

## K-Pop and J-Pop

Anne-Marie Mylar  
September 9, 2019

I read today a beautiful article about a group of young people who are part of the K-Pop culture. The article was true but incomplete.



My response to the article is below:

I see nothing wrong with the article I just read, but there is something missing.

They are young people exploited by the businesses at hand who have no other goals but make plenty of money. These young people are puppets that suffer tremendously in their soul. If Satan takes, God will too and therefore, in around about way God is going to use the unwilling sacrifice of these young people to advance his providence. These young people, most of them will become casualty of war. Their personal lives are ignored, their souls and hearts are ignore. I cannot watch them, it makes me cry.

You will find the article [HERE](#)

2/25/2020: This is an update - that confirmed, in my personal opinion what I think about K-Pop and J-Pop.

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## The Korean Wave Matters: K-Pop Band BTS and the Providence

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By **Incheol Son**

Recently, a Korean boy band hit the world stage and many of the youth generation have fallen in love with them. They've become so famous that even this band of seven boys was surprised to see the global level of reaction to their performances, far more than they anticipated.



The band is **BTS**. Their name comes from the English acronym of 방탄소년단 or **BangTan Sonyeondan**, literally "Bulletproof Boy

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Scouts" in Korean. They won the Billboard Music Awards for Top Social Artist for the past three years. They are almost like the Second Coming of the Beatles, at least for our present generation of young people.

This year, at least 100,000 fans in each city they toured turned out. In particular, they filled **Wembley Stadium** where Queen performed **live** in 1985. Their fans have created a kingdom-like quasi-religion of their own. On the Internet, such as YouTube, the band's fan club is called the **ARMY**.

Fans are especially amazed by the dramatic growth of the band. Their production company was not one of the three major companies in South Korea. As they sang in "Silver Spoon/Baepsae," there used to be a golden rule in the South Korean entertainment industry: a band should be promoted by one of the top three K-Pop companies to gain global popularity. But, **BTS** started at the bottom. And none of the seven boys was from the capital, Seoul.

They were initially ignored after their debut because their music was totally different from prevailing trends. But because of that ignorance they went on to win the Billboard award, as sung in "DDaeng." The boys show their fans a humble attitude while singing "I Need U," "Best of Me" and "Illegal/Dimple." And they recently released the song, "**Boy With Luv**," dedicated to their fans.

BTS is known to write their own lyrics and sometimes compose their own songs and also produce. They're so talented, but that was not always the case. Their abilities came from hard work and desperation. This point is confessed in their autobiographical song, "We are the Bulletproof." So, one of their attractions is they not only disclose what they suffer from and criticize what seems unfair in society, but encourage people to overcome those difficulties and look for real nature, eventually to find hope.

They surely make their fans passionate with their songs in their own "Magic Shop." They sing about not only those issues most young people struggle with every day, as heard in the song "War of Hormone," but also of a longing feeling for lost ones as in "Spring Day." Their songs, like "Dope," touch upon sensitive social issues their fans face every day. They try to break through such constraints, as in "Fire."

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BTS suggests many helpful things to overcome our current stagnation. In a funny song, "Go Go," they advise it's more productive to just go on rather than stay struggling in life. They even sing philosophically articulated songs, like "Epiphany," which describes how young people experience demotions and struggles to be grownups. It helps one get comforted, as in "I'm Fine" and "Run." It eventually drives one to love oneself. They are saying that it's "Not Today" to get discouraged.

Yes, I'm a fan of **BTS**, as you've already guessed. Though I'm not yet so devoted to be called part of the ARMY, I listen to their music — actually only to their music — almost every day. My first encounter with them was out of curiosity. One evening last year I watched a TV news clip showing that lots of Western young women were excited about BTS. I'd seen many Asian girls who were fans of K-Pop bands up until then, but seldom Western fans. So, I began watching various kinds of "reaction videos" of the ARMY on YouTube.

In the early days of being a fan, it was more fun to watch reaction videos than the official boy band music videos. It was an intriguing phenomenon to me. As a Korean, I kept wondering, "Why are Western youth so amazed by the band?" Then I began reading their lyrics once mastering all those music videos. I found myself becoming a fan of the band. I'd fallen in love with the performance and messages they deliver through those lyrics. They were just amazing. If I were younger, I would have practiced their wonderful choreography.

One of main factors drawing fans' attention is surely the lyrics of BTS's songs, which are quite different from earlier K-Pop bands who sang about the routine interests of young people. Instead, they sang of the hardships, difficulties, resentment, sadness, etc., experienced by so many youth these days. The lyrics even contain philosophical awakenings.

The song "The Truth Untold" reminds me of Unificationists' situation in that we speak a message others hardly love to listen to. That might have been Jesus' heart when he confronted great disbelief from the public. I still tremble to go out in the public as I first did in my early years when people were so mean to me when I was trying to deliver a message.

Another song, "Fake Love," quickly struck me recalling our own understanding of "True Love." And the title of another song, "Blood, Sweat and Tears," made me think of a passage True Father used in the earlier version of My Pledge, "Shedding sweat for earth, tears for humankind, and blood for heaven." It sometimes made me wonder if any of the BTS members might be Unificationist?

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But at least they may have been influenced by our movement indirectly without being consciously aware. What matters most to me is that the message has been already spread to the world. That doesn't require it being done by any of us. The vehicle is just different, whether it be a Unificationist or a boy band, as God used different central figures in every era.



*How did BTS come to headline one of the world's most iconic stadiums? Prior to playing a sold out [Wembley Stadium](#), the band and fans reflect on their path to pop stardom (video courtesy BBC Radio 1, June 11, 2019).*

Someone might say, if Rev. Moon is now free from the limitations of his physical body, why wouldn't he work with outsiders more freely. Therefore, the Korean Wave matters globally today, at least for the youth, who are the people for the years ahead, and who will be on earth longer than the rest of us.

Actually it's been quite a while since the [Korean Wave](#) or *Hallyu* (한류, 韓流) first spread around the world. It's represented in many forms of culture such as [K-Drama](#) (TV), film, fashion, cosmetics, and music. The music especially, known as K-Pop, has been very influential to younger generations. The Korean Wave each year attracts millions of tourists to South Korea.

Experts cite several reasons why the world is responding to Korean culture. One is the dramatic development of Korean history. In particular, Korea has long been the historical victim

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squeezed among its powerful neighbors. Such victimhood touches almost half the countries of the world which had been colonies of stronger countries. According to Divine Principle, Korea was intentionally driven on the path of providential history.

I was so impressed when I heard a testimony from an early close disciple to Rev. Moon. She once heard him make a prediction. He said, "One day the people of the world will rush to Korea to learn the Korean language." She confessed she laughed to herself because she couldn't imagine such a phenomenon happening in the future, especially when she looked around the reality of our first church covered by cardboard and dirt.

She realized however at the time of her testimony that such phenomena were already beginning. Father Moon's prophecy was already coming true when the 1988 Summer Olympics were held for the first time in South Korea. Many international visitors walked the streets of Seoul. But, now I have really come to believe his prediction because of the phenomena of BTS. The worldwide ARMY of BTS fans learns Korean in order to read and sing its lyrics.

In 1971, Rev. and Mrs. Moon arrived in the U.S. By 1973-74, many American young people became excited about the messages they brought of family values of the Eastern world and the absolute value of God. In a way, I call them the first generation of fans of the Korean Wave, the ancestors of today's K-Culture fans.

A question arises here. How come Korean Culture is suddenly attractive to the world, especially to young people? Is it because Koreans are capable to affect the global community? In part, yes, but not entirely. Though I've tried to name a few factors, nothing fully explains this for me except for the Providence.

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As Divine Principle reveals, Korean history has long been prepared for providential work. Korea should become the model of a new nation which can reveal the providential work of heaven. From the Bible, we learn many miraculous stories. Even an army of just a handful of soldiers, “Gideon’s 300 Chosen Men,” was enough to defeat an enemy **according** to the Bible. Why? It shows Heaven’s power.

The Israelites are called the “Chosen People” in the Bible and also the Divine Principle inherits the biblical notion that they would have been very vulnerable without God’s protection. The people themselves reveal the existence of God, who has worked through and with them. With God, a mere 300 soldiers can defeat the world of secular power and sovereignty.

I believe it’s now Korea’s turn. To show heaven’s work, many things should happen mysteriously as the Korean Wave exemplifies. The world looks at Korea now for many different reasons: the providential interests of the first generation of fans of the Korean Wave, pure interest of K-Culture fans, and the curiosity of the world.

With that widespread attraction, Korea should sing and dance for the world. It’s obligated. What kind of dance should Unificationists perform? It should be one to build peaceful unification as a model for the new millennium, so the world can recognize that a peaceful approach is attainable for the human race. It will be a really hopeful message for the global community.

The people of the world should not fear human extinction or global confrontation like world war. People would say, “If Korea has achieved peaceful reunification by overcoming all kinds of obstacles and difficulties, why can’t we do that?” I believe many nations will follow Korea’s example. Then it will fulfill the Will of Heaven: eternal peace on the earth.

Lastly, the leader of BTS, **Kim Namjun**, spoke at the UN, as part **UNICEF’s campaign**, Generation Unlimited. From personal experiences, he shared many messages with the youth of the world. Of course, BTS fans reacted to his message over the Internet. They are so influential. So, BTS was able to speak directly to the people of the world.

I think it’s a golden opportunity for Unificationists to spread our values to the world. It’s like paving roads that lead to the hearts of people, especially the youth. From a providential point of view, it’s preparation for the achievement of the Will of God. Then, one last question comes to my mind: “Are you influential enough for the world to listen to *your* voice?”

What BTS has shown from their success story of starting at the

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bottom, much as the Unification movement began from a very humble church, is that the message is the key attraction. As long as the message makes people feel touched, moved, and burst into tears, we can be very influential. The world will listen to us and to our message.

Tonight, try to watch one of the many [reaction videos](#) made by BTS fans. You may get goosebumps from the video if it shows a whole lot of fans chanting while singing along with BTS in Korean. It's the very scene that Rev. Moon predicted in the early years inside his first tiny A-frame church.♦

*Dr. Incheol Son is the International Director of PWPA International and also works at SunHak Universal Peace Graduate University as a translator. He earned his Ph.D. in public administration from Kookmin University, an MBA from the University of Bridgeport, and his bachelor's in theology from SunMoon University.*

Photo at top: *BTS performing at Wembley Stadium, London, in June 2019.*



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# 8 thoughts on “The Korean Wave Matters: K-Pop Band BTS and the Providence”

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**Migliore Gennaro**

September 9, 2019 at 4:19 am



Surprised? We shouldn't be. After all, all Koreans (like it or not) are people born in a special land that has given birth to two special people, born on the same date, but different years.

★★★★★ 1 Vote



**Incheol Son**

September 9, 2019 at 8:12 pm



I'm counting down the days until the 100th anniversary of True Father's birth next year. There will be a huge fan gathering much more exciting than even of BTS fans gathering to meet their idol band.

★★★★★ 1 Vote



**Anne-Marie Mylar**

September 9, 2019 at 8:48 am



My personal opinion on K-Pop and J-Pop...

I see nothing wrong with this article, but there is a dark side.

Many young people are exploited by these entertainment companies who have no other goal but to make plenty of money. These young people are puppets who suffer tremendously in their souls. If Satan takes, God will too, and therefore, in a round-about way, God is going to use the unwilling sacrifices of these young people to advance his providence. Most of these young people will become casualties of war. Their personal lives are ignored, their souls and hearts are ignored. I cannot watch them, it makes me cry.

★★★★★ 2 Votes



**Incheol Son**

September 9, 2019 at 8:24 pm



Indeed, there's another "dark side" to this fandom. K-Pop fans often call themselves self-deprecatingly "ATM." They cannot resist what their idols release and escape from the zeal only once they put their hearts in deeply, so it's like religious faith. As DP says, the satanic world advances ahead of the providence. Now it's our turn to show something attractive and meaningful to youth who are thirsty for truth. We've got to fill them up. It may be the best if we can compose a nice song with precious lyrics of truth, say, "True Love" not "Fake Love."

★★★★★ 1 Vote



**David Eaton**

September 9, 2019 at 7:43 pm

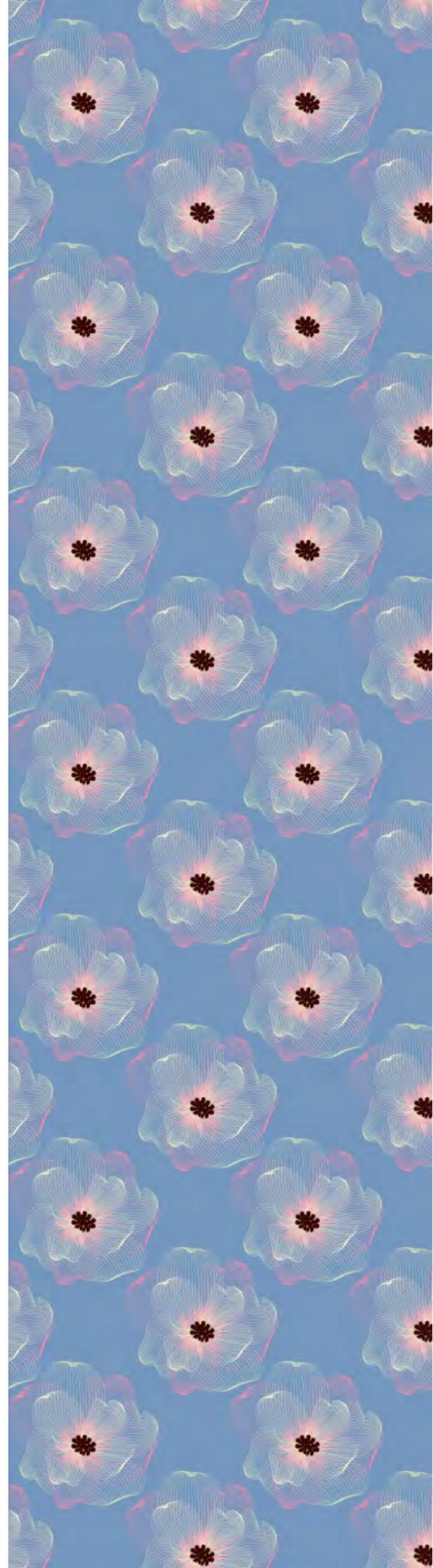


At the request of a few "concerned" parents here in Korea, I watched several of the videos by BTS on YouTube to see for myself if their concerns were warranted. The videos are slick, well-produced, high-tech affairs. To my ears, their music and dance routines are not unlike most of the K-Pop that's being produced and promoted here. There may be differences but they are minute.

One thing I came away with when watching the videos is that there is strong aspect of androgyny in the band's appearance. This is typical of many of the boy bands and male models in Korea. In Korea — as in the West — there is a crisis developing regarding younger people opting out of the traditional family modality. As we know, confusion about sexuality contributes to many of the unfortunate pathologies that are plaguing sociocultural realities of many countries, not just Korea or the USA, and it is a plague! Gender dysphoria is becoming quite prominent and controversial in the socio-political sphere in the West. BTS's physical appearance tends to add to the confusion in my opinion.

Though BTS is credited for singing about various social problems in the attempt to make the world a better place, I didn't hear lyrics that actually could "spread our(!) values to the world." (Though I admit seeing and hearing a limited sampling of BTS' work). If we are "paving roads that lead to the hearts of people, especially the youth," the issue becomes creating art that actually embodies the tenets of Godism.

Anne-Marie Mylar's concerns are worth considering because there has always been an exploitive aspect in the music industry. Many young lives have been ruined by the celebrity-industrial-complex.



I've taken a fair amount of criticism for being too "ideologically driven" in my ruminations about art and culture, especially with regard to the moral (axiological) aspects of the creative process. But DP, UT, and the words of our founders are unequivocal *vis-a-vis* morality, purpose and motivation in the creative process. One concerned parent here asked me if we could witness to the BTS troupe. I said, "Why not try." It would be interesting to see if they'd accept certain aspects of the Unificationist perspective about art and creativity.

★★★★★ 4 Votes



### Incheol Son

September 9, 2019 at 8:48 pm

Yes, you're right. That's exactly what still bothers me. It actually struck me when the leader of BTS, Kim Namjoon, mentioned "gender identity" things in his speech at the UN. He may not see what we see in the future when "the traditional family modality" collapses. And it alerted me, "We've got to do something!" We've got to keep providing corrected version of lyrics because young people sing the songs every day. Rather than avoiding them or treating them as kind of taboo, I think we need to take good advantage of this syndrome to educate or correct our children and grandchildren, not forcefully, but attractively and so persuasively, so that they can listen to why we've been excited about the K-Religion for a long time. Let's start a chat with our kids from BTS songs and the lyrics.

★★★★★ 1 Vote



### Johann Hinterleitner

September 14, 2019 at 11:43 am

I admit I do not know much about K-Pop and before reading this essay by Dr. Incheol Son, I never heard or read about BTS.

Now, I did a little research on YouTube and I can make the following two statements:

- a) K-Pop bands are put together by hugely powerful entertainment companies
- b) The bands are extensively trained to sing and dance at the highest level

This suggests they are a "product" of the entertainment industry, and if this is indeed so, the objective is clear — to make as much money as possible. I doubt BTS can and will be significant carriers of providential tasks — maybe to some extent in the short-term, but not so in the long-term.

I, for one, look forward to the day when the young adults of our Unification Movement produce lyrics and music that will resonate with the masses, especially with the young people in our world, who long for authentic beauty, compassion, unstained love, and many more things.

★★★★☆ 1 Vote



**Incheol Son**

September 14, 2019 at 6:26 pm



I agree with what you said: "The objective is clear — to make as much money as possible." And, BTS cannot be the "significant carriers of providential tasks" unless they were to join our movement.

In my article, I focus on the opportunity they've created. BTS is totally different from typical K-Pop bands because they write their own lyrics, touching so many of the younger generation. I think it's an opportunity for us to do something. We could learn from what they are good at and how they've been able to capture people's attention in the short run, and in the long run, as you said, one of our own needs to "produce lyrics and music that will resonate with the masses, especially with the young people in our world." I feel the power of culture like music and dance.

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# 'I could have been a K-pop idol - but I'm glad I quit'

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**Achieving fame as a K-pop star involves years of intensive training, and often some plastic surgery. Euodias is one of the few British hopefuls to have experienced the gruelling life of a K-pop trainee. Here she describes what it was like, and explains why - after being selected for a girl group - she quit.**

I was a child when I made the big move from my home in the north-east of England to South Korea, where I trained for two years to become a K-pop star.

At the time K-pop was largely unknown in Britain. But I'm half-Korean and half-Chinese, so I started watching South Korean TV dramas like *Boys Over Flowers* and *Playful Kiss* - and then fell in love with K-pop and the whole culture.

While my classmates were crazy about Britney Spears and the Backstreet Boys, I was also listening to Wonder Girls and B2ST.

My burning ambition was to become an actor and perform.

One way of doing that in South Korea is to become an "idol", which means someone who does everything: model, act, sing and dance. So K-pop seemed like a route to achieving my dreams.



From the age of 10, I auditioned for various companies in the hope that one of them would sign me up.

Often this meant sending a self-shot video of myself. Sometimes I skipped school to film an audition tape, which made my mum really mad.

Then, on a family trip to visit my grandma in Seoul, I got to go to a huge audition with more than 2,000 other hopefuls.

We were kept in a vast waiting room, like the sort you see on Britain's Got Talent, except there were no chairs. So we sat on the floor in rows of 10.

After a six-hour wait, it was my row's turn. My heart was beating so fast as we were called forward one-by-one.





When the first girl sang, the judge barked "Stop. Next!" before she got to the chorus of her song. Nearly everyone got the same treatment.

When it was my turn, I performed a monologue from a Korean TV drama. The judge stopped me halfway through.

"We're looking for singers," he said. "So will you sing?" I hadn't prepared a song, but I had a go at doing A Whole New World from Disney's Aladdin.

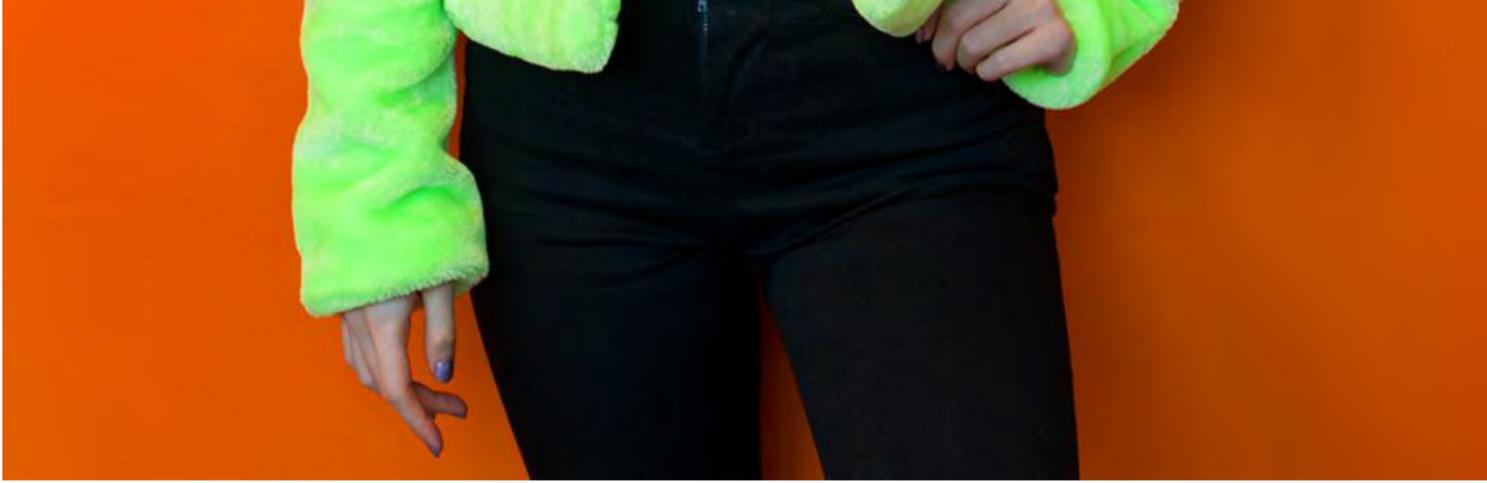
The judge halted me and asked to see me dance. I hadn't prepared for that either, and felt like an idiot. So they put on a dance track and I did some freestyling.

After conferring with assistants, the judge gave me a yellow piece of paper. I was through to the next stage.

I was directed to a room where I was asked to walk along a line taped on the floor, and my face was photographed from different angles to see how I would look on camera.

Within days, I was asked to come back with a parent to discuss a contract.





Under the terms of the contract, I would leave my family and move to South Korea to live and train at the company.

If I chose to leave before the contract was up, I would have to repay the full cost of my training, which would run into thousands of dollars.

Mum reluctantly signed a two-year contract - the shortest they offered - on my behalf.

After the meeting we had an argument and mum didn't talk to me for a month.

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Soon after I started as a trainee, the entertainment company that had signed me up transferred my contract to another firm. Such moves are common and trainees don't get any say in the matter.

My new company was strict. I had to live in their building with the other trainees who were all aged between nine and 16. The sexes were separated.

We only left the building to attend our normal school lessons. Korean trainees went to local state schools but because I was British I went to an international school. Other than that we weren't allowed out without permission, which was usually refused.

If parents wanted to visit they had to get approval in advance. Relatives who turned up without notice were turned away.





On a typical day we trainees would wake up at 5am to get in some extra dance practice before school started at 8am.

When the school day ended we would return to the company to be trained in singing and dancing. Trainees would stay up practising until 11pm or later, in an attempt to impress instructors.

At night we were left to look after ourselves. We had a strict curfew to make sure we'd be back in the dorms before they locked up the building.

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Dating was banned, though some secretly did. Trainees were all supposed to act straight even if they weren't. Anybody who appeared to be openly gay was ostracised by the company.

Both male and female trainees would have "managers" - uncle-type figures who would text us at night to keep tabs on us. If we didn't text back, then we would immediately get a phone call, asking where we were.

There was no such thing as weekends or holidays. On national holidays like the Lunar New Year, trainees would remain in the company building while staff took the day off.



The company sorted us into two main groups, kind of like a Team A and Team B.

I was one of the 20 to 30 members of Team A - we were thought to have the most potential.

Team B had around 200 trainees. Some of them had even had to pay their way into the company. They could train for years and years and never know if they would actually "debut" - the word used when someone is launched as a K-pop performer.

Team A trainees slept in dorms with four girls to a bedroom. The regular trainees would sleep together in a huge room and had to make do with mats on a wooden floor.

I saw exhausted Team B trainees sleep in the dance studios after training, because the mats there were just like the ones in their dorms.

**“They announced  
your weight to  
everyone in the  
room”**

I only ever saw one Team B trainee get promoted to Team A. If Team A trainees misbehaved, or complained about something they might be threatened with being thrown out or moved to Team B.

But generally nobody complained. We were all really young and ambitious. The company's attitude was that everything we experienced was part of learning the discipline needed to be a K-pop idol. So we just accepted everything.

Inside the company building, we didn't use our own names, except with other trainees. We were each given a number and a stage name in keeping with the sort of character they had picked for us.

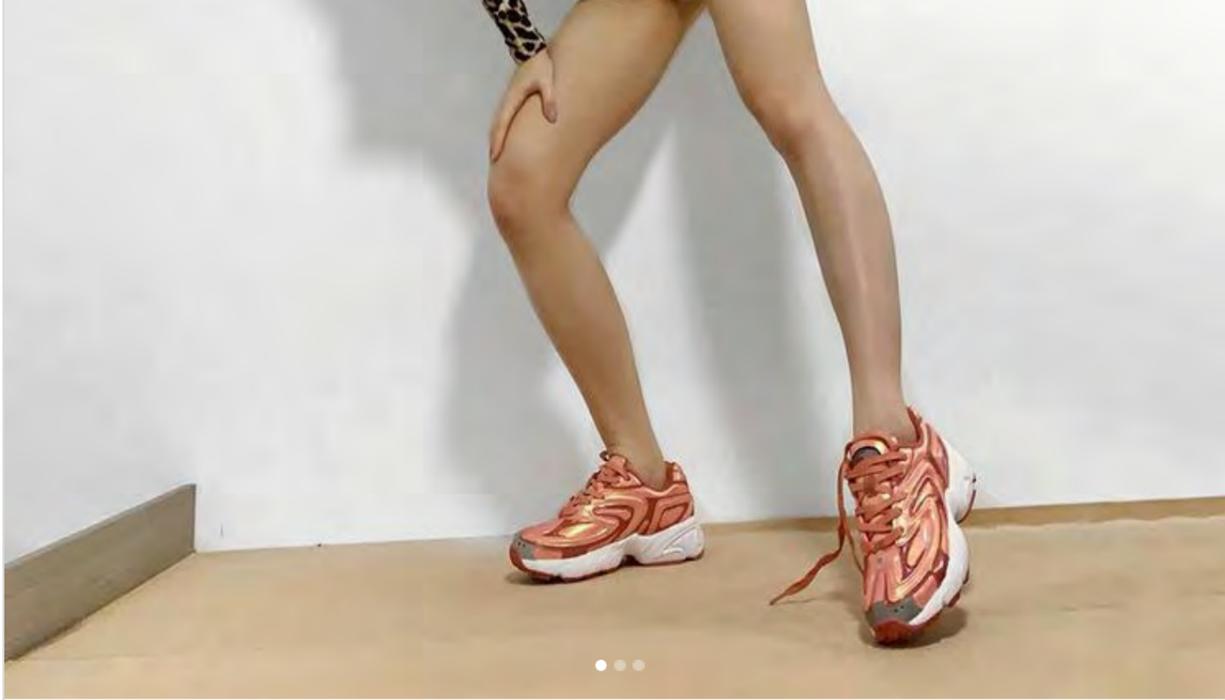
I was given the name Dia, but our instructors would only ever call us by our numbers, which they read from stickers on our shirts. It felt weird, a bit like we were in some sort of science experiment.



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I knew I had the attributes to be a successful idol.

The company favoured me, because I am very small - instructors constantly praised me for being petite. Don't get me wrong, I love eating, but I'm lucky to have a high metabolism and don't gain weight easily.

Weight was the constant obsession of everyone there. Everyone was required to be no heavier than 47kg (7st 6lb or 104lb) regardless of their age or height.

At weekly weigh-ins, your body would be analysed by the trainer, and then they announced your weight to everyone in the room.

If you were over the designated weight, then they would ration your food. Sometimes they would even take away entire meals and those "overweight" trainees would just be given water.

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If you need support with eating disorders, help and support is available from **BBC Action Line**

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I thought that was really harsh because some of those girls couldn't help being tall.

Starving yourself was really normalised. Some trainees were anorexic or bulimic, and many of the girls didn't have periods.

It was common to pass out from exhaustion. Often we had to help carry unconscious trainees back to the dorms.

I passed out twice during dance practice, probably because I was dehydrated or hadn't eaten enough. I woke up in bed not knowing how I got there.

The attitude among the trainees after that was like, "Good for her! She wants it so much!" Looking back on it now, I think it was really disgusting.

I found that I didn't really have good friends there, everyone was more like a colleague. The environment was way too tense and competitive to forge real friendships.

The stressful atmosphere was heightened by the monthly showcase events.

Each trainee would perform in front of everyone and be evaluated by the instructors.

If a trainee didn't get a good grade, then they would be kicked out immediately.



EUODIAS

They would be replaced by a constant stream of new arrivals. What was even more intimidating was that some of the new trainees had already had plastic surgery done, so they already looked more like K-pop stars than the rest of us.

There was also bullying going on among the trainees. One girl was picked on because she was over the maximum weight. Another trainee who was a good dancer had his dance shoes stolen.

I missed my old friends back in England but I couldn't really keep in touch with them as instructors made us hand in our phones so we would focus on our training. The company also wanted to make trainees seem more mysterious before they debuted, and didn't want us posting anything embarrassing on social media.

**“They wanted to change the bridge of my nose and shave my jawline”**

# Shave my jawline

We could get our phones back for 15 minutes at night, and I would use that time to call my mum. But most trainees also secretly kept a second phone.

My parents knew that training was difficult, but there really wasn't much they could do because I was under a contract and they were so far away. Most of the Korean trainees wouldn't tell their parents anything at all because they didn't want them to worry.

What kept me going was the belief that I would eventually debut as a member of a group.

However, the company only had spots for fewer than half of the members of Team A. We competed for them through constant examinations in singing, dancing, and interviews.

K-pop groups are typically organised like this: a lead vocalist, dancer, rapper, youngest member, etc. Everyone has a specific role.

I was delighted when they told me I had been picked to be a lead singer. But then the company said they were considering me for an alternative role in the group, the visual.



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The visual is the face of the group. You get picked for this because of your appearance, and crucially, how you might look in the future. Another girl was in competition with me for this spot.

She was naturally more attractive than me, but the company predicted that if I got plastic surgery I would end up prettier than her and would then be ready to be the visual.

By Korean standards I have a very big face, so they wanted to change the bridge of my nose and shave my jawline.

The company couldn't force a trainee to have plastic surgery, but it was strongly encouraged. Plastic surgery is very normal in South Korea and the prospect of having surgery didn't bother me at all. I saw it as an investment in my future - the cost of the operation would have been added to my debt to the company.

But my mum had mixed feelings, she realised it meant I would be closer to becoming an idol, but she was also worried for me.

**“I doubted I’d be able to keep up this docile personality in public”**

When the company told me that I was being lined up for the visual spot, I was so happy.

They told me that I was going to be a K-pop star, and that's really amazing to hear, especially when you're an impressionable teenager hearing that from powerful people.

As time went on, the company started to tell us more about what the group was going to be like.

They told us the music genre, the style that we would have, and I started feeling iffy about the whole thing.

I learned about the character behind my stage name, Dia. She was supposed to be very reserved, sweet, and innocent. As the visual, I would be expected to personify those characteristics.

But Dia just wasn't me. I'm opinionated and loud. I doubted I would be able to keep up this docile personality in public.



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I thought it might just be worth it if it led to me becoming an actor. But when I tried talking to the company about my ambitions the response was: "No, we think you'll fit better with this girl group."

Someone senior there told me that as I was half-Korean, if I pursued an acting career then the best I could hope for was a supporting role on a TV show.

I felt my dreams slipping away.

My contract came up for renewal before my group was due to be launched - and I said that I wanted out.

It's really unusual to walk away, most trainees want the dream so badly that they'll agree to anything.

**“Even successful acts have to continue working to pay off the debt”**

Despite my refusal, I parted on good terms with the company.

Because I left when I did, I had no debts to pay off, I had fulfilled my part of the contract.

If I had stayed and debuted with the group then I would have been charged for the cost of my instructor fees, accommodation, and for any plastic surgery.

Even successful acts have to continue working to pay off all the debt incurred during training, and the new debt that builds up when you're an idol. It's actually really difficult to make money by being a K-pop star.

I returned to England without having had any plastic surgery and was reunited with my old friends. I was able to sit my exams with everyone else.

I went on to do an art foundation course and then got a place at a fashion school in France. I'm really fortunate because so many trainees get dropped at 18, or finish their contracts when they're 21 and feel lost. They gave up everything to try to be a K-pop idol, but that's ended and they find themselves with no qualifications.



My mum was so happy that I was back. She always believed training wasn't the right thing for me. But she knew I had to find that out for myself. I had to go the long way round, but I learned that mum is always right.

When I see videos of the group I was to have been in, I feel relieved that it isn't me up there on stage.

The whole thing feels fake to me, as I know those girls personally, and the way they have to behave in public is not what they are like in real life.

I'm not really thinking about pursuing acting at the moment, except perhaps as a hobby.

Instead I have a career as a YouTuber. I've realised that I'm quite

entrepreneurial.

I love making videos for my channel. I find I'm applying a lot of what I learned in my K-pop training. I feel liberated because I control everything, from planning to filming to editing.

The more I think about it, the more I think I made the right decision.

*As told to Elaine Chong*

Since *Euodias* underwent her training the South Korean Free Trade Commission has **introduced regulations** to ban some unfair practices in contracts between K-pop trainees and entertainment companies.

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