive globalization process, which overemphasized global competitiveness. In this respect, the beginning of K-pop idol groups in 1996 coincided with the music industry's effort to make its music sound as if it were imported from Europe or the U.S., with lots of English lyrics performed by Korean musicians. Since then, K-pop has been branded as something new, trendy, and fashionable and caters to a niche market between Korean traditional popular music, *Gayo*, and Western music in general. However, K-pop has recently come to overwhelm all other existing genres of Korean popular music. In other words, since 1996, Korea's soundscape has been dominated by "idol" singers who are manufactured by major entertainment agencies' strict apprentice/trainee systems. Subsequently, its diversity greatly decreased. Musicians' authenticity/ authorship is eradicated by their agencies' total control for the sake of commercial success, from song writing and selection to sartorial coordination. In this regard, three major K-pop management companies, SM Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, and YG Entertainment, have controlled Korean popular music, in terms of content, form, production, and dissemination.

Searching for rookies, the major management companies, in partnership with mainstream media institutions, began producing various audition programs. As seen by Huh Gak's surprising success in *Superstar K2* on October 22, 2010, these programs market themselves as discovering ordinary citizens' raw musical talent. In turn, the audience became attracted to them in the hopes of finding fresh musical auteurs and authenticity, while enjoying different genres, singers, and feelings from those of mainstream stereotypical K-pop idols. In this respect, IU, a solo female idol, has become a new, unconventional icon of K-pop, as her managing company, Loen Entertainment, has taken an alternative route to the factory-like manufacturing of K-pop idols. Characterized as an authentic idol with "impressive" vocal capabilities and musical talent, IU has endeavored to collaborate with established virtuosos whose peak times were in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, such as Kim Chang-wan, Yoon Sang, and Seo Taiji. These collaborative efforts with mas-

ter artists mark IU as a perfect combination between retro, artistic quality and an idol's commerciality.

In this respect, IU is a symbol of the K-pop industry's new chapter, which revisits and revises retro music of the 80s and 90s in order to commercialize the past generation of musicians' reputation and artistic authorship. In a similar marketing ploy, ToToGa tried to recast K-pop female idols in the roles of 90s musicians. For example, in an episode of ToToGa, Seo-hyun of SNSD took the place of Eugene of S.E.S., indicating an interchangeability of idols as a disposable component in a manufactured popular music group not only by contemporary idols but also with intergenerational ones. In regards to the culture industry's continuous commercialization of 90s retro music, ToToGa tries to sell a cultural nostalgia to the audience who are old enough to reminiscence on the decade and, moreover, target current K-pop fans by stitching the idols with the retro music by refreshing a consumerist appetite for something that is both familiar and different simultaneously. And this generation stitching between the current K-pop idols and the 90s' singers aimed to renew the audience's attention to K-pop. Consequently, the 90s retro boom stemmed from the K-pop industry's commercial opportunism (Drake 2003) to meet the audience's desire for more diversity in genres and musicians. However, this strategy is an ostensible change that does not entail a structural transformation of the K-pop industry from its current factory manufacturing system to a collective of individual, autonomous musicians.

POLITICS OF NOSTALGIA: REGRESSION, COMMODIFICATION, AND REFLECTION

The feeling of nostalgia is a by-product of change in society, which sets people apart from their previous lifestyles, customs, traditions, and thoughts. In a modern, industrialized society, people are driven and alienated by the high tempo of change dictated by the endless capitalist cycle of production-circulation-consumption, and suffering from uncertainty and insecurity. As an integral part of modernity, nostalgia is a defensive symptom of individuals' longing for continuity, collective memory, and community. Referred to as a reactionary yearning for the past or creative/cultural amnesia (Grainge 2000), nostalgia tends to romanticize the past, not because the past was good per-se but because nostalgia uses the past as an ephemeral means of forgetting the burdens of the present. Seeking to attain the unattainable to satisfy the unsatisfiable, what is lacking in the present, nostalgia is a desire to escape from the present by a "positively toned evocation of a lived past in the context of some negative feeling toward present" (Davis 1979, 18). In this regard, as a socially, culturally, politically, and historically engineered memory, nostalgia is an articulation of how the past is wishfully reimagined in the

present, by being positively reconstructed and legitimized through a selective process of idealized characters (Pickering and Keightley 2006).

The culture industry's marketing ploy for nostalgia appears incoherent, as TV episodes appear random; however, the systematic application of nostalgia, and its reach vis-à-vis major TV networks, commodifies the past through a random recycling of processed and reconstructed memories. This, in turn, helps maintain the *status quo* of the present. By focusing on "banality, functioning not through [intellectual] stimulation, but by covering up the pain of loss" (Boym 2001, 339), mediated nostalgia provides a superficial, fleeting feeling of relief to the extent that historicity is replaced by an aesthetic nostalgia (Jameson 1991). In other words, since memory became a best-selling commodity in a consumer society (Le Goff 1992), the past is commodified by nostalgia merchants to sell an ephemeral escape from harsh reality by reformulating the past to serve the present, and in turn sacrifices historical meanings and implications. From a post-Fordist perspective, the culture industry's commercialization of popular memory of the 90s and ToToGa's success in ratings and impact on consumer goods sales stem from their "exuberant and inventive recycling of the past in new stylistic combinations" (199).

Related to Le Goff's nostalgia merchant, I examine how ToToGa navigates Grainge's (2002) differentiation between nostalgia as a structure of feeling/experiential discourse and nostalgia as a commodified style or practices. In other words, with the growing commodification of culture, ToToGa strategically selects a certain set of musicians and their songs to place audiences in nostalgia mode, which portrays a superficial appearance of the past and leads to a loss of its complex meaning. Without foregrounding the historical and cultural reconsideration of the 90s, ToToGa is boastful of replicating exactly the same stage and performance of the 90s to the extent that the audience gets to time travel to the decade. Simultaneously, ToToGa's singers are all fast-beat dance music performers with best-seller records, who can easily be related to the musical features of current K-pop (H. Lee 2015). As a mere reified cultural artifact that is sterile with its socio-political meanings, the revivals on ToToGa erase the sociocultural references of the 90s embedded in the decade's popular sentiments, with the exception of fast dance beats and melody. However, this ahistorical, commercial process exerts more powerful influence than institutions of historical investigation like museums and schools in its "discourses of memory by invoking commercial products and representations" (Burgoyne 2003, 211).

On the other hand, nostalgia can still be a deliberate attempt to seek an alternative to the present by engaging in a dialogue with the past (Pickering and Keightley 2006). Since the lost past is associated with a longing for a better future, the past functions as a resource and inspiration for present and future possibilities (Boym 2001; Landsberg 2003; Oliver 2001; Pickering

1988). Thus nostalgia is a politics of memorizing the past for the future, which can redress a gap between individuals' lived experiences and expectations of modernity. As a democratic potential with an alternative, critical assessment of the past, nostalgia acts as a critical juncture and can provide a deliberate opportunity to criticize the current social, economic, cultural, and political environments (Baer 2001). From this point of view, nostalgia can possibly "awaken multiple planes of consciousness" on the decade (Boym 2001, 50): Thus ToToGa can alternatively be considered as "reflective nostalgia . . . [for] the exploration of other potentialities and unfulfilled promises of modern happiness" (342).

In this respect, by examining how ToToGa evokes audiences' nostalgia to 90s pop, I investigate whether the program intends to "return to an earlier state of idealized past," or to "recognize aspects of the past as the basis for renewal and satisfaction in the future" (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 921). By investigating how the program contextualizes and codes the meaning of the 90s pop in the current neoliberal society, I examine how ToToGa reconstructs the symbolic meaning of 90s pop music between "past-fixated melancholic reactions," and "utopian longings" (921).

EMOTION, MEMORY, AND SUBJECTIVITY

Memory constitutes an important setting of human lives, providing social and biological continuity, symbolic meanings, identity, and political stakes. As a collective of desires, needs, and definitions, and a conscious form of narrative (White 1987), cultural memory is entangled and co-constitutional with personal and historical discourses at various degrees in their various procedures of relating, selecting, revising, documenting, and sharing the past. Popular music functions as a bearer of personal and social memory in which "people make sense of their own lives and their connection to the lives of others" (van Dijck 2004, 262). As such, studying popular music is a way of understanding the public sentiment at a given time, since the former plays an important role in the latter's formation of identity, expression, imagination, and social performance in a given social environment (Bennett 2006, 2008; Hesmondhalgh 2005; Mulder et al. 2010). In terms of Fredric Jameson's (1981) political unconscious or Michel Foucault's (1994) *episteme*, popular songs, absorbed into the customary fabric of everyday life, are an indicator of general sentiments in sociocultural and politico-economic realms as a cultural manifestation of complex relationships between "cultural production and 'mood management,'" (Neiger, Moyers and Zandberg 2011, 972). For instance, 70s folk music represented a burgeoning youth culture of (passive) resistance, 80s ballad music was embedded in the military dictatorship's depoliticizing the cultural policy of "3S" (screen, sex, and sport), and 90s

hip-hop and dance music is a cultural manifestation of Korea's growing optimism in its participation in the global capitalist regime, epitomized by membership attainment in global economic organizations like WTO and OECD.

With its powerful affective and sensuous potence (DeNora 1999; Drake 2003; van Dijck 2006), music effectively evokes the memory of an idealized past with a "promise of a retrieval of lost utopian coherence" as a means to overcome individuals' impotence in the present (Flinn 1992, 50). Likewise, people with negative sentiments tend to be more nostalgic than those with neutral or positive moods (Wildschut et al. 2006). Concerning the relationship between emotion, identity, and memory in listening to recorded music(Mather 2004; Turino 1999), popular music, especially shared listening and collective discussion, creates a sense of belonging to a larger community andgeneration (Connell and Gibson 2003). Actually, ToToGa in its entirety is filled with full-fledged emotional responses to 90s music to the extent that 90s musicians and audiences share a full scale of different emotions. There are multiple occasions of tear-filled emotional confessions that participants and MCs experience. "We are still thirsty for the 90s nostalgia!"

I argue that ToToGa production crews' own memory of the 90s is projected outward to today's Korean society, and in turn, this personal-turned-social memory of the 90s reformulates the memory of the decade in the audience of *Infinite Challenge*. As much as cultural memory is a mediated and systematized re-presentation of past experiences and realities, which is discursive and ideological in its nature (Huyssen 1995), personal memory is a social production, formulated and maintained by a society's value system (Halbwachs 1992; van Dijck 2004). What one remembers is a result of social constructions by a selective, strategic process of what to remember and what to forget. In this regards, as a result of the media's cultural politics, one's reminiscence of the past is simultaneously "*embodied* [through media representations], *enabled* [by interacting with others], and *embedded*" in the current sociocultural and politico-economic conditions" (van Dijck 2006, 358, emphasis original). Moreover, this selective process of memorizing stems from a social imperative to achieve individuals' positive psychology against anxiety, fear, jealousy, and other negative affects (Sturken 1997). What matters most in collective memory is not its historical accuracy or truth, but its *political* objective, which aims to maintain continuity and coherence in its social, economic, and political values and standards.

In order to reimagine the present through a playful appropriation of the past "*metonymically*, standing in for the entire decade" (Drake 2003, 188, emphasis original), ToToGa provokes positive emotions associated with fast, upbeat, and uplifting pop music through a careful selection of certain genres, musicians, and songs of the decade. By doing so, the program recreates and reformulates a structure of feeling and texture of the decade. ToToGa paid

careful, meticulous attention to recreating the decade's authentic, frisky atmosphere by reenacting and replicating *Mise-en-scène* and props of the stage and outfits in order to immerse the audience in a 1990s experience. By immersing itself in the playful, hopeful, and energetic atmosphere of the 90s, the audience is provided with an opportunity to reconstruct their selves through the special episodes for a cultivation of self-accountable images and identities that are enthusiastic, hopeful, and capable subjectivity.

Subsequently, since individuals consume particular music for specific mnemonic, emotional, social, and cultural needs, music is considered a technology of self which exercises a "regulation, elaboration and substantiation of themselves as social agents" (Croom 2015; DeNora 1999, 32). The seemingly private practice of consuming music is conditioned by large cultural, economic, and political contexts (Cloonan 1999). Thus, individuals' thematic consumption of music based on their personal and/or social needs is an interactive process of self-creation and maintenance by reflecting, and responding to, large sociocultural and politico-economic parameters. In other words, deploying specific music as a means of "emotional self-management," which is an object of self-knowledge, individuals maintain their psychological equilibrium and individuals perform socially desired, disciplined behaviors by "creating, enhancing, sustaining and changing subjective, cognitive, bodily and self-conceptual states" (DeNora 1999, 34–35; Saarikallio 2011). In terms of Foucauldian biopolitics, the "self-accountable imageries" embedded in ToToGa's song selections, which have a fast, playful, danceable uplifting-feeling textuality, perpetuate the current economic injustice and inequality emblematic of neoliberal governmentality. In other words, rather than critically reflecting the decade, ToToGa merely relieves the audience of the gruesome economic realities of neoliberalism since 1997, by utilizing a nonthreatening and fun form through which the audience can share happy memories from the 90s. In this idealization of the decade, ToToGa mainly focuses on the cultural style of surface and referentiality, rather than reflective examination.

POPULAR MUSIC AND CONSTITUTION OF NEOLIBERAL SELF: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY OF RETRO MUSIC

Regarding happiness as one's intangible, desirable attribute to be achieved, Binkley (2009, 2011) maintains that positive psychology, which aims to optimize, coordinate, and manage human behaviors by engineering human affects, has become a major governing method in neoliberal society. As a technology of neoliberal subjectification (Foucault 2008), positive psychology has dealt with individual happiness as an object of positive science, clinical intervention, and therapeutic manipulation (Gable and Haidt 2005). As

autonomous, willing neoliberal subjectivities of self-government, individuals regulate their emotions and govern themselves in a way that neoliberalism wants them to with "prescriptive, reflexive and instrumental dimensions of the happiness" (Binkley 2011, 381). In this neoliberal governmentality which replicates how the macro system of social regulations and rules produces docile subjects in micro, individual practices of subjectification, happiness is not a personal attribute of emotional well-being, but a matter of social policy for economic development. The biopolitics of neoliberalism manipulates one's thoughts, redirecting one's thoughts to happy subjects from negative ones; in turn, positive psychology is a powerful, cultural means of maintaining and proliferating the *status quo* (Ehrenreich 2009). In other words, as neoliberal governmentality, happiness is a strategic instrument for economic self-help, self-interest, and self-efficacy: Thus, positive psychology is a tool of inducement to self-production of neoliberal subjectivity, *homo economicus*.

Likewise, as an ideological representation of a "world of youth immersed in romanticism and play . . . walled off from the rest of the society" (S. Lee 2012, 463), K-pop in general is an effective means of perpetuating neoliberal positive thinking and aims to make the audience forget the dim sociopolitical and economic reality. In turn, this neoliberal positive ideology is a careful device to maintain consumerist capitalism that keeps capitalizing on people's urge to spend. Similarly, ToToGa is a neoliberal regulatory tool for individuals to navigate between how they think they "ought" to feel (neoliberal positive thinking) and how they "do" feel (everyday real-life feeling) in the worst employment market and economic disparity in Korean history (S. Kim 2015). Actually, as a means of embedding the audience into the positive psychology of 90s dance music, ToToGa imposed a dress code that aims to control not only their sartorial conduct but also psychological practices, by seating those in 90s costumes in the front row. By reproducing the temporal and spatial feeling of the 90s by careful deployment of props, goods, and atmosphere on the stage, the program delocalizes and detemporizes, and in turn, erases any reference or sense of real, specific historical time and location. By doing so, the 90s becomes a mere consumer spectacle that commands an urgency of the present moment.

In this dire socioeconomic situation where people are not willing to be agents of positive thinking, 90s dance music is once again deployed to configure the audience into neoliberal agents of positive thinking, feeling, and identity. Considering that "positive emotions experienced during a song [are] a much stronger predictor of music-evoked nostalgia" (Barrett et al 2010, 399), "Twist King," an encore song, preaches and urges people to feel positive, confident, and optimistic. This song culminated ToToGa's cultural politics in attaining, enhancing, and maintaining socioeconomically desired states of positive feeling. As a "catalyst that shifts actors out of their reluc-

tance to adopt what they perceive as 'necessary' modes of agency, and into the modes of agency 'demanded' by particular circumstances" (DeNora 1999, 38), the final, encore song resonates particularly well with the audience's psychological desperation to be successful financially and socially in the ever-polarizing neoliberal society. In this way, the audience, who have been suffering from neoliberal economic problems, are once again summoned to be faithful subjects of neoliberal fantasies to be rich and powerful in a way that demonstrates "how governmental rationalities transpose themselves onto the affective dispositions of subjects as analogous emotional enterprises centered on the cultivation and maximization of particular emotional potentials" (Binkley 2009, 387).

Therefore, as examined in chapter six, ToToGa's main theme is to show how the 90s musicians have been resilient to survive after their peak times, by suggesting that everyone has to do their best to survive in today's economic difficulties. Kim Jeong-nam, a member of Turbo who opened and closed the show, testified that he had put up with unbearable amounts of work to make ends meet while performing at clubs and bars for the last ten years. Quoting his personal reminiscing of the 90s as the best time of his life, which he thought "would have never come again," ToToGa signals that the "good old days" could possibly return when individuals are resilient and laborious, maintaining a proper psychological status to endure the dire living conditions of the current neoliberal regime. When ToToGa covers Cool, a dance trio, it focuses on Kim Sung-soo, whose daughter was watching his stage performance. While a 48-year-old singer is rather too old to sing and dance at the same time, he confesses the stage is emotionally fulfilling since he is able to prove his performance capabilities to his daughter, evoking paternal responsibility. Another participant ToToGa emphasizes is Shoo of S.E.S., who is a mother of three children. During qualifying scenes, Shoo's busy daily life as mother was highlighted to indicate how a former top celebrity lives just like ordinary people, thus symbolically naturalizing increasingly degrading living conditions under neoliberalism. This is especially evident when Shoo's discussion of unbearable pains while giving birth is juxtaposed with her excitement for this special episode where her performance is legitimized through neoliberal self-efficacy. After a round of degrading talks about Shoo's unexpected motherhood troubles and trivia, she reactivates herself as someone who used to be at the top of the industry. When asked to dance to a song she did not recognize at first, Shoo automatically perfects her choreography once the song plays. Despite a positive example of her talent, this incident indicates the biopolitical nature of the K-pop industry's slave-driver-like training system. Her comment, "thanks for encouraging mothers to pursue long-forgotten dreams," legitimizes a neoliberal exploitation of housewives' affective labour in service industries as a major workforce that sustains the current Korean economy.

Kim Taeho, the director and producer of *Infinite Challenge*, indicates that ToToGa pays homage to Kim Jeong-nam of Turbo and Shoo of S.E.S., focusing on their struggles to survive in reality. Leaving behind their legacies as the nation's top celebrities, they still have to come to terms with the neoliberal rules of life, doing their best to stay competitive and capable. Likewise, this is why Lee Jeong-hyun, introduced as the Lady Gaga of Korea, is praised for her well-maintained physical attractiveness, and more specifically, her young looks with a lot of *aegyo*. When Uhm Jeong-hwa later joins the show, ToToGa emphasizes how she is still busy with her successful career in the culture industry. By doing so, the show focuses on Uhm's explicit sexuality as her main selling point against countless younger, beautiful, sexy female celebrities. Most phenomenally, when she performs her songs with her original dancing crews from the 90s, ToToGa explicitly broadcasts how the dancers do their best to perform onstage even though they are not physically fit and capable anymore to the extent that their outfits have become too small and tight for them to move freely. What is suggested here is that ordinary people can still enjoy their success no matter how late it comes, as long as they stay resilient. Also, Jinu-Sean, a hip-hop duo, testify how hard they practiced in order to maintain physical stamina, representing a neoliberal model of self-development and self-efficacy in order to stay alive and competitive in the industry. Eventually, ToToGa persuades individuals to put up with the current sociocultural and politico-economic difficulties, sticking to the fading promises and hopes of success in neoliberal society. In sum, Uhm Jeong-hwa suggests "no matter how terrible and awful it feels at the moment, once time passes, you will realize that everything is meant to be important and worthy."

Participating musicians on ToToGa are required to achieve over 95 percent on their karaoke score, indicating that the neoliberal mantras of self-development, self-efficacy, and competitiveness govern the entire show. Turbo's "Twist King," the encore song of ToToGa, the singers had difficulty in passing the minimum score for qualification. Actually, Kim Jeong-nam testified he did his very best putting the very last drop of his energy into his performance. Likewise, three songs Turbo sang in the show were chosen since Kim Jeong-nam's portion is most salient amongst the group's songs. Therefore, it is suggestive that Turbo opened and closed the show. When persuading Cho Sung-mo, the most commercially successful musician of the 90s, ToToGa indicates that his appearance exemplifies a legitimacy and effectiveness of doing 90s music today. However, when he got a failing score of 83 percent for his test, Cho Sung-mo was asked to change his style of singing to accommodate that of karaoke which radically nullified his original singing mode, indicating that survival in neoliberal Korea requires one to admit and naturalize the neoliberal way of life. This comment invites the audiences to long for reactivating their fantasized 90s in reality, assuming

that they have to work hard so that they can achieve the desired socio-economic status in today's neoliberal Korea.

Concerning nostalgia's deliberative potential to seek an alternative to the present, which is a politics of memorizing the past for the future, *Infinite Challenge*'s ToToGa seems to inspire the audience to "recognize aspects of the past as the basis for renewal and satisfaction in the future" (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 921). However, since it does not critically examine the decade but arbitrarily selects certain genres and musicians, ToToGa is simply one of the most successful marketizations of nostalgia as an aesthetic and commercial stylization of the past, which serves the neoliberal *status quo*. While other nostalgic commodities such as *Architecture 101*, *Reply 1994!* and *Reply 1997!* situate the 90s within the present by narrating the decade's influence on growth, success, and changes of characters' current lives, ToToGa does not provide any reflective perspective on the decade, or discuss the participating musicians' professional and personal trajectories. Rather, the singers were used as stage props in a 90s theme park. For example, when Soh Chan-hwee, to date the most powerful female vocal singer, represents the year of 1996, her debut year, her perfect performance symbolizes an apex of Korea's economic optimism, epitomized by membership attainment in OECD. In turn, representing 1998, when Korea was completely replete with defeatism and pessimism right after receiving the IMF bailout, Cho Sung-mo, the Prince of Korean ballad, sings an emotionally charged sad ballad without its historical context. However, right after the sad ballad song, Cho bounces back to a fast-beat dance ballad to confirm the positive emotional theme of ToToGa, and he is praised as an ultimate male singer at last. After his successful management of emotional fluctuations, Cho Sung-mo is complimented for holding the performance venue and conveying strong emotional resonances to audiences by rejuvenating positive feelings. From this perspective, the last entry of the show, Kim Gunn-mo, as the "legend of Korean pop," succinctly summarizes ToToGa's ahistorical treatment of 90s pop music, which is a strange combination of sad messages and fast, optimist beats and melody. In other words, without providing any historical contextualization of the 90's pop music within Korea's contemporary political, economic, cultural, and social transformations, ToToGa consumes the music as a reactionary politics of emotion, which just relieves psychological stresses and burdens of people who struggle to live in today's neoliberalism.

In this respect, an ideological imperative of positive psychology, summoned back from 90s popular music, lies in neoliberalism's biopolitical strategy of "putting actors in touch with capacities, reminding them of their accomplished identities, which in turn fuels the ongoing projection of identity from past into future" (DeNora 1999, 48). In short, ToToGa asks the audience to work as hard as they did in the 90s. Therefore, as a result of commercial opportunism (Drake 2003), and as fabricated nostalgia, ToToGa

does not help the audience to deal with the future. Rather, it helps maintain the neoliberal *status quo* by further proliferating rosy fantasies as neoliberal positive thinking. While reflective, critical nostalgia can foster a transformative and creative self that improves sociocultural and politico-economic conditions in the present, *Infinite Challenge*'s ToToGa fails to reconstitute the decade. By ignoring the 90s' possibilities, challenges, contributions, and failures, the show eulogizes the dreadful present which is surpassed by not only the positive atmosphere of the 90s permeated in the songs, but also the vanishing dreams of a better future under the debilitating neoliberal regime. Instead, as a method of proliferating neoliberal positive thinking, ToToGa asks the audience to be devoted, resilient workers who are eager to endure the side effects of neoliberalism, like a surge of precarious, temporary employment, soaring income inequality, and a demise of social safety nets.

In conclusion, ToToGa's romanticizing narrative of the 90s is an ideological tool in imposing a moral imperative of working hard, staying resilient, and dreaming big at a time of economic hardship. In turn, ToToGa interpellates the audience to be willing socioeconomic agents in serving the current, neoliberal capitalist regime. Listening to 90s pop music provided the audience with an opportunity to recharge themselves. While "nostalgia can be both a social disease and a creative emotion, a poison and a cure" (Boym 2001, 354), ToToGa exploits the 90s as just a new inventory for commercial profiteering, and furthermore, helps perpetuate neoliberal governmentality.

NOTES

1. As a harbinger, KBS's *Gayo Mudae* (Popular Music Stage) has featured popular songs from the 50s, 60s, and 70s since November 1985. *Gayo Mudae* resurfaces public nostalgia sentiments toward Korea's past turbulent conditions under which people perseveringly struggled to modernize the country.

Conclusion

In this book, I have tried to reconsider K-pop and its female idols as a culmination of Korea's updated developmentalist strategy in neoliberal capitalism. Rather than an autonomous musical evolution or adaptation to a changing sociocultural environment, K-pop has been an industrial innovation to capitalize on what is available to maintain and advance national economic competitiveness. In this respect, the culture industry in post-IMF Korea has meant to replace the country's traditional strategic fields of development such as the consumer commodity manufacturing industry of the 60s and 70s and the heavy and chemical manufacturing industries of the 80s and early 90s. However, while the culture industry deals with a starkly different rationale, mode, and form of products, K-pop has retained and exploited the traditional, authoritarian mode of manufacturing and labor relations with its workers. In this context, as much as the nation's miraculously fast industrialization was possible by a successful mobilization of unwed female workers by the logic of patriarchal nationalism, K-pop's recent success, especially since 2007, has mainly been conditioned by a neoliberal appropriation of the traditional gender norms and expectations. To be more specific, I have examined how K-pop female idols have been an integral part of the culture industry's active role in neoliberal biopolitics, female subjectification, and subjectivation in neoliberal immaterial labor and consumerism. By reconsidering Foucault's theses on neoliberalism not only as a political economy of free market capitalism, but more importantly as a governmentality of individuals by the market rationalities, I have indicated how K-pop has been effective in reformulating the government's industrial and social policies, promoting commodity consumptions, (re)producing patriarchy, perpetuating neoliberal mantras like positive psychology and resiliency, and conditioning women to monitor, correct, and conform their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to

Korea's patriarchal neoliberalism. With this book, I hope to contribute to opening up a new approach to understanding K-pop's seemingly incongruous phenomena. Likewise, I hope this book helps usher in a new scholarly approach to the topic, namely, Critical K-pop Studies. With my attempt to encourage researchers to carry out Critical K-pop Studies, I hope they further develop critical, structural, and organic examinations on various particularities of the music genre in its practices and influences in both Korea and beyond.

However, my initial attempt in this book is far from satisfactory in its scholarly soundness, mainly due to its limited scope of topics, methodology, and a unit of analysis. As I disclosed in the introduction, this book's exclusive focus on female idols sacrifices many important developments, issues, and contributions, which were rendered by male idols. Despite its disclaimer, this book has a very limited pool of research objects, leaving many significant and influential K-pop female idols unexamined. While this study examines a structural condition of possibility of the music genre, or an industrial practice of deploying young female bodies, it does still have various limitations on its research methodology. Since this book mainly analyzed how K-pop female idols are presented as an object of desire and more specifically a mode of ideal femininity by the patriarchal neoliberal K-pop industry, it did not examine how female audiences actually appreciate them. In other words, because little is known about how audiences with different backgrounds make different meaning in a variety of ways in their everyday lives, this book took the risk of ignoring a concrete, day-to-day affection, attachment, and value the audiences conjure up *in their own terms* by consuming the idols' content.

Relying on mainly what is available in the public realm, such as published governmental reports, news articles, press releases of the industry, discussion threads on online sites, and YouTube videos, this book does not examine what is really going on in the minds of actual female idols. While ostensibly treating them as uncritical conformists to the industry and the cultural trend, this study takes the risk of not listening to their own voices and thoughts. This book's emphasis on the sociocultural implications of the idols' explicit sexualization poses another risk of treating audiences as mere passive recipients of media messages. As an "elastic discourse" (Lumby and Albury 2010), this study does not examine what audiences get out of the idols' staged sexual expressions, but treats them as evidence. With a hint of protectionism or victimization (Bragg et al. 2011; Smith 2010), this study does not consider how female audiences actually negotiate the media content in their everyday lives, neglecting audiences' sexual autonomy and pleasure. This in turn incurs an unexpected side effect of restaging a dichotomy between active, predatory male sexuality and passive, obedient female sexualities. I do hope future researchers fill this vast void and correct the mistakes I was not

able to avoid in this book. For example, using obtrusive methods, especially interviews with actual female idols and audiences, can reveal what is really going on in their minds in terms of their subjectification and subjectivation processes, and in turn overcome this book's major limitation. Interviews with personnel in the K-pop industry and the government will verify this book's preliminary argument on neoliberal developmentalism since the 1997 Financial Crisis. While I have raised more questions than answers on these issues, I do hope this book's critical attempts will encourage and vitalize critical, systematic investigation into Korea's culture industry in general, and K-pop in particular, in their dynamic relationships with the nation's neck-breaking speed of neoliberalization.

In an ever-mediated society like Korea, the media are increasingly being commercialized: Individuals are receiving messages that are mainly manufactured based on the economic interests of the stakeholders behind them. Subsequently, in this profit-driven media environment, public opinion or sentiment is shaped by economic interests rather than civic or social importance. Considering femininity has been defined, surveilled, and controlled by the interests and needs of the dominant patriarchs over time in Korea, I have tried to understand how K-pop female idols as a dominant cultural and social genre of the nation promote a certain array of behaviors, images, ideas, and emotions, and in turn teach audiences how to make sense of the world and how to manage themselves to survive. As a dominant force of sense-making in people's everyday lives, K-pop female idols, as a microcosm of Korean society, have become an icon of neoliberal female subjectivity manufactured as contemporary South Korea's concrete cultural, economic, historical, and social specificity. In this respect, with this book's preliminary arguments, the audience has to be more critical and aware of the cultural politics of the neoliberal cultural commodity in its cultural, economic, ideological, and social functionalities in maintaining a neoliberal regime.

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