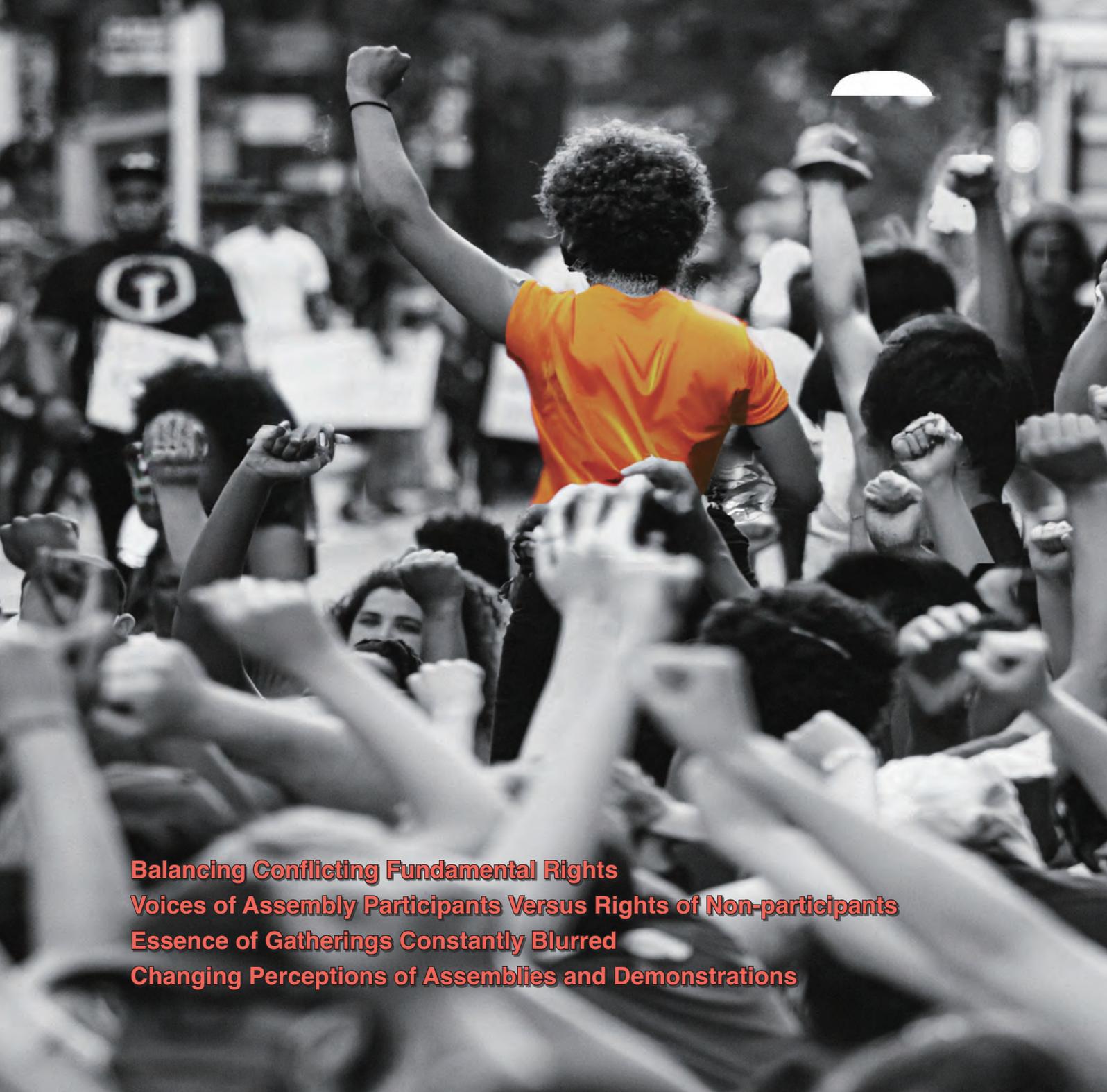


No. 538 NOVEMBER 16, 2023

The Argus

Since 1954

Proposed Revision of South Korea's Assembly and Demonstration Act



**Balancing Conflicting Fundamental Rights
Voices of Assembly Participants Versus Rights of Non-participants
Essence of Gatherings Constantly Blurred
Changing Perceptions of Assemblies and Demonstrations**

The Argus

ESTABLISHED 1954

Published monthly except on school holidays by and for the students of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, The Argus, the campus English magazine, pursues the highest standard of campus journalism and academism.

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Editorial

Compassion for Dignity

“My name is Daniel Blake. I am a man, not a dog. As such, I demand my rights. I demand you treat me with respect. I, Daniel Blake, am a citizen, nothing more and nothing less.” Director Ken Loach’s film “I, Daniel Blake” (2016) depicts an old man’s struggle to secure his human rights. The journey to prove that he is eligible for unemployment benefits exposes how stingy a country can be in aiding its struggling citizens, revealing the humiliating ordeals those in the blind spots of society.

Is an individual poor because they are lazy? Does the discomfort experienced by a person with a disability stem from them being excessively demanding? Is an elder’s hesitation at a kiosk due to a lack of effort in learning? A society that predominantly values rewards based on abilities often tends to judge an individual’s entire journey based on their capabilities. However, isn’t it a fact of life that we often cannot see what lies just ahead? Even if one has lived an honest and diligent life, they could find themselves pushed to the edge of a precipice at any moment. Just as Daniel, who has proudly and honestly pursued his passion as a carpenter, finds himself compelled to place his hopes in a welfare system that lacks fairness and support, he now faces unexpected challenges.

We often find it easy to blame those facing adversity and based on their circumstances may even hold them in contempt. The experiences of those in the majority, who do not feel significant discomfort in their daily lives, and those in the minority, who constantly face unfairness and unkindness, are undoubtedly distinct. The demands voiced by individuals with disabilities may sound like mere noise to those in the majority. However, a country has a duty to all its citizens. To fulfill this duty, it is essential to continuously review and reflect on whether the current system is fair and if there are any overlooked individuals. We must not forget that every one of us has the right to live a dignified life and the opportunity to do so. Observing Daniel’s world, where he struggles to lead a humane existence, prompts us to contemplate: What kind of society do we want to create? 

By Lee Jue-hyun
Editor-in-Chief

이 주 현



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No. 538

>> Freedom of assembly and association is a fundamental right guaranteed to all citizens in modern democratic societies. However, it may conflict with the right to enjoy a comfortable living environment for others, as some cases tend to undermine public order. In September 2023, the Korean National Police Agency announced a push for a revision of the Assembly and Demonstration Act with the aim of intensifying their crackdown on assemblies and demonstrations. Meanwhile, in November, large-scale gatherings of various organizations are scheduled to resume. Let's take an overview of the Assembly and Demonstration Act, with the aim of seeking a constructive understanding regarding conflicts between fundamental rights.

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Prof. Emeritus Kim Kyu-chin Wins Jiri Theiner Literary Award

On September 22, 2023, Professor Emeritus Kim Kyu-chin received the Jiri Theiner Literary Award. Martin Baxa, the Czech Minister of Culture, presented the award himself at the World Book Exhibition and Festival in Plzen, a city in the Czech Republic. The Jiri Theiner Literary Award is given to foreign scholars who have made an important contribution in promoting and translating Czech literature. Hereby, Professor Emeritus Kim became the first Asian to be recognized for his work.

Over the past 34 years, Professor Emeritus Kim introduced Czech studies in Korea by translating more than 20 volumes of Czech literature. He translated Michal Aiva's "The Other City," Karel Čapek's "Stories in the Pocket" series, and the "R.U.R.," a play in which the word "robot" was used for the first time. Moreover, he authored books of his own, including "Russia-Eastern Europe Literature & Art" and "A Critical Biography of Karel Čapek." Professor Emeritus Kim is a graduate of HUFS, having majored in Russian, and thereafter having gone to the U.S. to study Czech and Russian Literature at the University of Chicago in the 1980s. His life as a professor at HUFS started in 1989, and he continued teaching students until 2014. During his tenure at HUFS, he served as the vice president of HUFS and dean of the School of Eastern European Studies as well.

Professor Emeritus Kim remarked, "I feel like this award is the pride of HUFS and the Republic of Korea, not just my own. I think I got the award for promoting Czech literature and Czech culture to Korea for 33 years and translating about 20 pieces of Czech literature." The Argus hopes students feel motivated to study and research areas of their interest in depth, as Professor Emeritus Kim did. 📖



▲ Professor Kim(1st from R) receives the Jiri Theiner Literary Award.

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LDT Department Study Room Disappears

In November, the university announces the final applicants. Prospective students carefully read the perks offered by each department to decide which university they want to attend. However, the Division of Language and Diplomacy and Division of Language and Trade (LDT) are facing difficulty in attracting new students due to the closure of the LDT study room, one of the perks provided by the school. Its use was suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic, and it was later temporarily closed and demolished because the building with the LDT study room received a low grade in the building's safety assessment. Since then, the school has not provided an alternative space for the LDT study room.

The school explained that it was unable to fulfill the study room privilege due to the lack of space. In addition, the school suggested granting access to a certain percentage of LDT students to the 6th floor of the library. However, this is very different from the original guaranteed study room. LDT students are aware of study room privileges. In addition, since 2020 the privileges of the LDT division have been steadily decreasing, and the affection that LDT students have for the school has been diminishing.

The school said although in 2014 LDT freshmen were given a perk, other departments might oppose continuing privilege only for LDT. Shin Jae-eun (Division of Language and Diplomacy '22), the student council president of the LD department, said, "I know that it is realistically difficult to allocate study rooms right away. However, through ongoing meetings with the school, the LDT student council plans to strongly request priority allocation to study rooms." As the removal of study room privilege can result in a decrease in the competitiveness of HUFS itself, HUFS needs to take this situation seriously. 📖



▲ The LDT study room has remained closed since 2020. However, the privilege of using it was removed from the promotional materials for admission to the LDT faculty in 2024. Until 2023, HUFS included this study room privilege in its promotional materials.

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HUFS Holds 47th International Model United Nations

The 47th HUFS International Model United Nations (HIMUN) is now accepting visitor applications. The application period is from October 1 to November 18, and the actual Model United Nations (MUN) will be held on December 2. The agenda is an international discussion on humans and artificial intelligence, which will discuss the legal issues and impact of the expansion of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) on the international community. As the use of AI expands, such as the recent general strikes of Hollywood actors for refusing to make movies using AI, the issue has become important.

HIMUN is an academic venue for young people leading the era of internationalization based on the basic principles of the United Nations (U.N.): Liberty, equality, and fraternity for international peace and human security. After the establishment of the MUN in 1958, HIMUN held the first foreign language academic event in Korea, following the UN4MUN format, which replicates the actual United Nations conference procedure. This event comprises a Security Council, a Secretariat, and an interpreter board. Each HIMUN delegation is characterized by speaking in the language that their country represents, and interpreters will provide simultaneous interpretation in six official languages of the U.N. (English, French, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, and Russian).

In order to visit the 47th HIMUN, a separate application process is required. Individuals or groups of five or more can apply through the Google form and fill out the application form on the official website of HIMUN. Lee Jun-hyuk, the 47th HIMUN Secretary General, said, "I don't think there is as much interest from HUFSSans compared to HIMUN's reputation off-campus. I ask for HUFSSans' interest and support to continue HIMUN's tradition." 



©@himun_1958

▲ HIMUN is now accepting visitor applications and the conference will be held on December 2.

By Jang Yewon

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HUFS Signs MOU with International Schools

On September 25, 2023, HUFS signed an MOU with three international schools as a cooperative arrangement for the high school credit system. Principals of Korean International School in Hanoi, Korean International School Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), and Korean International School of Bangkok participated in the signing ceremony.

This MOU was signed as part of the aim to establish and promote a firm system in building a foundation for the high school credit system. Furthermore, HUFS hopes to foster future talent by opening and providing online curriculum classes for students studying in Korean schools overseas. Such an agreement means HUFS fully supports the high school credit system to be fully implemented starting from 2025. The high school credit system was initially launched in part to reform the high school curriculum. Its significance lies in which students are able to choose a course of study within subjects or areas like Korean language, mathematics, social science, nursing science, and engineering. Such a system has been established to encourage students' creative thinking and self-directed study. In particular, this MOU is the first for a university in Korea to open an online course program in partnership with overseas Korean schools, and it is outstanding in that the high school-university linkage project has expanded its scope to overseas.

Oh Jun-sik, the principal of Korean International School in Hanoi, commented, "Though it is practically difficult to open a variety of courses with the school's sole effort, I am very grateful to be able to open subjects required in high schools in connection with universities through this agreement." The Argus hopes students studying overseas can take advantage of this MOU and become familiar with the high school credit system. 



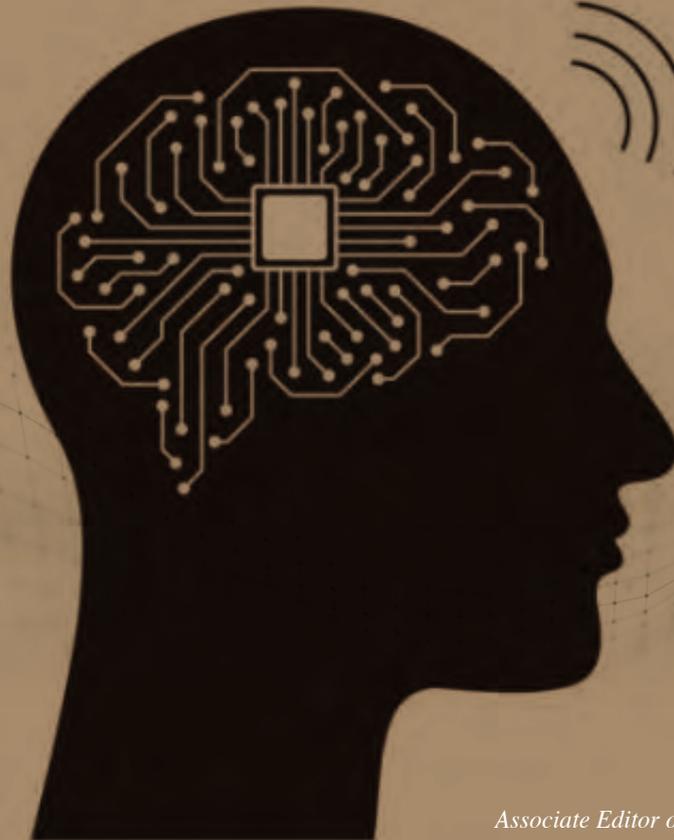
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▲ HUFS signs MOU with three international schools.

By Kim Ji-hyang

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The Cyborg Returns Again



By Kim Su-yeon

Associate Editor of Theory & Critique Section

What if you could move the cup in front of you or type on your laptop screen with just a thought? This telekinetic power that has belonged to movie heroes is no longer just a dream. On September 19, 2023, Elon Musk's neuroscience startup Neuralink began openly recruiting paraplegics who will participate in a clinical trial to implant a computer chip in the brain area that controls physical movement. This is a significant step towards the development of cyborgs, which are organisms that combine humans and machines.

A Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) uses computers to analyze brain waves and determine a person's thoughts and intentions and allows connected machines to work accordingly. BCI can be used to treat a variety of motor dysfunctions, and it does this by relaying commands from the brain to a computer, which then controls a machine. Beyond the medical field, BCI has many other applications for life and entertainment, such as apps that control lighting via brain waves and games that let a person fight virtual characters with his or her thoughts. Advances in science are constantly reshaping society and the lives of the people in it, and the world is undergoing a rapid transformation due to these advances. Celebrating World Science Day on November 10, The Argus examines the ways in which BCI is already changing and will change society.

What is BCI?

Concept and Trend of BCI Research



▲ Professor Charles Xavier's BCI technology enables him to engage in telepathic communication with other mutants.

The X-Men movie series features characters with various superpowers. One of them, Professor Charles Francis Xavier, has telepathic powers that allow him to read human thoughts and use them to give commands to agents from afar. BCI, also known as mind-reading technology, is a technology that uses computers to analyze brain waves to understand a user's thoughts and intentions and combine them with mechanical devices to realize specific actions.

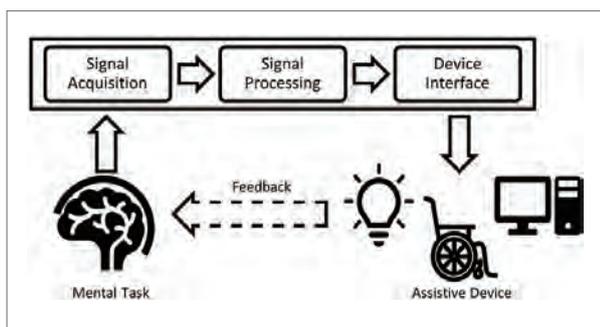
BCI enables two-way communication between the human brain and a computer. The computer can read the brain waves sent by the brain, and vice versa, the computer can send specific stimuli to the brain. Then how can a living thing like the brain and a machine, like a computer, work together? This is due to brain plasticity. Brain plasticity is the flexibility of brain cells to change with the environment. The human brain causes its structure to change and naturally adapt to those changes, as it constantly receives new stimuli. When a person uses BCI, the brain is connected to an external device called a computer via a chip or wearable device, so it needs time to adjust to this change. Kim Sung-phil, a professor of Biomedical Engineering at UNIST, explains, "With repeated learning, the human brain reorganizes its neural circuitry or changes the function of the neurons in the circuit, which gradually generates clearer brain waves to facilitate BCI to measure them." Repetitive learning is what strengthens the connection between BCI and the human brain, and current BCI research is focused on

improving the quality of communication between the two.

BCI has been systematically studied for nearly a century. In 1924, German physiologist Hans Berger placed electrodes on the human scalp and discovered that microscopic signals were flowing through the brain. This sparked the first regular research into BCI technology. In 2005 and 2012, researchers conducted experiments in which they implanted electrodes in the brains of monkeys and humans, and they had the connected machines pour water with robotic arms. Through this process they discovered that BCI could control the external environment through brain waves. With years of research behind them, BCI startups are now focusing on bringing BCI technology into the market. In 2019, the social metaverse company Meta acquired the neurotechnology startup CTRL-Labs and began developing technology that allows users to type with their minds instead of using a keyboard. In 2021, the U.S. neurotechnology startup Synchron successfully implanted a computer chip in the brain of a patient with Lou Gehrig's disease. The patient can now use messaging apps or search online by only moving their eyes or thinking. In May 2023, Neuralink also received approval for human clinical trials from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and the company plans to surgically implant computer chips into the human brain. What makes Neuralink's announcement so noteworthy is its work on a direct skull surgery method. Synchron inserted electrodes into blood vessels in the neck, which receive signals from the brain's motor cortex, without requiring any brain surgery. Neuralink, on the other hand, is currently trying to cut out a tiny portion of the skull with an ultrasonic cutter and replace it with an artificial chip.

The Operating Mechanism of BCI

Then how does BCI work? Imagine that person A is in bed and wants to turn on the heater without getting up. When A thinks "turn on the heat," the BCI device detects the thought as brain waves and sends them to the computer as data. The computer's algorithm then interprets the data as a command to turn on the heater and sends the command to the heater, so that eventually A can turn on the heater without moving.



▲ Brain waves measured by device are sent to a computer for processing, resulting in the movement of assistive device.

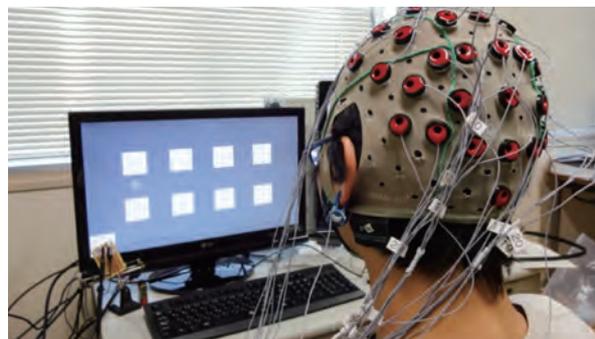
BCI technology works by analyzing brain waves. The most reliable way to read human thoughts and intentions is to utilize metrics that visually represent the brain's activity as a person thinks. Brain waves are the most popular metric. They are electrical signals generated by the brain when it is active. Jeong Ji-hoon, a professor of Computer Science at Chungbuk National University, explains, "Brain waves are generated when information from one's sensory organs enters the brain and excites neurons." The BCI device detects these brain waves and sends them to the computer. Finally, a pre-trained AI model analyzes the pattern of the waves to determine which activity or sensation they are associated with.

BCI technology involves three steps: brain wave measurement, signal conversion, and final output. In the first step of brain wave measurement, a bio-detecting device attached to the scalp or brain measures the brain waves to detect and interpret them as commands. The next step is to convert the measured waves into computer language. This signal is then refined to make it easier for machines to understand. An analog to digital (AD) converter performs this task. It converts brain waves, which are analog signals, into digital ones and sends them into a computer. In other words, it encodes the amplitude of brain waves into a form that can be manipulated by a computer. The computer then removes the noise from the brain waves and amplifies only the brain waves that it needs to analyze. After that, the computer's algorithms interpret command data with the brain waves and send it to the machine that the user was trying to control. Eventually, the machine will perform the specific behavior or task that the user wants.

How BCI Measures Brain Waves

Non-invasive BCI

There are two main types of BCIs and they are based on where the brain waves are measured. First of all, non-invasive BCIs measure brain waves from the scalp. Therefore, no surgery is required, and measurements can be taken simply by wearing the device on the head. There are several types of non-invasive BCIs, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), but one of the most studied is electroencephalography (EEG). MRI is the most famous and commonly used for medical purposes, but it is limited in that it only shows the appearance and structure of frozen tissue at a specific time. On the other hand, an EEG provides real-time physiological information. It makes it possible to observe how the brain responds in real time and detects cognitive changes. In addition, an EEG has a high temporal resolution, so it records the brain waves in milliseconds, more densely than others. It uses a cap-like device called an EEG cap with wires. A liquid gel is injected into the terminals of the electrodes where the electrical wires are connected. This is to maximize conductivity of the electrodes so that they can detect as many brain waves as possible.



▲ EEG caps require many wires and electrodes to measure brain waves.

However, non-invasive BCI has the limitation that the measured brain waves include a lot of noise. Non-invasive BCI helmets and headsets do not touch the brain directly, so they are prone to noise such as non-brain wave signals. This is why the post-process to remove noise and amplify the brain waves is essential. Noise is mostly caused by physiological signals. Noise comes from the heartbeat, visual signals from blinking or moving eyes, and other

signals from basic brain activity that are irrelevant to the experiment. Regarding this, Hwang Han-jeong, an associate professor of Electronics and Information Engineering at Korea University, says, “There is no way to completely eliminate these unnecessary signals. Instead, it can be prevented or eliminated to some degree.” He adds, “Active electrodes that are utilized in devices worn on the brain prevent noise from reaching the brain. The amplifiers in the electrodes amplify the brain waves as soon as they receive the signal, making them relatively clear even when noise is introduced later.” However, even these devices cannot completely eliminate noise, so computer programs are used to improve accuracy. A computer program called an “independent component analysis” analyzes each piece of noise independently to distinguish brain waves from others. After removing the noise, it restores the brain wave to its original signal. Besides noise, non-invasive BCI devices have difficulty pinpointing where a particular brain wave is occurring, as the waves travel through the cerebrospinal fluid.* Professor Hwang explains, “EEG electrodes may not always purely record brain waves from the area directly below them.” This is because EEG waves from distant brain regions can also travel through the cerebrospinal fluid and reach the electrodes. Professor Hwang suggests, “Recent research has been conducted by utilizing a computer algorithm called source imaging to overcome these limitations.” With the measured brain waves, source imaging simulates how much brain wave is coming from each area and then selects only the brain wave from the targeted area. In this way, non-invasive BCI devices overcome their limitations with the help of software programs.

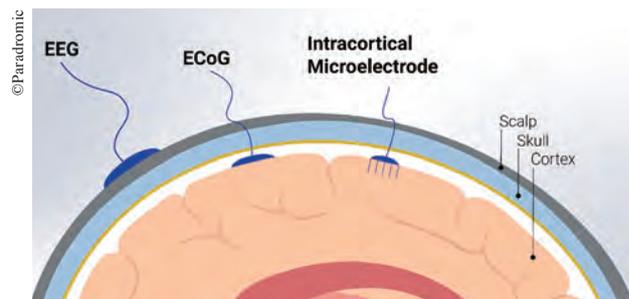
*Cerebrospinal fluid: The fluid that fills the spinal cord and interconnected hollow spaces within the brain.

Invasive BCI



In February 2023, the U.S. BCI company Synchron implanted a chip in the motor cortex of seven patients’ brains through endovascular surgery. This is one of the invasive methods that measures brain waves by placing electrodes inside the body to capture signals from the brain. Neuralink’s human clinical trial uses another

sort of invasive BCI, which inserts chips directly into the brain. The chips contain numerous microelectrodes. Each electrode is inserted near a neuron’s cell body to measure the action potential. An action potential is an electrical signal produced by neurons when a person moves their body. Action potentials usually occur in the cell body, so the most accurate way to measure them is to insert electrodes directly into the cell. However, this is difficult because it is dangerous. Professor Kim states, “It is extremely difficult to insert electrodes into cell bodies in the normal brain.” He adds, “Even if it is successfully inserted into a cell, the physical chip can have adverse effects on the nerve cells.” Professor Jeong also agrees that the biggest limitation of invasive BCI is that it requires surgery by a medical professional. Invasive BCI involves opening the skull and attaching or inserting electrodes directly to the surface of the brain. Moreover, the surface of the brain tissue where the electrodes are placed could be temporarily weakened after surgery.



▲ ECoG, an invasive BCI, directly measures brain waves from the brain cortex.

Despite these concerns, invasive BCI is constantly studied because it provides more precise brain waves with less noise than non-invasive BCI. For example, electrocorticography (ECoG), an invasive BCI, involves opening the skull and attaching a patch with multiple electrodes directly to the brain cortex.* This makes it possible to attach electrodes to different parts of the brain for different purposes, allowing for more sophisticated reception of specific sensations. Alternatively, it allows for two-way communication between the brain and the physical chip, such as passing a small current through a specific area of the brain cortex and then observing the brain waves it produces. Another invasive BCI is the probe

method, which involves inserting tiny needles into the cortex to allow electricity to flow. This method has the advantage of obtaining more brain waves with less noise than other invasive and non-invasive methods.

*Brain cortex: The gray matter on the surface of the brain which is responsible for thinking.

The Future of BCI

Overcoming Physical Disabilities

Genius physicist Stephen Hawking suffered from Lou Gehrig's disease, but BCI helped him overcome some of his physical limitations. A device that interprets brain waves read Stephen Hawking's thoughts and projected his thoughts onto a screen. Thus, he was able to communicate his thoughts without speaking or using his hands, allowing him to make significant contributions to people's understanding of the universe. In this way, BCI allows a person to type with their minds. In addition, paraplegic patients can control their artificial legs with their minds. How can thoughts lead to actions like this?

The reason BCI can read brain waves and control specific behaviors is because of how the brain processes information. Professor Kim explains, "In general, when a person moves their body or says something, the associated brain neural circuits activate, but just imagination without actually moving or speaking activates the same brain neural circuits." In other words, when one imagines a certain behavior, brain waves are produced that are similar to the real thing. BCI reads the patterns of these waves to determine which body parts a person is trying to move and what words they are trying to say, and then produces movements or speech accordingly. For example, when a person imagines moving their arm, neurons in the motor cortex generate action potentials similar to those that would be generated if they were actually moving their body. The neurons in the motor cortex contain their own motor information. For example, some neurons represent the speed of movement, while others represent the direction of movement. When a person speed up or move their arm in a certain direction, the neurons generate more action potentials, which create a distinct signal. By reading

and interpreting the relationship between the patterns of action potentials and movements, computing systems can determine a person's intention to move. The intention is communicated to the machine as a command, which ultimately produces the same movement as a human body part. Stephen Hawking's brain wave detector also reads signals from the motor cortex. When a quadriplegic patient imagines writing a certain letter of the alphabet, they are actually imagining moving their hand to produce the handwriting. When a person moves their hand, the action potential of neurons is generated. By analyzing the patterns of neuron activity, AI can infer what handwriting gestures are being made and predict the shape of the corresponding letter. AI then types the letter on the computer screen, just like a human would type it on a keyboard.



▲ A BCI device reads a user's brain waves to detect hand movement and type letters on the screen.

This is why BCI is often used for medical purposes to complement athletic performance, as it can slow the deterioration of a disease. As a patient's motor skills decline, the area of the brain that controls them also shrinks in size, but simply imagining the movement activates the brain and helps with neurorehabilitation. However, BCI is not perfect yet. Professor Jeong points out, "When experimenting with patients, the performance of the technology varies depending on the patients' condition." This means that BCI devices are not yet ready to be sold on the open medical market. Therefore, current research is focused on improving the "accuracy" with which BCI devices can read human intent.

Living and Wellness



In order for BCIs to be used in daily life other than for medical care, the equipment must be miniaturized and simplified first. Professor Hwang says, “For non-invasive BCI, now a minimum of 30 electrodes and a maximum of 60 electrodes are required to accurately represent the flow of brain waves to the computer. This is impractical for everyday use.” In order for the BCI market to expand, it needs to be accessible to everyone, not just a few users in the medical field. Recently, wireless earphones have been introduced that measure brain waves near the ear to check one’s stress levels. One such example is “brid.zzz,” launched by LG Labs. Utilizing non-invasive BCI, brid.zzz is a wellness device in the form of wireless earphones that measures brain waves in real time to determine the user’s stress level and plays sounds at the appropriate frequency to relieve tension. Adding moisture to the inside of the ears before putting the device in can help the sensor detect brain waves more accurately. It is the same principle as putting gel in the terminals of an EEG cap. When the electrodes are wet, the skin is in closer contact with the electrodes.



▲ Brid.zzz measures brain waves to provide solutions for better sleep and stress relief.

On the other hand, collaboration with smart homes will be a great way to make BCI accessible to everyone. When combined with BCI, a smart home makes it possible to control appliances with just thoughts, rather than by pressing buttons on the smartphone or using voice commands. In the paper “Development of Smart Home System Based on IoT Using EEG” (2021), Seo Ssang-hee, a professor of the Computer Science and Engineering Department at Kyungnam University, presented a smart home system that uses brain waves to open and close the

windows in a house. The system consists of a series of processes that induce and collect the user’s brain waves and use them to control the movement of the window. First, the user puts on an EEG headset and accesses a mobile app that elicits brain waves. When he sees an arrow pointing to the right in the mobile app, he mentally associates it with the right direction. In the same way, when the user sees an arrow pointing to the left, he imagines a direction to the left. The brain waves are then converted to a numerical data format. The brain wave that occurs when the user thinks of the right side is turned into a one, and the left side is turned into a two, which is then fed into the brainwave classification algorithm. After being categorized by the algorithm, the orientation data is sent through a small computer in the form of commands to a motor attached to the window. Then as the motor moves, it opens and closes the window.

Neural Hacking and Privacy



What if others could steal your thoughts? Combined with privacy concerns, the possible ramifications are significant. Neural hacking is a concept that emerged out of concerns that information in the minds of humans could be used for malicious purposes when it connected to a computer. In fact, researchers at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom have found that it is possible to use EEG technology to learn a subject’s banking information. In the paper “On the Feasibility of Side-Channel Attacks with Brain-Computer Interfaces” (2012) written by Ivan Martinovic, researchers used the P300 brain wave, which is produced when a person recognizes a familiar object. The P300 is commonly used in polygraph interrogations in a way similar to the Guilty Knowledge Test, which is derived from the fact that a subject that is familiar to a person has a different brain response than one who is not. In the experiment, researchers showed subjects images of four different credit cards emblazoned with the bank’s logo and then measured their P300 brain waves. By capturing the card with the strongest P300 when the subject looked at each option, researchers learned the name of the subject’s bank. Later, the researchers emphasized that even more sophisticated attacks will be possible in the

future, giving examples of “mind games.” The idea is that a hacker can disguise a brain wave reading experiment as an interrogation-style game and make users participate in the game in order to extract their personal information. Like this, BCIs can be used to read brain waves that occur instinctively when a person is in a certain situation and can be used to commit crimes such as stealing personal information.



▲ Researchers identify the corresponding bank of each subject by comparing the P300 wave strength when shown images of four credit cards.

Hacking is an even greater threat when BCI meets the Internet of Things (IoT). In the paper “Analysis of the Vulnerability of the IoT by the Scenario” (2017),

Hong Sung-hyuck, a professor of the Department of Information and Communication at Baekseok University, presents several scenarios for IoT security threats. Among them, one scenario that is particularly concerning is the possibility of hacking medical devices. In detail, a hacker could manipulate the signals from an artificial pacemaker and threaten the life of a patient with heart disease. This means that a hacker could gain access to the software that manages the pacemaker’s signals and take sudden actions, such as increasing the current or turning it off, which could ultimately kill the patient. This is even more threatening considering that BCI allows for two-way communication, not only from the brain to the computer, but also from the computer to the brain. The case of a Parkinson’s patient clearly implies this. Specifically, BCI devices can deliver electrical stimuli to the slowed brain area of the immobile patient to restore his motor skills. In one experiment, researchers applied electrical stimulation to a patient’s brain, and he was able to move easily. When the electrical stimulation was stopped, the movement stopped. Because delivering stimuli from a computer to the brain could induce both positive and harmful effects, the combination of IoT and BCI is a double-edged sword.

The future of BCI has arrived. Once the stuff of science fiction, the prospect of humans integrated with computers is slowly becoming a reality in the modern world. In addition to helping people with neuroparalysis, BCI will also bring convenience to the everyday lives of ordinary people. However, there are a few challenges that need to be addressed first. Efforts should be made to improve the performance of BCI such as by making them smaller and more accurate, and recent research is making good progress toward this goal. Meanwhile, on the other hand, there is a parallel struggle to figure out how to use the technology properly. Technological advancement is a positive thing, but there is still a need to put safeguards in place to prevent misuse, ensuring that BCI technology is used ethically. The Argus looks forward to a future where BCI technology can coexist harmoniously with human society. 

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Is a Hangover Cure Your Best Friend or Foe?

By Ryu Hyo-rin

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After drinking, what comes to people’s minds? It could be spicy ramen, cool water, or just lying in bed and sleeping all day long. However, modern people have a so-called “cheat code” to counter the painful hangover that often follows a pleasant drink. It is a hangover cure. In November, as year-end gatherings kick into full swing, hangover cures are flying off the shelves. In 2022, the Korean bio-health company HK Innoen experienced a 16 percent increase in sales of its hangover cure “Condition Stick” in November compared to the previous month, marking the largest boost in sales. As further evidence of this trend, it is common to see people readily consuming hangover cures while drinking alcohol at year-end gatherings. However, do the hangover cures so loved by modern people really have a hangover-cure effect? And by what principle does it work on our bodies and what are the side effects? Now that the hangover cure market and consumption are gradually expanding due to various gatherings, these questions are well worth considering. The Argus encourages readers to consume healthy hangover cures by examining the effects, principles, and side effects.

 [Before Reading] Hangover Cure

Hangover cure refers to eating or drinking to relieve hangovers caused by excessive alcohol consumption. In South Korea (hereafter Korea), various hangover cures are on sale, starting with CJ CheilJedang’s “Condition,” Korea’s first hangover cure, which was introduced in 1992. Although it is often called a hangover drink because it is mostly in the form of drinks, there are various formulations such as pills, liquids, powders, and jellies. In addition to formulations, there are also a wide variety of ingredients such as herbal medicines, vitamins, and amino acids. Most hangover cures are classified as healthy functional foods or general medicines and can be purchased at convenience stores or pharmacies.

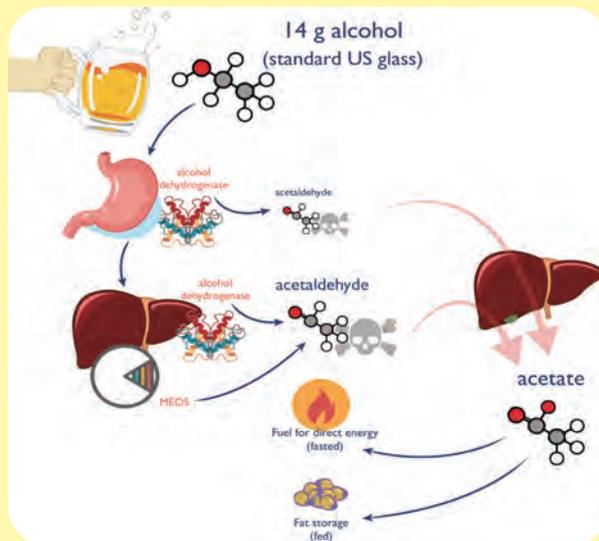


Bright Side of Anti-Hangover

(1) Promoting Alcohol Metabolizing Enzymes and Energy Recovery

“Say hello to your new favorite drinking buddy...And goodbye to rough mornings.” This is the advertising phrase for “Morning Recovery,” one of the American hangover cures. Literally, taking a hangover cure will relieve people’s hangovers and give them a relatively refreshing morning. So how does a hangover cure relieve a hangover in less than half a day? Hangover cures help relieve hangovers by helping the liver break down alcohol. To understand the principle of alcohol decomposition of hangover cures, people must first know how hangovers occur. Alcohol is broken down by two processes in the liver. According to Kim Do-young, a professor of the Department of Internal Medicine at Yonsei University College of Medicine, alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH) in the liver breaks down alcohol when it enters the body, causing toxic substances that cause people to get hungover. To relieve these hangover symptoms, the body needs to go through a second decomposition process. When toxic substances that cause hangovers are decomposed, by-products are produced and when these by-products are released, the hangover symptoms that people commonly experience stop.

The principle of hangover relievers helps activate alcohol-degrading enzymes ADH and aldehyde dehydrogenase (ALDH), enabling the rapid decomposition and discharge of toxic substances. B group vitamins, a representative ingredient of hangover cures, helps break down alcohol. According to Min Jae-won, Pharmacist of the Korean Pharmaceutical Association and Min Jae-won Pharmacy, B group vitamins are involved in the metabolism and degradation of alcohol. She explains, “Alcohol is metabolized in the liver, and B group vitamins such as vitamins B1, B2, B3, and B6 are needed in the alcohol metabolism process.” In addition, “Alcohol causes changes in the cell membrane of the intestine, inhibiting or lowering the absorption of essential amino acids, fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals, which are essential elements of our body. Alcohol decreases the absorption of vitamin B and easily excretes it, so after drinking too much, the body lacks vitamin B.” Drinking alcohol makes one feel bloated and tired the next day because of vitamin B deficiency.



▲ Alcohol is broken down by two processes in the liver.

(2) Liver Protection

Easy Tomorrow, Condition and Glami Dawn 808 are hangover cures that most people may have heard of at least once in Korea and they all contain the same main ingredient: oriental raisin tree extract. Oriental raisin tree extract is a common ingredient in market hangover cures and is known for its excellent liver damage reduction effect. The oriental raisin tree belongs to Rhamnaceae, a family of flowering plants and trees, and helps to detoxify active oxygen generated by the decomposition of alcohol in the liver. Active oxygen is an oxygen-containing oxygen ions or atoms. Active oxygen damages cells during alcohol degradation. Active oxygen occurs mainly in the second process of alcohol decomposition, which releases toxins from the liver, and active oxygen caused by ALDH decomposing toxic substances oxidizes the liver. Glutathione, an antioxidant contained in the oriental raisin tree extract, prevents liver cell damage due to active oxygen. According to a paper by Professor Park Sun-hee of Yeungnam University, “Protective Effect of Hovenia dulcis Thumb Leaves Extraction on Hepatic Injurious Induced by Benzo(α)pyrene in Mice” (2009), the glutathione in the oriental raisin tree extract increases the glutathione content in the liver and quickly resolves the active oxygens that cause liver oxidation.

Easy Tomorrow Booster, one of Korea’s most well-known hangover cures, contains milk thistle. In addition to Daewoong Pharmaceutical Company’s Easy Tomorrow Booster, Ursa Ace also contains milk thistle. There are also

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hangover cures or nutritional supplements in Korea with milk thistle as the main ingredient. Why is milk thistle so widely appreciated as a component in hangover cures? Milk thistle, the epitome of liver health food, is a chrysanthemum plant that protects the outer membrane of liver cells. “Milk thistle mainly contains silymarin, a compound that helps protect the liver and restore hepatocytes,” explains Pharmacist Min. Silymarin is a substance that protects the liver from damage caused by hepatotoxic substances or chemicals. According to the 2019 research paper titled “Isolation and Purification of Active Components for Liver Protective Activity from Milk Thistle Extract,” written by Heo Eun-ji at Chungnam National University, silymarin is a powerful antioxidant and has the effect of protecting

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▲ People can get various types of hangover cures containing oriental raisin tree extract and milk thistle.

the hepatic cell membrane and preventing toxic substances from entering the hepatic cell and helping the hepatic cell regenerate.

(3) Glucose and Electrolyte Supplements

Have you ever experienced the craving for chocolate milk or ice cream after consuming alcohol? Or perhaps you have had a brain meltdown? These situations often occur when there is an actual disruption in the smooth supply of sugar. Originally, if there is excessive blood glucose concentration, glucose is converted into glycogen* and stored in the liver. When the blood needs glucose, glycogen is converted back into glucose to supply glucose to the blood. However, when alcohol is supplied to the body while drinking, the liver focuses on alcohol decomposition and the supply of glucose to the blood slows. Because the liver is too busy breaking down alcohol, it is not possible to convert stored glycogen into glucose. Therefore, when someone consumes alcohol, the body can be misled into perceiving a lack of sugar, even though alcohol contains a significant number of calories. During this time, the sugar component in the hangover cure promptly replenishes glucose to address this issue. Consuming a hangover cure means that glucose is directly restored into the bloodstream.

Some people experience a frequent need to visit the

bathroom when they consume alcohol. Additionally, in bar restrooms, the queues can be quite long, causing anxiety for those waiting. Some people attribute the frequent bathroom trips to the liquid nature of alcohol, thinking it leads to increased urination. However, the increased urination while drinking is primarily due to the influence of alcohol on the brain. When the body lacks water, the pituitary gland* secretes antidiuretic hormones that regulate water in the body to absorb water from the kidneys. On the other hand, if there is a lot of water, the amount of antidiuretic hormone secretion decreases, and water that is not absorbed by the kidney is discharged into the urine. Alcohol inhibits the action of antidiuretic hormones and does not absorb water from the kidneys, increasing the amount of urine. The problem is that when water escapes from the body due to diuretic effects, the body lacks electrolytes. Electrolytes refer to substances that dissolve in water in the body to form ions, such as sodium, potassium, calcium, and magnesium. These electrolytes are essential for biological processes because they are involved in metabolism and help cells operate normally. Electrolytes are maintained at a constant concentration by various complex physiological mechanisms in the body, which is called electrolyte homeostasis. However, when water in the body escapes due to the diuretic action caused by alcohol, the homeostasis of the electrolyte naturally collapses, and an imbalance of the electrolytes occurs. The electrolytes contained in the hangover cure resolve the electrolyte imbalance caused by lack of water, quenching thirst, and supporting metabolism.

*Glycogen: Polysaccharide consisting of a set of glucose.

*Pituitary gland: A small endocrine gland located in the middle of the brain that regulates the secretion of various hormones, according to Asan Medical Center in Seoul.

☹️ Flip side of Anti-Hangover Cures

(1) Not Remedy, Just Painkiller

Ms. Kim (Department of ELLT '22), said, “When I drink a hangover cure, I do not get drunk even if I drink alcohol the next day. The more hangover cure I drink, the more alcohol I detoxify.” Then, as Kim said, does a hangover cure actually detoxify all the alcohol left in the liver? In fact, drinking a hangover cure boosts alcohol-degrading enzymes, not removing the poison accumulated in the liver by consuming alcohol. Jun Dae-won, a professor of the

Department of Gastroenterology at Hanyang University College of Medicine, says a hangover cure only serves as a pain killer, not a remedy to eliminate the underlying cause of pain. “A hangover is the kind of pain that causes our bodies to stop drinking alcohol, and a hangover cure is what relieves this pain. However, it literally relieves pain and does not treat toxins or abnormalities in the body that cause the pain.” Therefore, even if one takes a hangover cure, the body will bear the diseases and inflammation caused by alcohol poisoning. In other words, the damage to the body caused by alcohol itself and toxic substances in the process of decomposing alcohol does not end simply with a hangover.

Toxic substances, which hangover cures cannot remove, have an adverse effect on the body even after decomposition. Professor Jun says, “The toxicity of alcohol adversely affects not only the liver, but also all the organs in the body, including the brain, intestines, and pancreas.” In particular, acetaldehyde and acetic acid produced by alcohol adversely affect the intestine. According to Professor Jun, alcohol weakens the intestinal barrier in the process of digesting alcohol. The intestinal barrier determines the substances that can be released from the intestine into the blood. At this time, a small gap in the hard barrier called the tight junction, allows water and nutrients to pass through but blocks toxic substances. Alcohol makes the hard junction of the barrier mushy. This makes it difficult for the intestine to filter out toxic substances, allowing harmful bacteria and toxins to pass through the intestine into the bloodstream. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as “leaky gut syndrome.” Symptoms such as abdominal distension and enteritis caused by gas may occur in cases of leaky gut syndrome. In severe cases, this can lead to internal bowel cancer.

(2) Some Ingredients Become Toxic to the Body

In fact, hangover cures often contain a significant amount of added sugar to replenish the body’s glucose levels after drinking. However, the real issue arises after all the alcohol has been metabolized. According to statistics from Biz Watch in April 2023, the average hangover cure contained 18 grams of sugar. The product with the highest sugar content is Lotte Chilsung’s Kaesugang, which contains 21 grams in 160 ml, which is higher than the 20 grams in 190 ml of Coca-Cola. Of course, consuming sugar

during alcohol decomposition can help overcome hypoglycemia, but a problem occurs when the sugar in the alcohol and the sugar in the hangover

Product Name	Key Ingredients	Sugar Content (g)
Kaesugang	Korean dendropanax, Raisin tree extract, seaweed	21
Raisin Tree Power	Raisin tree extract	18
Easy Tomorrow	Raisin tree extract, Glutathione	12
Ready Qaicuc	Raisin tree extract, Curcumin	12
Condition	Raisin tree extract	11
Tomorrow N	Korean dendropanax	11
Morning Care	Rice Soybean Extract (RSE+q)	6

▲ Most hangover cures contain lots of sugar.

cure are consumed at the same time. Consuming sugar and alcohol at the same time creates an environment where visceral fat accumulates. In a 2021 article in Health Chosun titled “Bitter Liquor? Now Sweet Liquor... Alcohol Plus Sugar Bomb,” Professor Suh Hee-sun of Gachon University said, “The calories from alcohol are consumed relatively earlier than those from sugar. This means that unused sugar accumulates in the gut.” The issue is that alcohol itself also promotes the accumulation of visceral fat. Visceral fat is dangerous because it circulates through the bloodstream, accumulating in blood vessels, the liver, and the heart, and triggering the release of inflammatory substances. In the article, Professor Kang Bo-sung of Hanyang University said, “In theory, alcohol metabolism inhibits the emergence of enzymes related to sugar metabolism, which interferes with sugar metabolism itself.”

On the other hand, Koreans’ love for oriental raisin tree extract is evident in market sales. According to market researcher NielsenIQ Korea’s Ready to Drink (RTD) beverage market statistics in May 2023, sales of oriental raisin beverages from April 2022 to March 2023 reached a whopping 62 billion won (US \$45.95 million). However, is there any harm to the body if people continue to consume large amounts of oriental raisin tree extract? In fact, if there is liver damage, such as hepatitis or chronic hepatitis, excessive consumption of oriental raisin tree extract can strain the liver due to its weakened function. This is because the high concentrations of various ingredients in oriental raisin tree extract can impair liver function. In fact, according to the “Clinical Characteristics of 159 Cases of Acute Toxic Hepatitis” published in The Korean Journal of Hepatology in 2008, there were cases of toxic hepatitis caused by oriental raisin tree extract. In fact, doctors do not recommend that liver patients take oriental raisin tree

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extract but prohibit it. According to an article in 2010 titled “Everyone Knows and Eats the Oriental Raisin Tree” from Herald Pop, boiling the oriental raisin tree raw may cause its concentration to vary and cause harm to the body. Therefore, it is safe to consume the recommended amount of 2460 mg. It is very important to know and consume the oriental raisin tree extract cautiously because its efficacy depends on the extraction site, intake, etc. Jang Dong-min, a Doctor of Korean medicine, said, “The oriental raisin tree can be poisonous or medicinal depending on the condition of a person’s body. If one who has a fever, hepatic redness, or disease consumes oriental raisin tree extract, I cannot guarantee his or her safety.”

(3) Not a Healer, Actually a Traitor to the Body

There are people who say they can drink beyond their normal drinking limit with the aid of a hangover cure. Is this true? It is impossible to increase one’s drinking capacity. Professor Jun said, “The drinking capacity is the amount of alcohol the body can handle. In other words, it means the amount of alcohol that the body’s alcohol-degrading enzymes can handle. However, these alcohol-degrading enzymes are genetically determined.” In other words, the amount of alcohol a person can handle is innate. Therefore, it is not correct to say that hangover cures can increase drinking capacity. Drinking alcohol while continuing to drink hangover cure causes side effects. This is because the body ignores the signal to stop drinking and continues to pour alcohol into the liver. When a person drinks beyond his or her drinking capacity, an enzyme called Cytochrome P450 (CYP) is secreted, not an enzyme that breaks down alcohol. The role of CYP is not originally to break down alcohol. However, when CYP decomposes alcohol, more active oxygen is generated than usual. If one drinks too much while relying on a hangover cure, the

frequency of CYP’s artificial release increases, which intensifies liver damage.

In addition, there are people who randomly purchase, and drink hangover cures sold on the market to relieve hangover symptoms. It is okay to consume hangover cures sold at general convenience stores before and after drinking alcohol. However, taking a hangover cure regardless of one’s symptoms or by arbitrary judgment after drinking can have side effects. Pharmacist Min said, “Consuming a hangover cure about 30 minutes before drinking is effective in reducing alcohol absorption in the liver and alleviating heartburn. Eating while drinking can also immediately affect the decomposition of alcohol in the liver. However, the crucial aspect is the choice of a hangover cure after drinking. Pharmacist Min explains that excessive consumption of hangover cures can lead to side effects. In other words, when using a hangover cure after drinking, individuals should select one that matches their specific hangover symptoms. Pharmacist Jeong Jae-hoon said, “For example, if one complains of a headache the day after drinking alcohol and takes an acetaminophen* based pill, it can damage his or her liver.” When taking a hangover cure after drinking, it is important to choose one that fits the symptoms after consulting with an expert.

* Acetaminophen: Pharmaceutical ingredients representing pain relief, fever-reduction.



▲ Hangover cures cannot increase one’s drinking capacity.

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“There is no healthy drinking in the world.” These are the words left by Professor Jun of Hanyang University. After all, taking a hangover cure for the purpose of healthy drinking is a clear misuse of a hangover cure. Of course, hangover cures act to relieve the pain in the body caused by drinking. However, blind faith in them and excessive drinking beyond one’s innate limit are very dangerous. Fun events accompanied by drinking are waiting for people at the end of the year. In this atmosphere, it is not easy to avoid drinking. Instead of relying on hangover cures, why not focus on enjoying a healthy and happy drinking experience and preventing a hangover altogether? 🍷

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ROAR OF THE CROWD: CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING THE ASSEMBLY AND DEMONSTRATION ACT

By Kim Jun-hong

Associate Editor of Social Section

During Seoul's Monday rush hour, people in wheelchairs with signs that read "Guarantee mobility for people with disabilities" struggle to get on the subway. Police and Seoul Metro employees scramble to stop them, and citizens, with a cold look, go up the stairs in resignation. In addition to the subway, Gwanghwamun Plaza, Hyeon-dong roundabout, and the area near the War Memorial of Korea in Yongsan are crowded with those who continue to hold rallies and protests, each with different reasons and purposes. Every individual deserves their rights, but it is almost impossible to guarantee them to everyone at the same time. This is because there are often cases where certain freedoms or rights infringe on the freedoms and rights of others. At the heart of the sharp conflict between many fundamental rights and freedoms are assemblies and demonstrations. The conflict between participants and non-participants of such actions continues to be an ongoing issue, and the Assembly and Demonstration Act serves as a balancing point.

Meanwhile, the Korean National Police Agency, who have been observing the escalation of tensions between protest groups and citizens, announced in September 2023 that they will push for a change in the law with the aim of strengthening the present crackdown on assemblies and demonstrations. The amendment particularly includes a total ban on assemblies and demonstrations from midnight to six in the morning, raising the possibility that assemblies and demonstrations will in fact operate under a "permit system." Regarding the amendment, there are voices of concern in various places that it infringes on the freedom of expression, which is a key factor in determining the proper functioning of democracy. The Argus seeks to delineate the boundary between basic rights and freedoms, and further contemplate the optimal form of democracy.





Definition and Background of the Assembly and Demonstration Act

The Assembly and Demonstration Act is a law enacted to guarantee the right to assembly or demonstration while restricting illegal demonstrations. Its aim is to ensure lawful assembly and demonstration and to protect the public from unlawful actions, thus striking an appropriate balance between the protection of the right to assembly and demonstration and the maintenance of public order. The act states the following: “The holding of assemblies or demonstrations that are clearly likely to pose a direct threat to public welfare and order by means of collective violence, intimidation, arson, etc., shall be formally prohibited,” specifying the types of assemblies and demonstrations that are prohibited or restricted. In addition to the types of gatherings, there are also prohibitions on the time and place. As for time, it states: “No one shall hold an outdoor assembly or demonstration before sunrise or after sunset.” Gatherings are restricted at night to maintain order and to allow people to sleep or rest, but the vagueness of the criteria “before sunrise” and “after sunset” has caused confusion. This is because the time period varies depending on the season, making the criteria unclear. A total ban on nighttime demonstrations would restrict individuals’ freedom of assembly and association. In response, the Constitutional Court twice ruled the above provisions as constitutional nonconformity* and a violation of the constitution* in 2009 and 2014, consistently questioning their legitimacy. The Constitutional Court then demanded that the National Assembly respond to the supplementary legislation. However, the National Assembly did not, and until now it has remained in effect in a conditional status. In principle, nighttime gatherings are restricted, but exceptions have been made to allow gatherings even at unconventional hours as long as an order maintainer is present and the meeting is reported in advance. As a result, the law on prohibited hours now remains ineffective, and there is practically no legal provision for nighttime gatherings. In addition to time, there are also prohibitions on location. Outdoor gatherings are prohibited within 100 meters of the National Assembly, courts, the Constitutional Court, and the president’s residence. On the other hand, the current Assembly and Demonstration Act adopts a pre-notification system for assemblies and demonstrations. When holding

an outdoor gathering, the police must be notified at least 48 hours in advance, and a notice of prohibition may be issued based on restrictions such as time, place, and manner.



▲ Members of the labor union from the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions are occupying the street over night.

In September 2023, the police announced a plan to amend the Assembly and Demonstration Act with the aim of intensifying the crackdown on gatherings and demonstrations. The amendments include a ban on late-night gatherings, tighter noise control standards, and restrictions on gatherings during rush hour. Various concerns and movements surrounding the revision of the Assembly and Demonstration Act have continued, but the police announcement is attracting more attention, as it reveals a firm determination to confront the situation with a stern response in line with the more intense exercise of rights. The event that reignited the debate on the revision of the Assembly and Demonstration Act was the two-day, one-night demonstration of the labor union of the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions on May 16, 2023. The labor union held protests at Gwanghwamun Plaza and Sejong-daero in the area of Seoul City Hall. The demonstration was to commemorate the incident on this year’s Labor Day, May 1, when the executive of the labor union immolated himself before being arrested for examination of warrant, and to criticize the government and police for cracking down on the union. This resulted in severe traffic jams. In places with heavy vehicle traffic, the demonstration continued until 6 p.m. in the evening, when many businesses close and foot traffic rises to a maximum, causing severe traffic jams. It was also problematic that some of the protesters continued the demonstration on the streets after midnight. Nearby residents continued to report problems with high-pitched banging, street urination, drinking and

smoking by those who occupied the streets all night, leading to an increase in the number of people who demanded a strict response to illegal demonstrations. The situation at the time came to be called an illegal demonstration because the organizers continued the demonstration beyond the permitted time. The police only allowed them to occupy the streets until 5 p.m., citing congestion on the way home from work, but the organizers violated the order and continued protesting.

*Constitutional nonconformity: A decision that recognizes the unconstitutionality of the law, but recognizes the validity of the law temporarily until the law is amended to avoid the legal vacuum and social chaos caused by the immediate annulment of the law.

*Violation of the constitution: A decision that renders the law invalid, causing it to cease having effect immediately.



Aspects of the Current Assembly and Demonstration Act

The Constitution of the Republic of Korea protects assemblies and demonstrations by declaring these a fundamental right, but in practice the Assembly and Demonstration Act is applied in a way that is somewhat inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution. There are cases where people walk on a tightrope between legal and illegal actions, aiming for loopholes in the law, blurring the practical application of the law. The current law stipulates that the police can use their official powers to restrain others if noise exceeding the standard causes harm to others during assemblies and demonstrations. According to the noise limit of the Assembly and Demonstration Act, noise below 75 decibels during the day is not subject to police enforcement. Currently, the police are restraining gatherings by calculating the equivalent noise level,* which is determined based on an average noise level over a 10-minute period; and they intervene

in the gathering if the value exceeds the threshold. The problem is the prevalence of expedient behavior. Since the measurement period averages 10 minutes, there are cases where participants create excessive noise for 5 minutes and then lower the volume for the remaining 5 minutes. Regulations on the maximum noise level also exist, but they allow for no more than three violations in one hour. So, if a noise level reaches the maximum limit only twice, the police cannot impose sanctions. Cha Jin-ah, a professor at Korea University Law School, also points out the inefficiency of the regulation. “The noise regulation of South Korea’s Assembly and Demonstration Act is quite lenient to the point that it can be comprehended as encouraging illegal behavior. Other countries, such as the U.S. and Germany, have much more segmentalized distinctions in time zones and spaces, and the permissible noise thresholds are much lower.” Amid the growing expedient behavior among participants, the Assembly and Demonstration Act has been criticized for being full of loopholes.

The difference becomes more noticeable when examining regulations in other countries. Unlike South Korea, other countries have more effective measures. People are subject to regulation immediately after a single violation of the noise regulation level, and noise-related penalties are established in criminal law, better reflecting the reality of the demonstration site. The United Kingdom is one of the leading countries in the world that has kept restrictions to a minimum to ensure a wide range of freedom of assembly and association. However, since the late 2010s, social turmoil has increased, with police officers being assaulted during rallies. The law was subsequently amended to be more effective. However, even after these amendments, protest noise frequently caused serious disruption to the activities of surrounding agencies and caused damage to nearby residents, which led to the enactment of the “Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act” in 2022. This, along with a provision that allowed for active police involvement, nailed down penalties that were punishable by fines and even imprisonment for violations during the demonstration. For comparison, Germany has established specific permissible standards by classifying noise caused by demonstrations on par with environmental pollution. In the case of France, it became mandatory to provide information on noise measures to nearby residents, in the application for a demonstration permit. Efforts are being made to prepare measures to protect the general public from



▲ The police restrain gatherings if the average noise level exceeds a certain degree.

indiscriminate noise caused by demonstrations.

Why are South Korea's regulations relatively lenient compared to those of other countries? Professor Cha cites the lack of proper maintenance of laws and regulations as the reason. "Other countries have evolved to tighten regulations little by little, but in South Korea, the National Assembly has been very negligent in legislating to create tighter regulations on the Assembly and Demonstration Act. The fact that the ban on outdoor gatherings at night was determined to be incompatible with the constitution, but leaving it unamended till the deadline for amendment, can only be regarded as a shirked responsibility of the National Assembly." In addition to the effectiveness of the law, there are some cases where regulations are selectively applied depending on the subject or case of the demonstration. Kim Jong-seo, emeritus professor at Pai Chai University, provides an example for further understanding. "In order to test how subjective and biased the application of the Assembly and Demonstration Act is, several civic groups have registered 100 gatherings in Seoul, but only one was allowed, and the remaining 99 were prohibited. What is surprising is that the occasion, place, method, and content of the meetings reported in these 100 places were not subject to legal prohibition or restriction."

*Equivalent noise level: The average amount of noise emitted over a period of time.



Limits of South Korea's Assemblies and Demonstrations and Implications for the Revision Movement

In the past, citizens delivered their messages through assemblies and demonstrations, successfully effecting change. This movement has continued in recent years, and gatherings in an unusual format, never seen before, have also started to emerge. The first thing that comes to mind is the Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination protests, where disabled people tried to use the subway during rush hour, to demand the guarantee of mobility rights for people with disabilities and an increase in the budget for such purpose. While the protest cannot be labeled as illegal, it caused inconvenience to a large number of citizens, leading to confrontations and conflicts between participants and non-participants. This eventually served as one of the key reasons to call for



▲ Members of the Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination are demanding their rights in the subway during rush hour.

the establishment of strong regulations on assemblies and demonstrations. Professor Kim says the protests of Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination provide a glimpse into some of the most worrisome aspects of South Korea with regard to assemblies and demonstrations. "One of the ways in which the government and the police have responded to assemblies and demonstrations has been to turn citizens' complaints against the government into a citizen-to-citizen conflict structure. When the people of Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination attempted to protest in a unique way, such as trying to get on the subway during rush hour, what the Constitution expects from citizens is to protest and confront the government, questioning the government's role in making people with disabilities go through such struggles." Quite different from the spirit of the Constitution, which pursues solidarity among citizens, the situation is turning into a conflict between participants and non-participants, that is, between citizens and citizens. However, the government, which should play a pivotal role in addressing the situation, is primarily focused on controlling the demonstrations rather than addressing their underlying causes.

Meanwhile, the police decided to codify a ban on late-night gatherings "from midnight to 6 a.m." in the Assembly and Demonstration Act. The key issue is that all gatherings at this time are banned, regardless of their size or character. The law's key clause, as currently defined, specifies the time as "before sunrise or after sunset." The police explain that the decision was made in order to ensure the tranquility of the public during the late-night hours. The underlying reasoning is that the purpose achieved by holding late-night demonstrations is relatively insignificant, but the legal interests that are violated by permitting them carry far more serious consequences. Assemblies and demonstrations aim to make one's opinion known to more people, but the timing can

Cover Story

often pose challenges and cause greater inconvenience for many people. However, there has been a lot of buzz around the amendment movement because it could be interpreted as a potential permit system that allows the fundamental right of freedom of assembly and association at the discretion of the government and those in power.

Currently, outdoor gatherings are allowed at night if they are deemed necessary due to the nature of the event and if it is reported in advance, with an order maintainer present. However, the removal of such provision raises certain concerns since it eliminates the clue that ensures gatherings that do not carry the risk of turning into violent rallies. In this regard, Professor Kim also highlights the way assemblies and demonstrations are viewed. “The fact that South Korea’s Assembly and Demonstration Act views assemblies as objects of regulation rather than protection is problematic in itself. Peaceful assemblies should basically be protected under the law in order to help fulfill one’s fundamental rights to the fullest extent. But it cannot be denied that there is an intention to restrict the freedom of assembly and association itself by prioritizing the inconvenience of others to such an extent as to set it back and neutralize it.” Such concerns stem from worries that tough restrictions will virtually decide whether or not to permit free assemblies and demonstrations even before they begin. However, Chang Young-Soo, a professor at Korea University Law School, suggests a different view from a legal perspective. “The concern that the amendment of the Assembly and Demonstration Act will lead to a permit system stems from a complete misunderstanding of what a permit system is. Permission refers to a case in which the competent authority, such as the police, has full authority and arbitrarily decides the availability. What is prohibited by law cannot be called a permit system, because it does not make sense to call it a permit system with a clause in the law that prohibits gatherings at a particular place or time.”



Prospects

No fundamental right is absolute. Because each fundamental right is important, it is crucial to reach to a reasonable point of reconciliation when conflict between rights occurs. Professor Chang explains the conflict between freedom of speech and the right of reputation as an example. “There is no case

where freedom of speech or the right of reputation prevails over one and tramples on the other. Freedom of speech is protected first if it is consistent with the truth and the public interest, but if the information is confirmed to be fake or has the purpose of defamation, the right of reputation takes precedence. It is just a matter of weighing it rationally on a case-by-case basis. The same is true of freedom of assembly. It is necessary to make judgments based on the time of day, the place, and the degree of inconvenience. It is impossible to single out the right that absolutely takes precedence.” Ignoring the basic rights of others and only valuing one’s own fundamental rights is impossible, so it is necessary to weigh them on the basis of subdivided regulatory provisions. On the other hand, experts agree in chorus that what is most necessary is to change the perception regarding assemblies and demonstrations beyond the revision of the law.



▲ Change starts with understanding the shifts in the way people perceive and conceptualize assemblies and demonstrations.

In recent years, perceptions surrounding assemblies and demonstrations have changed. In the past, the perception of justifying the means if the purpose of the demonstration was reasonable was dominant. “Before democratization in 1987, most of the gatherings that were commonly referred to as ‘demo’ were anti-government activities, so at the time they were considered to be more of a ‘right to resistance’ than a ‘freedom’ of assembly and association. However, we should not equate current gatherings with those before democratization. At the time, strong and dangerous acts, such as throwing firebombs, were tolerated. But now they are only considered violent demonstrations,” Professor Chang explains the changed concept of assemblies and demonstrations. People’s perceptions have changed in line with the change in meaning. Previously, assemblies and demonstrations were important for the defense of democracy

in the democratization process, so even after democratization, many people continued to tolerate such actions. Even if it was a little unreasonable, most of them were in the mood to put up with it.

Today, however, the atmosphere is quite different. Professor Cha adds, “In the case of the older generation, they have experienced and understood the exercise of their right to resist the authoritarian regimes of the past, either directly or indirectly. However, the younger generations, who do not have the understanding and experience of this, are becoming critical towards a government that does not respond properly, leading to a shift in perception. Unlike the older generation, who still harbor the idea that they should tolerate such actions, many of the younger generations question why their fundamental rights should be unilaterally conceded in the interests of a particular group.” Now, rather than sticking to the old methods, it is a must to keep pace with these changing perceptions and continue to exercise everyone’s freedom justly within the framework of the law.



▲ Media reports tend to focus on the damage and inconvenience caused by assemblies and demonstrations.

A shift in the perception of assembly participants can also lead to a change in the media and citizens. In recent years, when the media reports on assemblies and demonstrations, such as in the case of Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination, the focus tends to be on the damage caused to non-participants, such as obstruction of traffic. While some point to this as uncritical bias in the media, Professor Cha offers a new perspective on the abuse of freedom of assembly and association. “We cannot unilaterally blame the media for focusing on the harm done to ordinary citizens and not to the message of the demonstration. If the participants of the demonstration exercise their freedom in a legitimate manner, the message they want to convey through the demonstration will be reported. This is because the media has no choice but to cover and report on what the public wants to know and is interested in. But if the focus is on pushing the arguments in the wrong way, then the coverage has no choice but to be in line with the wrong way of protesting.” Assemblies and demonstrations should serve as a means of expressing one’s arguments, not as a means to entirely fulfill their demands. Therefore, it is unacceptable to continue gatherings in an unjustified manner solely for the purpose of asserting one’s viewpoint, and change must begin by rectifying the flawed methods in place. The first is the legitimate way of protesting; what is needed after that will definitely be solidarity among citizens. Regarding this, Professor Kim emphasizes that in the end, change must come from the citizens, not from the government or the media. “It is important for fellow citizens to recognize and stand in solidarity with the fact that assemblies and demonstrations are a right as precious as life for the socially disadvantaged. Stronger sympathy and solidarity among the citizens will force the government to accept the truth, even if it is inconvenient.”

Assemblies and demonstrations are the most important means of expressing opinions for the socially disadvantaged, who do not have easy access to mass media. For some, it may be the only way to express themselves, or even a last resort. However, the essence of important freedoms is being blurred by the people who continue protesting by methods that have gone too far, the passers-by who feel hatred towards them, and the government that allows and even induces them to continue to speak ill of each other. It is now imperative to make an effort to reach a compromise between freedom and the fundamental rights for all, so that the confrontation that deviates from the essence will no longer continue, and above all, so that the voices of the socially disadvantaged are not drowned out. 📢

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The Argus



4th Generation Phenomena: The Path to Balance Between Fans and Artists

By Jang Yewon

Staff Reporter of Culture Section

Las Vegas, U.S. announced November 25th as K-Pop Masters Day. A day to celebrate K-pop being announced in Las Vegas rather than South Korea (hereafter Korea) makes people realize the power of K-pop that has spread throughout the world. A new trend has been observed in the K-pop idol industry since two to three years ago. Many idols have been selected as luxury brand ambassadors, female idols have written success stories, and an application has been developed for communication between artists and fans. These are phenomena that fragmentarily show how different things were for the 1st to 3rd generation idols, when communication was minimal and male idols achieved great success, compared with today's 4th generation idols. The idol industry, which is sensitive to trends, quickly adapts and changes to contemporary society's preferences, social values, and new technologies. Based on the changes, even the smallest aspects of the idol industry are being capitalized on, and even the personal lives of idols are being consumed as services. Because idols grow in popularity based on fans in their teens and 20s who have not fully developed the concept of consumption, there is a problem in that the weight of new changes is easily passed on to the fans. Before the new flow becomes solidified, it is time to have an in-depth discussion about the relevant phenomena. The Argus aims to provide an opportunity to consider what a healthy idol industry is by highlighting new phenomena, causes, and limitations that appear for fourth-generation idols.



Music critic Kim Young-dae says that the change in K-pop idol generations can be seen as effects of globalization and media. The 1st generation of idols, who were active from 1998 to 2003, relied heavily on traditional media such as DVDs and TV, and they were the generation that stayed in the domestic market. The 2nd generation idols, who were active from 2004 to 2011, were based in the domestic market but went beyond the Asian market and entered North America to build fandom. In addition, they are also the generation that introduced full-scale online marketing using YouTube after its launch in 2005. The period of the 3rd generation is when Korean idols took a leap into the mainstream music market globally. In terms of media, they introduced marketing using social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter beyond YouTube. Lastly, the 4th generation idols are the generation that emerged around 2019, around the time of the pandemic. K-pop has established itself in overseas markets, and due to the popularity of audition programs, many 4th generational groups debuted with already secured public fame and enjoyed popularity overseas first.





Phenomenon



1. Idols who Promote Luxury Goods

There are many pictures of various idols such as Hanni of New Jeans and BLACKPINK's Rosé in department stores. This is because they were selected as ambassadors for luxury brands. The term "luxury brand ambassador" refers to a promotional model representing a specific brand. Since when did idols and luxury brands have a close relationship? According to an article titled "How Idol Fashion Became the 'Second Runway'" by the JoongAng Ilbo released in 2017, starting in 2010, some singers began appearing in music videos wearing clothing from luxury brands. After SHINee appeared on stage wearing clothes from Thom Browne in 2013, many famous idols wore foreign luxury brands on music broadcast stages. However, this was limited to only a few idols from large entertainment companies. This is because most 1st and 2nd generation idols performed on stage wearing the same clothes to create unity within the group. Therefore, in the past, it was not common to see stage costumes from luxury brands. After the 3rd generation, instead of wearing identical clothes, clothes that were different in design but maintained a sense of unity were introduced. This phenomenon has become more intensified in the 4th generation, as luxury goods are now in the mix.

As 1st to 3rd generation idols were far removed from luxury brands, the only advertisements in which idols frequently appeared were advertisements for school uniforms and domestic telecommunication companies. However, this changed when Big Bang's G-Dragon became the first Korean to be selected as Chanel's global ambassador in 2016. Subsequently, the number of cases of K-pop idols representing luxury brands began to increase. As of October 2023, the youngest luxury brand ambassador in Korea is Hyein of New Jeans. At the age of 15, Hyein was selected as an ambassador for the global luxury brand Louis Vuitton, sparking public interest. In this way, luxury goods are no longer a new element in the daily lives of idols.

2. The Golden Age of Girl Groups

Looking at the recent Korean music charts, it is not easy to find songs by boy groups. New Jeans took 1st and 2nd place on the August 2023 monthly chart of Melon, a music application favored by Korean idol fans, and there were only two male idols in the top 30: BTS's Jungkook and SEVENTEEN. The golden age of female idols has literally arrived. Culture critic Cha Woo-jin said in his personal newsletter "Cha Woo-jin's TMI.FM" that the business model of idol groups is built on the powerful influence of "fandom." He explains, "There are overwhelmingly many success stories of boy groups as dominant industry believed it is difficult for girl groups to form a fandom and build a business value chain such as concerts and goods sales based on scale."

However, this belief was broken in the 4th generation. Female idols are attracting female fans and achieving great success. According to Circle Chart's statistics in 2022, compared to 2021, female idols' album sales increased by 16.5 percent points while male idols' album sales decreased. The most significant change is that girl groups now take up 78 percent of the market share. In addition, according to the idol brand reputation announced by the Korean Business



▲ New Jeans' Hanni appears on the campaign of Gucci promoting their new bags. This is the first activity of Hanni as a Gucci ambassador.

Rank	Artist	Album	Genre	Label
1	New Jeans	Get Up	Pop	ADOR
2	G-IDLE	WANNABE	Pop	JYP
3	IVE	IVE	Pop	Starship
4	aespa	MY WORLD	Pop	SM
5	LE SSERAFIM	UNFORGOTTEN	Pop	JYP

▲ In the August 2023 monthly Melon chart, the top 5 positions are held by female idol groups: New Jeans, G-Idle, IVE, aespa, and LE SSERAFIM.

Research Institute in March 2018, Wanna One* ranked 1st, BTS ranked 2nd, and EXO ranked 3rd, and these are all boy groups. On the other hand, female idols ranked high in the idol brand reputation conducted in March 2023, with New Jeans ranking 1st, BTS ranking 2nd, and BLACKPINK ranking 3rd. The brand reputation is calculated by considering the consumer participation index and the idol’s market value. Therefore, the fact that female idols are at the top of idol brand reputation means that, as they move into the 4th generation, female idols have begun to attract not only public response but also corporate preference.

*Wanna One: A project boy group that was selected through Mnet’s “Produce 101 Season 2.” They debuted on August 7, 2017.

3. Increased Communication Channels

Is the concept of mysticism familiar? Mysticism is a concept that intentionally distances idol members from the public and does not try to reveal them to increase their stardom. To maintain the concept of mysticism and prevent various incidents, the entertainment agency told idols to refrain from speaking or banned them from sharing their daily lives on social media. At that time, to communicate with their idols, fans would talk to them if they were spotted on their way to a broadcast station or at an airport when they were leaving the country for a concert. However, this method was often blocked by security guards hired by the agency. Of course, 2nd and 3rd generation idols made efforts to lessen the distance to their fans through video content produced by entertainment companies. However, there was still no way for fans and idols to communicate directly.

Now reaching the 4th generation, they actively communicate with their fans through the Internet. Most idols have personal social media accounts and try to actively communicate with fans through comments using Weverse,* Bubble,* and many other platforms. However, the indiscriminate use of social media poses a great risk to idols. During the 2022 Beijing Olympics, Ning Ning, a Chinese member of aespa, received great criticism for sending a message on Bubble expressing happiness that the Chinese short-track team won a gold medal. This is because controversy over China’s biased judgment arose at the time. Why does the agency encourage the use of social media even though there is a risk that idol posts could create controversy? According to “Human Branded Content: Fandom Formation of Idol Groups Using One-Person Media” written in 2021 by Lee Sejin, a professor of the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at Kookmin University, the attachment and loyalty of fandoms to idols have risen as communication channels have increased. In particular, active two-way communication between idols and fans has been analyzed as the cause of the fandom’s formation according to attachment psychology. Entertainment companies view this two-way communication as a tool to create and maintain idol value and are turning it into a service and using it as a meaningful marketing tool.



▲ Ning Ning’s celebration bubble for China’s gold medal sparks controversy.

*Weverse: A fan community platform developed by HYBE. It supports a variety of services, including communication between artists and fans and live broadcasting functions.

*Bubble: An app developed and released by SM Entertainment that allows users to enjoy communication by exchanging messages with real artists.



Cause

1. Idols Used as Coveted Consumer Goods

The K-pop market has been expanding worldwide, starting with BTS. However, Mimyo music critic says that until 2017, K-pop idols were a kind of subculture in the Western world. This is because their music was consumed mainly by social minorities such as children of immigrants. Since BTS was invited to the Billboard Awards, K-pop has been recognized worldwide. However, the image of K-pop music being listened to by minorities still remains, and it is recognized as a music genre that represents diversity. This image fits perfectly with the needs of luxury brands. Suh Yonggu, a professor of Business Administration at Sookmyung Women’s University, said in a 2021 interview with the JoongAng Ilbo that diversity has become very important for luxury brands as corporate social responsibility has recently begun to receive attention. That is why they started using a variety of different models of various races and sizes and not just thin, white models. Professor Suh explained that one of the ways for luxury brands to exhibit diversity is by using K-pop idol ambassadors. K-pop idols are singers who represent diversity, so idols perfectly match the image that luxury goods want.



©Fashion Insight

▲ Chanel, which has a strong tendency to prefer white models, now features black models in an advertisement, a departure from past racially controversial campaigns.

According to the “Haute Couture S/S23 Industry Report” released by French marketing platform Lefty, sales of the MZ generation increased by about 400 percent after BLACKPINK’s Jisoo was selected as Dior ambassador. How was this possible? Due to the nature of the idol industry, there are many loyal fans, so the commercial effect is excellent. According to “The Effect of Idol Fandom’s Psychological Characteristics on Product Advertising Effect,” published in 2022 by Shim Sung-wook, a professor of the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at Hanyang University, idol fans consume products based on idolization, identification, and daily happiness. Representative luxury goods have a significant psychological influence linked to the brand image. Idol group idolization intensifies when the luxurious image of luxury goods is combined with the psychology of fans. In the end, fans initially idolize their idols and later use luxury goods to connect with and emulate their idols. Being a luxury brand ambassador is mutually beneficial for both the luxury brands and the idols. This is because it is an opportunity for idols to build a classy and luxurious image, and the more idols can elicit surprise and envy from the public, the more it helps their popularity.

2. Spread of Female Fandom

“Narcissistic, my God, I love it.” These are the lyrics of the song “Love Dive” by IVE. Along with the lyrics, IVE members raise the palms of one of their hands in front of their faces like looking in a mirror. In the song “Love Dive,” the person with whom IVE members fall in love is not a man but themselves. In the past, girl group lyrics depicted an image of women depending on men. To illustrate, “Ah, my prince! When are you going to rescue this body of mine?” is a lyric from a Girl’s Generation song called “I Got a Boy.” However, not only IVE but also many other 4th generation girl groups such as LE SSERAFIM’s “Unforgiven” and New Jeans’ “Attention” depict images of confident women. Why did female idol song lyrics change? Music critic Kim Young-dae says, “The idol industry follows social discourse.” As feminism and women’s human rights have become increasingly important, female fans

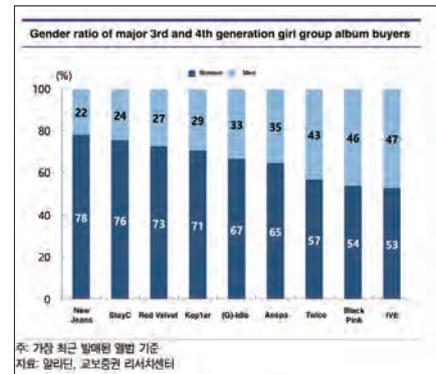


©Joy News 24

▲ On the “Love Dive” stage, IVE’s Jang Won-young performs a mirror-like choreography with raised hands.

have likewise become more attracted to non-traditional female idols. In fact, according to “The 4th Generation Idol with Hexagonal Stats is Coming” published by Kyobo Securities Research Center in 2022, 78 percent of New Jeans album buyers were women. Feminist lyrics have always existed in K-pop, but since BLACKPINK emerged on the scene, most girl groups have adopted the concept of girl groups targeting female fans.

As the public sympathizes with the theme of active women, girl groups have begun to try new concepts to appeal to female fans. They have begun to pursue a “girl crush” concept that appeals to female fans. In fact, according to the same report from Kyobo Securities, the concept of female idols has changed significantly with generational changes. TWICE, who debuted as a 3rd generation idol group in 2015, formerly adhered to the image of innocent and passive women in songs such as “Like OOH-AHH” and “Cheer Up.” However, starting with “Fancy” in 2019, a girl crush concept was introduced. TWICE reinforced their image of a mature woman through “Feel Special” and “More and More.” In response, the proportion of female fans among album consumers remained at 34 percent in 2019 but increased to 41 percent in 2020 and 49 percent in 2021. As the discourse on feminism expanded in society, the girl group market was able to succeed because girl groups attempted various concepts that attracted female fans.



▲ According to the chart, most album buyers for major female groups are female. Even IVE, with the most male buyers, still has over 50 percent female buyers.

3. Idols who have been Active Online since the Pandemic

To subscribe to Bubble, fans pay 4,500 won (US\$3.33) a month. Even though the price is burdensome, the service is incredibly popular among fans. It achieved sales of 19.1 billion won (US\$14,134,332) in just three years after launching. Music critic Kim Young-dae pointed to the pandemic as the main reason why Bubble gained such explosive popularity. The pandemic brought a downturn in the global entertainment business. People stayed indoors, and gatherings of more than five people in indoor spaces were prohibited. Performances and fan signing events where many fans gathered were inevitably banned. Entertainment companies decided to introduce new internet technologies to combat this crisis. Newly introduced technologies emerged, including Bubble, a community where idols and fans communicate through chat, and Weverse, a platform that shares idols’ personal broadcasts and newly released media.

Even though the pandemic is fading and in-person events are taking place again, the popularity of online communities shows no signs of slowing down. Ms. Kim (Division of Language and Trade '22), said that the reason she continues to subscribe to Bubble is she enjoys the feeling of having a personal chat with her favorite idol. In addition, as Bubble provides photos and voice messages sent by idols only for subscribers, the feeling of being differentiated from people who do not use Bubble was another advantage. The structure of the community allows fans to feel a sense of superiority or intimacy. According to the report “How the Intimacy Fantasy Works: Focusing on the Fan Platform Bubble Users” written by Lee Naeun of Seoul National University in 2021, “Conversations with idols are a mixture of fantasy and reality, so fans consider the sense of intimacy important, and they focus on that feeling.” In addition, fans are excited about Bubble because idols share their private life there, and that justifies the fans’ desire. Bubble is a great outlet for fans to have their desire fulfilled. The fundamental reason for the emergence of a platform to connect fans to their idols was the pandemic, but what brought this platform to the mainstream is the psychological satisfaction fans get from it.





Limitation



1. Social Impact of Idols with Luxury Goods

“Your parents’ spine breaker” This is a lyric from “Spine Breaker,” a song by BTS. What this song criticizes is young students in the 2010s buying an expensive North Face puffer jacket. However, entering the 2020s, parents’ “spine breakers” have changed. Students are now asking their parents to buy luxury goods, such as Gucci and Miu Miu which cost hundreds to thousands of dollars. In fact, investment bank Morgan Stanley estimated the typical luxury goods consumption per person in Korea is \$325, far exceeding \$280 in the U.S. and \$55 in China. Morgan Stanley pointed to idol ambassadors as the cause of Korea’s luxury goods consumption craze. In this way, the practice of having idols promote luxury goods is problematic, as it increases the consumption of luxury goods among the younger generation.

In addition to the increase in luxury goods consumption, there is another point to consider. The reason why idols begin working as luxury brand ambassadors is that luxury goods help idols establish a classy image. Music critic Mimyo says this is because fans envy “success without effort.” Because our current society cannot guarantee “success through hard work” to young people, young people have started to idealize the image of being born into a silver spoon family. Therefore, people have begun to project feelings of envy when they see idols consuming luxury goods, which epitomize silver spoon babies. In this way, idols who are subject to admiration for having luxury goods make the public habituated to admiring wealthy people. Professor Shim said, “Idol idolization will be combined with luxury goods, and the phenomenon of envying old money will be strengthened.” If people have an external locus of control and envy becomes customary, the class structure will eventually become more solidified, and “luxury” will remain as a standard for distinguishing the rich from common people. Now that “old money” has begun to become a trend, the public must consider the negative impact of idols wearing luxury goods.

2. Contradiction in the Idol Industry

Female idols constantly deliver messages in support of body positivity and loving oneself. However, unlike these progressive lyrics, the beauty standards required of 4th generation idols have become more stringent. In the past, extreme diets named after celebrities, such as the IU diet, a diet that advocated avoiding foods containing carbohydrates and fat and eating only salad, were popular. However, recently, many 4th generation idols are not obsessed with extreme diets. Also, rather than diets, exercise routines named after idols, such as LE SSERAFIM Kazuha Ab Workout, are starting to become popular. This is because attempts at extreme diets cause criticism from the public who are concerned about health of idols. However, opposing extreme diets does not mean that the public likes idols who are not thin. In online communities, often people can find contradictory responses like, “I hope idols don’t try an extreme diet, but they need to stay slim.”

The fundamental reason for the public’s contradictory reactions is the characteristics of the entertainment industry. According to music critic Kim Young-dae, the reason people like celebrities is to enjoy visual superiority that cannot be found in lay people. He says, “The idol industry is a model of idealism, and it views appearance as talent.” As idol music has become “music to watch,” visual elements are a factor in its success. Meanwhile, music critic Mimyo said that entertainment companies are using strict appearance requirements as a tool to complete the image that idols pursue. LE SSERAFIM promotes the image of a female warrior. Therefore, it was inevitable for LE SSERAFIM to break away from the typical “girl group” image. That is why HYBE deliberately showed behind-the-scenes footage of



▲ Group LE SSERAFIM releases the song “Antifragile” and poses with one of their main choreography, raising their arms. This pose shows an unusual female idol in a manly pose.

the recording of their debut album showing employees' obsession with LE SSERAFIM members' appearance through saying, "You need to lose more weight." Following HYBE's strategy, the public was greatly outraged by the scene. After the documentary was released, LE SSERAFIM published a song called "Antifragile," which conveys the message that directly breaks the company's appearance obsession. Ultimately, these incidents provided an opportunity for the feminist message of the song to stand out. The entertainment industry's strategy to attract the public's attention obscures the sincerity of gender consciousness contained in the concept of female idols. There is sufficient need to discuss the tendency of entertainment companies to intentionally expose actions that run counter to feminism at the company level and use them to elicit responses from fans.

3. Shackles of Communication

The increased communication channels act as shackles for fans and idols. This is because idols complain of fatigue from having to excessively reveal their personal lives, and fans complain of unsatisfactory returns for their legitimate consumption. Bubble is a subscription system that requires payment every month. Moreover, since sending messages to fans is entirely dependent on the idol's prerogative, if the idol a fan subscribes to does not send messages often, a fan will inevitably receive less satisfaction relative to the amount paid. In fact, NCT member Jaehyun sent a photo of an expressionless face through Bubble 19 days after sending a photo taken at a beauty salon. Some fans complained about receiving only a few messages and photos every month. According to the current platform regulations, fans cannot receive a refund even if an idol sends only one message per month. As there is no social consensus on the appropriate number of communications, fans' complaints are bound to pile up.

Because fans expect active communication from their idols, they often judge the level of appreciation an idol has for their fans by quantifying how often they send messages and photos on Bubble. However, it is questionable whether the level of communication seen on Bubble is proportional to the appreciation of the idol. Forcing the same level of communication on everyone while ignoring each idol's individual tendencies comes across as a burden to the idol. In an interview with the JoongAng Ilbo in 2022, culture critic Kim Heon-sik said, "Active communication may be good from a fan's perspective, but it is an enormous amount of emotional labor for an idol who has a busy schedule and has to spend time on Bubble frequently." In particular, opinions emerged that because of the pandemic, idols' online activities became more active, and the intensity of their labor increased. Because online content is not limited by time or space, there is a problem that idols' private lives can be consumed as a service.

Recently, K-pop idol groups have been gaining significant attention in the global entertainment industry. Therefore, the necessity to understand the current trends among the 4th generation idols and their causes has been highlighted. With the deepening of the old money admiration phenomenon, idols are increasingly engaging as luxury brand ambassadors. Simultaneously, the discourse on feminism has expanded, leading to the rapid rise of female idols. In response to the spread of the pandemic, idols have started utilizing online platforms actively. In all these regards, the idol industry rapidly adapts to changes, and the underlying causes of these trends are closely intertwined with societal factors. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the fatal drawbacks within the industry, such as exacerbating the polarization of wealth in society, blurring gender consciousness, and creating an unsatisfactory relationship between fans and artists. As the idol industry continues to expand into various fields beyond music, it is essential to build a positive culture to ensure a beneficial impact on society. At this juncture, when new phenomena are unfolding, it is imperative for idols, fans, and entertainment companies alike to contemplate and address concerns related to a healthy idol industry. 

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What Duality in “MASK GIRL” Says About Korea

By Kim Ji-hyang

Staff Reporter of Culture Section

How many people are the same both inside and outside? The majority will be different from how they show themselves at school or work and how they act when they are alone. Such duality occurs naturally as people go into the real world. Netflix’s “Mask Girl” (2023), is a TV series based on the character’s duality. “Mask Girl” garnered attention by ranking 2nd on Netflix’s non-English speaking TV chart just three days after its release in South Korea (hereafter Korea), “Mask Girl” tells the story of Kim Mo-mi, an office worker who is insecure about her appearance; the reclusive life of shut-in named Joo Oh-nam; and Kim Kyung-ja, who shows a distorted version of motherhood. The duality of Kim Mo-mi, who suffers from lookism but conforms, Joo Oh-nam, who is passive outside but active in the house, and Kim Kyung-ja, who seeks cruel revenge against her son for her unwanted motherhood, clearly shows that modern society is not healthy. The Argus would like to consider the social responsibility of the phenomena of characters living behind their masks in “Mask Girl.”



1. Summary of “Mask Girl”

As a young girl, the protagonist, Kim Mo-mi, dreams of becoming a beloved entertainer. However, she had to give up her dream due to her appearance and live the life of an ordinary office worker. After all, she becomes famous as a Mask Girl by becoming a mask-wearing streamer on internet broadcasts at night. Mo-mi meets one of her fans who is nicknamed Handsome Monk, in order to recover from a heart break. He attempts to sexually assault Mo-mi, and she kills him in the struggle.

Meanwhile, Joo Oh-nam, a fan of Mask Girl, finds out that Mo-mi is Mask Girl. He recognizes her by Mask Girl’s green nails and dots on both hands. Then, while chatting with Mask Girl online, he learns that she is in danger, and helps Mo-mi to dispose of Handsome Monk’s body. After the murder, Mo-mi resigns and undergoes plastic surgery. Upon learning of her resignation, Oh-nam visits Mo-mi’s home and rapes her. While defending herself, Mo-mi kills Joo Oh-nam. Joo Oh-nam’s mother, Kim Kyung-ja, becomes shocked that her son died. As she inquires with the police about her son’s death, she finds out that Mo-mi is related to the case and decides to kill her. However, Mo-mi, who gave birth to Oh-nam’s child, leaves her child at her parents’ home, and turns herself in for the crime and is imprisoned.



▲ Netflix’s “Mask Girl” premieres August, 2023.

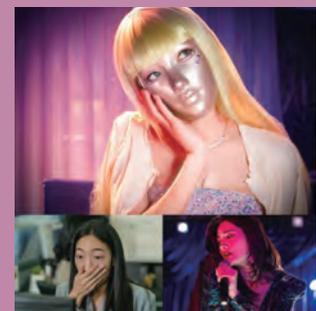
As the years pass, Mo-mi's daughter, Mi-mo, becomes a middle school student. Kim Kyung-ja approaches Mi-mo in an intimate way as a tteokbokki grandmother. She forms a close relationship with Mi-mo by helping her deal with negative rumors. After all, Kyung-ja herself spread the rumors, and all of her actions were part of a revenge plan to kill Mi-mo. In the meantime, as part of her escape plan, Mo-mi volunteers to donate a kidney for the daughter of a fellow inmate who needs a kidney transplant surgery. Taking the opportunity, Mo-mi escapes from the hospital and finds Mi-mo, who is detained at Kim Kyung-ja's home with the help of Mi-mo's best friend, Kim Ye-chun. Before Mi-mo arrived at the scene, her grandmother, Young-hee, was stabbed to death while trying to protect her from Kyung-ja. In addition, Mo-mi, who hugs her daughter while shielding from Kyung-ja's gunfire, is shot to death. In the end, Kim Kyung-ja is also killed immediately by police after the gunfire.



2. Appearance Evaluating Society

2-1. A Victim and Beneficiary of Lookism

"Mask Girl" begins with Kim Mi-mo's childhood. Young Mo-mi displays her talent at the kindergarten's talent show, exuding happiness and joy. However, as she grew, she becomes increasingly disheartened by people's disregard and contempt for her appearance. The desire to receive love and attention from people acts as a decisive reason for her to become the Mask Girl. While wearing a mask to cover her ugly face, Mo-mi attracts viewers to her internet broadcast with her beautiful body and dance skills. As a result, Mo-mi earns money by sexually objectifying herself. Moreover, Mo-mi feels superiority and satisfaction through the enthusiasm and interest of people, the exact emotion she had dreamed of since she was young.



©Maecil Kyungjae

▲ Kim Mo-mi becomes an online broadcaster as a Mask Girl.

2-2. Lookism in Korea

According to Merriam-Webster, lookism describes the prejudice or discrimination people have toward others due to their appearance. It was in the late 1970s when lookism was initially used to refer how people perceive others by their looks. How did lookism spread in Korea? "Let Me In," a program aired by TVN from 2012 to 2015, carried out a plastic surgery project for those with serious insecurities about their looks. The program quickly became controversial for promoting a distorted perception of beauty. This occurred because the panel members, upon watching the video clip, would audibly sigh in response to the participant's difficult life, as portrayed with a gloomy expression. In "Let Me In," a participant who suffers from social discrimination and economic poverty is described as a social failure. After the surgery, the participant is depicted as a "winner," regaining confidence and a smile. Through this, a social atmosphere was formed that the look of a person determines either victory or failure of life. Furthermore, a discourse emerged stating that "becoming pretty is contingent on the level of effort, and hence those who do not become pretty are incapable of managing themselves." Ultimately, the program was discontinued following strong insistence from the Korean Plastic Surgeons Association. Park Eun-ah, a psychology professor at Daegu University, said, "It is problematic that the appearance highlights the fact that life in general changes through plastic surgery."

The tendency to regard looks as an individual's asset is also evident in a compound word that includes "face" and "spec," "facespec." According to a survey in 2021 of 372 companies on the job search platform, Saramin, 55.6 percent responded that the appearance of applicants affects the job evaluation. This indicates that people seeking for a job in an unstable job market are under pressure to commercialize and prove their ability. It is a situation in which people must fit into a frame. Professor Park explains that Koreans think it is natural to judge people by their appearance, but Westerners have a perception not to discriminate by their looks. Moreover, Park said, "Job applicants in the U.S. are not allowed to upload resume photos, but Korea requires photo information. Especially Koreans feel that they can understand the person well only when looking

at a person's photo." Thus, she emphasized that starting with the removal of photo information from resumes, there should be an understanding that it is not appropriate to judge people based on their appearance.



3. Negative Perceptions of Hikikomori

3-1. A Hikikomori Who Acts Different Inside and Outside

"I like to be alone, and I am still afraid of people."

This is the line of Joo Oh-nam, a co-worker of Mo-mi who secretly admires her. He shows duality depending on the environment. At work, he finds it difficult to make eye contact and acts passively. However, he dominates the Internet after coming home from work. At home, he attempts active communication with the Mask Girl and tries to catch her eye. How did Joo come to live a different life inside and outside? First of all, for Joo, school was a place where he experienced unprovoked harassment. He was bullied just because he stood out, even if he didn't do anything. Moreover, his mother had to make a living, so Joo does not ask anyone for help. Therefore, he realized that it is best to stay quiet and live like an invisible person from then on. Joo, whose memories of being bullied embedded in his mind, continues to live a lonely life.



▲ Joo Oh-nam is Kim Mo-mi's boss at work.

©Kuki News

3-2. View on Hikikomori in Korea

A "reclusive loner" is a newly coined term that describes a person who stays at home for extended periods and avoids contact. How many reclusive loners are there in Korea? The Republic of Korea's Office of Government Policy Coordination defined respondents who stay home without a specific reason as "reclusive loners" in a survey of young people aged 19-34 from July to August 2022. The results revealed an estimated 244,000 individuals fitting this description.

In August 2023, a series of violent crimes shook the people of Korea. In response, the media hurriedly published articles about these criminals. In September 2023, Cho Joon, a professor of the Department of Social Welfare at Dongshin University, wrote an article in the Target Citizen Newspaper, expressing concern. He stated, "It is worrisome that the media has suggested that the perpetrators of motiveless crimes are Hikikomori and that their discontent during isolation triggers their anger toward society. This framing of reclusive loners as potential criminals can lead to unjust prejudice." In "Insight," an online community with 15,000 monthly users, a post titled "I think a reclusive loner is really dangerous" appeared. In the Everytime of HUFs, there was a post mentioning, "In the future, Hikikomori should be considered a potential criminal." In addition, in a paper published in 2021, Kang Joo-seung, a psychology professor at Sungkyunkwan University, explained, "The stigma of a mental health practitioner being a reclusive loner indirectly suggests that there may be as many negative perceptions as with schizophrenia. This was confirmed through an analysis of the labeling* effect after informing a general adult group that the individual is a reclusive loner."

What kind of tendencies does a reclusive loner have? Bae Sang-hoon, a former police administration professor at Wooseok University, explains, "Because of the reclusive loner's nature, there is a lower tendency toward aggression, and they are less likely to engage in criminal acts due to their avoidance of contact with others." The first step of supporting them is psychological counseling. Lee Ji-yeon, a counseling psychology professor at the Graduate School of Education at HUFs, said, "We need to counsel psychologically so that they can have a positive experience through conversations with people." In addition, Professor Lee said, "Social interest and understanding of those who already have a defense mechanism due to their painful past experience is essential. So rather than looking at reclusive loners with prejudiced eyes, we should help them return to society," she added.

*Label effect: A psychological term, which refers to the effect that a person's thoughts or actions are influenced by the term for naming others.



4. Respectless Thought on Others

4-1. Obsession in the Name of Love

In “Mask Girl,” the image of Kim Kyung-ja, Joo Oh-nam’s mother, is a distinct example of “Only my kids are precious.” Having to be responsible for the family’s livelihood, Kyung-ja strives to earn money. She believes she could do anything for her son, not knowing that he is being bullied at school. After hearing of Joo’s death, the love for her son turns into an obsession toward revenge on Kim Mo-mi. She visits and threatens Mo-mi in prison, “You should feel the sadness of losing your child like me,” and intentionally approaches Kim Mi-mo. Kyung-ja’s duplicity is revealed at the point where she threatens Mo-mi’s daughter in the name of motherhood while knowing what the sadness of losing her child as a mother is.



©Netflix

▲ As Joo Oh-nam’s mother, Kim Kyung-ja takes revenge on Kim Mo-mi.

4-2. Motherly Love in Korea

Kim Kyung-ja’s episode provides a moment to think about the way motherhood is expressed in Korean society. Can violence toward others be justified just because a mother believes that her children are the only precious beings? As of July 2023, the National Elementary Teachers’ Union surveyed elementary teachers nationwide on the infringement of teaching rights, and 99.2 percent of the 2,390 respondents said they have experienced such infringement. Forty-nine percent were found to have received malicious complaints from parents. Recently, a renowned webtoon writer in Korea reported his son’s teacher, accusing “words and deeds that are difficult to regard as discipline” as child abuse. Eventually, the teacher was dismissed from the position. However, the father’s claim turned out to be untrue. Ryu Jae-yeon, a professor of Special Education at Nazarene University, recognized as an authority on special education, analyzed the teacher’s remarks and submitted a 12-page opinion mentioning to the prosecution. The teacher was reinstated in the end.

Examples of parents’ malicious complaints are asking the teacher to take the child home in rainy weather or asking what the teacher did when their child was bitten by a mosquito. Professor Park said, “All parents want their children to be cared for in a better environment than they had been in and to become better people. The ‘only my child is precious’ thinking of parents shows a phenomenon in which parents’ overly selfish sense of competition is affecting their children’s education.” She also added, “Parents are overly worried that their child should be the best, in case they are not well treated or experience unfair treatment. They think, “One way or another, my family’s happiness should be prioritized,” Professor Park commented, “It is most important that a sense of community is cultivated,” and that if individuals act correctly, society can automatically become healthy. She emphasized that problems arising in the name of motherhood will become more extreme if interest or responsibility for the right sense of community is not developed.

It is natural to have duality, because there are situations in which people have to show themselves in the way they prefer. Kim Mo-mi, Joo Oh-nam, and Kim Kyung-ja in “Mask Girl” are criminals who end up committing murder, so their words and actions cannot be justified. However, by analyzing their duality, it is necessary to check the practices that are deeply rooted in society. The practice of evaluating people based on their appearances, perceiving reclusive loners as potential criminals, and prioritizing one’s own children highlights social issues in Korea. Living with such perceptions deviates from a sense of community that respects others. One’s appearance is just that, appearance, and not the abilities of the person. Since reclusive loners need the help and attention of society, it is wrong to look at them with negative awareness. Finally, those who care only for their children need to have an attitude of respect for others who are someone else’s children. Thus, there is a need to recognize that the perception one holds can be an arrow toward others. The Argus hopes that such efforts could contribute to the creation of a Korean society in which responsible members thrive. **A**

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Exploring Fiji: Beyond the Tourist Brochures

Cho Eun

Editorial Consultant

The palm trees sway silently, their glistening fronds showing the direction of the wind. The azure sea and cloudless sky bewilder me, blurring the line where they converge. The warm and welcoming smiles, coupled with unique expressions through raised eyebrows are contagious, compelling me to smile in kind. Fiji, the tropical paradise in the middle of the South Pacific, serves as a hub for many neighboring islands including Tonga, Samoa, and Vanuatu. The country was colonized by the British from 1874 to 1970. Because of the long period of colonization, they endured the influence of British culture, evidenced by the popularity of rugby and the widespread use of English. During the colonial era, a significant Indian population came to Fiji to work in the sugarcane fields and currently make up 40 percent of the population. The Indians were moved to Fiji because the British thought the exceptional character of Fijians enjoying relaxation was unsuitable for labor. These historical-cultural disparities continue to affect contemporary Fiji-Indians who amassed wealth through hard work and now dominate the Fijian economy, leading to periodic conflicts and coups between the Indian and Fijian communities, both vying for control. Despite this, the laidback nature of Fiji has now become typical, rendering Fiji as an attractive holiday spot to relax.

Yet, beneath the glorious resorts and natural beauty, the Shangri-la has a hidden wound inside. Even in Suva, Fiji's capital, foreigners face danger when walking beyond the city center. Pickpocketing, commonly found in tourist areas, is prevalent, but theft extends to residential neighborhoods as well. Some robust individuals can effortlessly wrench apart iron-barred doors with their bare hands. Stories of people being robbed and car windows being smashed in parking lots are commonplace. Settlements, unauthorized makeshift housing areas constructed from corrugated iron, are on the rise. People are leaving their hometown villages to earn money in the city, and these settlements are expanding rapidly in both size and number.

For the past month, I have been in Fiji, visiting these settlements weekly. Each week, I visit the settlements to teach math and English to children. Although Fiji uses English as one of its official languages, kids from the settlements rarely go to school, have limited access to education, and struggle with English. Even students in third and fourth grades in primary school struggle with

Review



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adding beyond 10. There are so many kids, but nobody is taking care of them. Women under the age of 20 often have children and keep having them. Parents have no time or energy to take care of the children, so kids are raising their sisters and brothers. Primary school students hold their infant siblings on their backs. A settlement is not a good place to raise children, as the rusted corrugated iron structures are all over the place and the streets are full of rotting trash. Children frequently get hurt, and during each visit, people bring the wounded, as they lack basic medical supplies like ointments and bandages. Most children have skin troubles and wounds that have not healed properly and some acquire disabilities due to the lack of adequate treatments. These neglected children, whose greatest dreams were to be mart cashiers, grow up in poverty and with so little education. As a result, they often resort to a life of crime and substance abuse, perpetuating a vicious cycle.

“Bula,” the Fijian greeting for “hello” in Fiji, carries the dual meaning of “I wish you happiness and good health” and “life” itself. This greeting, which conveys wishes for happiness and health, mirrors Fiji’s relaxed approach to life, but are their bula (lives) being bula (happy and healthy)? Many tourists cherish the warmth and friendliness of Fijians, often referring to them as having the “Bula smile” and using “bula” liberally, yet are they genuinely concerned about the lives of those beyond the luxurious hotels and resorts? There is a paradox in uttering “Bula,” signifying life and blessings, while neglecting the well-being of these lives. While perfection may elude us, should we not be responsible for what we spend money on and enjoy? This issue is not unique to Fiji, as numerous countries heavily reliant on tourism face similar challenges. There are ways we can enjoy tourism and at the same time help the local community in a responsible manner. As COVID-19 fades out and vacations to different kinds of countries resurface, our attitude toward travel destinations and other countries must change now. 🇻🇺

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The Unknown Citizen

- W. H. Auden -

(To JS/07 M 378
This Marble Monument
Is Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Instalment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

To All the Lovables



Lee Jue-hyun

The energy conveyed solely through band music is unique. It is not only the synchronization among the members, but also the liveliness felt when connecting with the audience that makes it so captivating. That is why experiencing it live is especially appealing. The energy conveyed to the audience varies depending on the emotions each band member feels in that moment. This autumn, I hope you will discover your favorite band and experience the energy they uniquely deliver with your whole being.

Kim Su-yeon

When the weather gets colder, I draw close to music. I associate each season with certain songs, and this autumn will be remembered for old songs, especially old pop or old Korean folk songs. I was fascinated by the old songs when I first heard them in my father's car, and I still love them today. I especially love the dryness and warmth of old songs. These days, I share my playlist with my friend. I love listening to her autumn playlist to get a glimpse of how she experiences the season. Music is a way for me to connect with the seasons and with the people I love.

Kim Jun-hong

I adore all of my relationships. In the past, I tended not to spend my time and heart on those who seemed to pass by just for a moment. However, once I realized that I could remain memorable in someone else's mind by chance, I began to regard every person I encounter as a true relationship and try to show them respect. Doing my best when it comes to relationships and treating others sincerely in every moment makes me feel like I am in possession of a treasure. I am so grateful to those who remember and like me, though I am merely a nobody. I love you with all my heart and promise to always face you with sincerity.

Ryu Hyo-rin

There are many things that I love in the world, but cute dog videos are a big part of my daily life these days. Maybe they seem trivial and do not look serious, but they undoubtedly provide me with a bunch of joy. Also, it is proven that cute pet videos are good for mental wellbeing, and by sharing such videos with my loving friends, I can empathize with them. Killing two birds with just one cute dog video!

Kim Ji-hyang

I love the scent of nature because memories come to my mind. Scent has the special power of encompassing one's emotion and experience. For example, after the start of autumn, I once got a sniff of the cold night air while going home. Then I was reminded of the memory of taking a walk with my friends in my third year in high school after studying at night. It was 11 p.m. when we would stride through the parking lot, sharing our concerns and hoping for a better day the next day.

Jang Yewon

What I love most these days is sunlight. More accurately, I relish time spent in the sunlight. I find happiness in the late afternoon when I open the window and enjoy the chilly breeze and warm sunlight. Adding a cozy blanket to the wind and sunlight makes it the perfect day. When I watch TV, take a nap, or eat a snack, this time makes me feel calm and restores my energy to work hard for another week.

Cho Eun

Sometimes the content of a conversation is not what is crucial. Even when the story is not particularly entertaining, I often find myself engaged, laughing, and truly enjoying the moment. This is because I feel a connection with the person I am talking to. Making eye contact, I believe, is central and fundamental to establishing that connection. It signifies that I am listening attentively, fully engaged, and genuinely interested in the conversation. Such gestures of respect and politeness are the keys to bringing us closer together. Sometimes words become unnecessary when we can read each other's thoughts through our eyes!



A screenshot of a social media post. On the left is a black and white photograph of a crowd of people at a protest, with many raising their fists. The photo is credited to ©Gayatri Malhotra. On the right is a social media interface showing a post with the text "people protesting" and a small thumbnail of the protest image. Below the text is a logo for "The Argus x DALL-E Human & AI". At the top right of the interface are icons for "Share" and "Save".

INJUSTICE
ANYWHERE
IS A THREAT TO
JUSTICE
EVERYWHERE



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