

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: VOICING THE UNHEARD: GENDERED PRACTICES, DISCOURSES, AND STRUGGLES OF *GUGAK* MUSICIANS IN SOUTH KOREA

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This dissertation investigates how individual musicians' experiences and gender identity are shaped by interacting with cultural ideals of gender roles in different levels of South Korean society and the ways in which they interact with gendered performances of music. In the last few years, gender has been a popular topic not only in academia but also in everyday conversations in South Korea. Traditional gender norms have been challenged, and various types of masculinities and femininities have emerged. As different ideas of gender roles coexist in society, *gugak* (literally "national music") musicians, too, face challenges in the middle of social transition.

This study aims to deliver the often unheard voices of two groups of musicians: male *gayageum* (Korean zither) players playing a "women's instrument" and female fusion *gugak* musicians playing "cheap" music. Based on in-depth interviews and my eighteen years' involvement in the *gugak* field, I examine how

both groups of musicians negotiate conflicts as they face contrasting gender norms and values between the *gugak* community and South Korean society at large. In this process, their performance becomes the prime site where their ideas of masculinity and femininity are put on display. By playing particular instruments and styles of music, defying negative discourses on them, and demonstrating their competence, I argue that performances and narratives of the musicians ultimately complicate the hegemonic views of masculinity and femininity.

By revealing untold stories of the often unheard groups of musicians, this dissertation sheds light on studies concerning what has been excluded from scholarly discussions, which will provide a more comprehensive picture of individual actors and communities in society. This work also contributes to studies on the complex interplay between individual actors, diverse ideas of gender, and performance.

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STRUGGLES OF *GUGAK* MUSICIANS IN SOUTH KOREA

by

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Notes on Translation and Romanization

All Korean words are romanized according to the official Romanization of Korean system released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (current Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism) of Republic of Korea in 2000. Exceptions are made for the direct quotations from other authors using the McCune-Reischauer system of romanization (*kugak* instead of *gugak*, for example), which is still widely in use in scholarly literature. I use the same romanization system for personal names in Korean. But if an individual already has a personal way of romanizing his/her name, I retain that spelling. Personal names in Korean are presented in the standard order of Korean names where family name precedes given names, except for the authors working in the United States who follow the Western convention (given names followed by family name). Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Korean to English are my own.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This dissertation investigates young South Korean musicians playing *gugak* (국악, “national music”),¹ with a particular emphasis on how society’s gender ideals and expectations affect individual musicians’ choices and experiences, their gender identity, and others’ perceptions of them. In the last few years, traditional gender norms have been challenged, and various types of masculinities and femininities have emerged in South Korea (hereafter Korea). With the rise of new gender roles and increasing awareness of gender equality, Korea started to experience new forms of social problems, and gender tension is one of them.

The tension between men and women has been heightened to unprecedented levels in Korea in the last few years. As if there are only two groups of people in society, “men versus women” or “women versus men,” people bombard each other on social media and popular online communities. The Seocho-dong public toilet murder case in May 2016, commonly known as the “Gangnam murder case” (*gangnamyeok sarinsageon*), lit the fuse of public conflict between women and men.² Women started to openly express their fear of becoming victims of men, and men accused women of treating all men as potential criminals. As people became more aware of their gendered

¹ Although *gugak* is often translated as “Korean traditional music,” today’s *gugak* includes traditional music and new musical styles developed since the twentieth century based on traditional musical elements. I will explore the definition of *gugak* more in detail in the following section.

² On May 17, 2016, a 34-year-old man stabbed a 23-year-old woman to death around midnight at a public restroom outside a karaoke bar near Gangnam Station in Seoul. Although the suspect claimed that he did so because of his hatred towards women, the police later announced that it was not a hate crime against women. However, despite the official announcement, the incident led to massive anti-misogyny protests both online and offline.

experiences and feelings, it sparked heated debates on what has been taken for granted as a woman or a man living in Korean society. While women speak about their disadvantages and advocate their equal rights in society, men speak about various burdens imposed on them. With little sign of resolution, the conflict between the two groups became intensified.

Debates on gender equality have also been an issue in the *gugak* field. After being involved in an affair, a male musician could stay in the field and still be respected by others, whereas a female musician had to leave the field. Also, in 2016, a male musician, previously accused of sexual harassment, returned to his job at one of the most prestigious *gugak* orchestras without receiving proper punishment (Yoo Chunoh 2016). Even after setting these serious cases aside, minor conflicts caused by gender differences have occurred within everyday life, such as issues involving teachers favoring male *gugak* students or male musicians receiving higher scores at competitions.

While contemplating gender issues, I realized how sensitive I was to female musicians' issues, but how ignorant I was about those of male musicians. To be more specific, I was more concerned about the issues related to mainstream female musicians—the topics often discussed as problems within the *gugak* field. Sherry Ortner points out the “big man bias” and argues that many men are “as disadvantaged as women with respect to property, marriage, and the like” (1996: 136). Moreover, in her book *Feminism is For Everybody*, bell hooks defines feminism as “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (hooks 2000: 1), and argues that it is not about being anti-male because “females can be just as sexist as men” (viii).

Since there are already numerous scholarly works on mainstream musicians and composers, in this dissertation I endeavor to deliver the voice of often-ignored groups—male *gayageum* (Korean zither) players and female fusion *gugak* musicians in their twenties and thirties.³ In doing so, I interrogate how individual musicians' experiences and gender identities are shaped by interacting with gender role expectations within the *gugak* field as well as in Korean society at large, and argue that their performances and narratives ultimately complicate the hegemonic views of masculinity and femininity.

I contend that both groups are understudied, but for different reasons. I argue that fusion *gugak* has been “otherized” because of its commercially oriented characteristics, and thus not viewed as a proper subject for academic research—this is a phenomenon that I explore in Chapter 5. However, I have not seen any studies dealing with ordinary male *gugak* musicians and their experiences, except for those focusing on male master musicians' musical work. I believe that this reflects a general tendency within academia in which gender issues often refer to women's issues. People may not pay enough attention to male musicians' experiences because men are believed to be in positions of power in various realms of patriarchal Korean society. It is also possible that male musicians are reluctant to openly talk about their struggles due to a fear of being stigmatized as “failures” in a society where men are expected to be strong, confident, and protective of women.

³ The *gayageum* is a twelve-stringed Korean zither and one of the best-known traditional instruments in Korea. Beginning in the late twentieth century, there have been various efforts to reform the *gayageum*, and currently there are 18- and 25-string *gayageum* in addition to the 12-string *gayageum*. Videos of the various versions of the instrument can be seen here: solo performance of the 12-string *gayageum* with a *janggu* (hourglass-shaped drum) accompaniment https://youtu.be/tGCQPPk_KJ4; solo performance of the 18-string *gayageum* with a *janggu* accompaniment https://youtu.be/Loo3Mm_goqE; solo performance of the 25-string *gayageum* https://youtu.be/JQx9s_0QjWw.

Through a close reading of these two understudied groups' experiences, this dissertation investigates how individual musicians' experiences and their gender identities are shaped by interacting with gender ideals, roles, and stereotypes in Korean society and how their gender identity interacts with gendered performances of music. The majority of professional *gugak* musicians are women, although historically male musicians have been in positions of power. In this gender-imbalanced environment, how do musicians—both male and female—shape their gender identity and navigate their roles? How does it influence the ways in which they behave or think? How does performance express, reinforce, and construct their gender identity? How does performance resist, reproduce, and transform gender norms? How do musicians interact with the rapidly changing cultural environments of Korean society?

Individual *gugak* musicians' experiences are influenced by the larger social context, but the unique environment of the *gugak* field seems to have a tremendous impact on musicians. The majority of *gugak* musicians and scholars form a homogenous group, establishing a unique social network. The large majority of active *gugak* musicians went to a particular middle and high school, and most of them also went to one of the six or seven university programs in Korean traditional music. Almost every musician I have spoken to have shared experience with other musicians in at least one of the three levels: middle school, high school, and university programs. Some of these performers have common experiences in all of the three interrelated educational communities, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 6. Although it is changing today, alumni from one particular middle and high school have dominated the *gugak* community for several decades and circulated certain ideas of masculinity, femininity, and tradition as a norm. Thus, it will

be useful to keep in mind this unique network of *gugak* professionals, as I demonstrate how musicians negotiate conflicts as they face contrasting values between the *gugak* circle and Korean society at large.

I believe that the topics I discuss in my dissertation, including gendered performances which simultaneously display and construct one's gender identity, and experiences in a gender-imbalanced community, are of interest not only to scholars in ethnomusicology but also to those in gender studies, cultural anthropology, and sociology. Each society has its own set of ideas about gender, and sometimes they can be very subtle. I contend that my in-between position, as a native Korean who grew up completely immersed in *gugak* culture as well as a US-trained ethnomusicologist, allows me to provide a unique perspective on these issues for a broader academic audience.

1.1. The Ambiguity of the Term Gugak

The Korean term *gugak* literally refers to “national music,” as *guk* (國) means nation and *ak* (樂) means music. The term has been used as synonymous with Korean traditional music (*jeontong eumak*) in academia as well as among the general populace in Korea, although in conversation Koreans would rarely say *jeontong eumak* instead of *gugak*. This is especially true in English-language scholarship because the Korean term “*gugak*” is often followed by its English translation—“traditional music.” Considering the current use of the term, however, this translation may not be enough to encompass the broadened repertoire of *gugak*. Fabian Holt argues that “naming a music is a way of recognizing its existence and distinguishing it from other musics,” and argues that definitions are often an integral part of musics and their cultural dynamics (2007: 3-4).

Although translating *gugak* as “traditional music” may be an easy—and perhaps safe—choice, I argue that it is time to reconsider the meaning of the term “*gugak*,” as it has expanded the boundary of genres it encompasses.

In order to examine how the term is used among Korean music scholars, I have analyzed its usage in twelve introductory books on *gugak* in Korean language.⁴ In their titles, five books use *gugak*, four use *jeontong eumak* (traditional music), and three use *Hanguk eumak* (Korean music). Although each author of these books may prefer to use a certain term over others, these three terms are often used interchangeably at some points in their books. Moreover, except for two of the books (Yoon, Heo, Jo, Kim, and Kim 2003; Song Hyejin 2007), they all deal with traditional music or the music prior to the twentieth century, which excludes newly composed music based on traditional music. While *gugak* is used synonymously with traditional music, new modifiers began to be added to the term *gugak* to refer to new styles of music incorporating non-traditional elements, such as *changjak gugak* (lit. creative *gugak*) and fusion *gugak*.

In general, English-language scholarship has also followed a similar trend, but it needs slightly more explanation since the Korean term *gugak* does not signify any meaningful data to those who do not know Korean. Although some scholars use a different romanization of the term *gugak*, depending on which system they use, the majority of them provide both its literal translation (national music) and its conventional meaning (traditional music). For instance, after providing its literal definition, Hilary

⁴ These books include Chang Sahun and Han Manyeong (1975), Chang Sahun (1989), Seo Hanbeom (1992), Paek, Choi, and Kim (1995), Ban Hyeseong (1999), Son Taeryong (2000), Yoon, Heo, Jo, Kim, and Kim (2003), Choi Jongmin (2003), Paek Dae-Ung (2003), Lee Hyegu and Lim Miseon (2005), Song Hyejin (2007), and Kim Yeongun (2015).

Finchum-Sung writes that *gugak* is “the general designation for traditional music genres” (2012: 396). Ruth Mueller offers a more detailed explanation of *gugak*: “this category includes traditional music of the upper and lower classes both in a historical context and in performance at present through the system of preservation” (2013: 2-3).

I want to pose this question again: is “traditional music” a valid description of the term *gugak*? It might have been a convincing description in the early twentieth century before new styles of music based on traditional musical elements started to emerge. It may still be a sufficient description of the term since traditional music is certainly a major part of *gugak*. This is important, I argue, because traditional music is only “part” of broadened *gugak* today, although it may outvalue other genres of *gugak*. Although someone might tackle a definition of “tradition,” I have not seen anyone who refers to *changjak gugak* as traditional music. However, *changjak gugak* has been fully accepted as part of *gugak*, which can be proved by the establishment of the Contemporary Gugak Orchestra at the National Gugak Center in 2004, which is the “central pillar of *gugak*” according to Keith Howard (2016: 455).

The changes in the English name of the National Gugak Center also reflect the broadened scope of *gugak*. While its Korean name (국립 국악원, *Gungnip gugakwon*) has remained the same, its English name has changed due to increasing interest in folk music, dance, and contemporary genres based on traditional music: the National Classical Music Institute, the initial English name, became the Korean Traditional Performing Arts Centre in 1989, the National Centre for Korean Traditional Performing Arts in 1995, and finally the National Gugak Center in 2010 (ibid.: 456).

The term *gugak* has been used in a much broader sense than simply referring to traditional music. *Gugak* musicians study not only traditional *gugak* but also new styles of *gugak* in Gugak Departments (*gugakgwa*) at universities. Musicians often have specific styles of *gugak* on which they concentrate in their careers, such as traditional, *changjak*, or fusion *gugak*, but the majority of musicians I have interacted with indicate that they are simply “*gugagin*” (*gugak* musicians). One musician who plays new styles of music by combining elements of traditional *gugak* and other musical styles such as jazz says that she calls herself a *gugak* musician, but sometimes adds explanations for those who are not familiar with *gugak* that the music she plays is *gugak* but not traditional.

It is hard to draw a clear boundary around what *gugak* is in contemporary Korean society, because it has expanded significantly in comparison to what is known as “traditional music.” There have been debates on what can and cannot be called *gugak*. Some *gugak* professionals express strong opposition to the acceptance of recently developed styles as *gugak*, while others are willing to accept the broadened categories of *gugak*. It seems clear, however, that the term “*gugak*” does not always signify traditional music. Hence, I propose to use a more inclusive definition of the term *gugak* as conventionally used among *gugak* professionals as well as ordinary Koreans. Therefore, I suggest a working definition of the term *gugak* in this dissertation as the following: “*gugak* (literally ‘national music’) includes traditional music and new musical styles developed since the twentieth century based on traditional musical elements.”

1.2. Gender and Music

As studies on gender and music began to appear in the field of ethnomusicology in the 1970s and 1980s, Korean music scholars began to discuss female musicians in traditional music (Byong Won Lee 1979; Howard 1995), but most of their writings did not go beyond the simple introduction of genres or traditions performed by women. Today, the number of scholars examining gender issues in Korean music has increased, but the majority of this scholarship focuses on popular music (K-pop) (Sun Jung 2011; Epstein and Turnbull 2014; Chuyun Oh 2014), not *gugak*.

Within the gender-related scholarship on *gugak*, indigenous scholars and US/UK-trained ethnomusicologists, including those originally from Korea, seem to have very different interests: while indigenous scholars tend to focus on particular traditions or types of performers from historical perspectives, such as *gisaeng* (female courtesans) and *yeoseong guggeuk* (all-female musical theater troupes), ethnomusicologists are more interested in contemporary phenomena, which seems to result from different disciplinary approaches. Although gendered aspects of *gugak* have recently gained much currency among ethnomusicologists, it still remains in a fledgling stage. The majority of ethnomusicological writings have briefly mentioned gender, mostly discussing female musicians, as a part of larger issues such as the development of new styles of *gugak* (Chan Park 2003; Howard, Lee, and Casswell 2008; Sutton 2008; Finchum-Sung 2012). Although there has not been a monograph primarily dealing with issues of gender and *gugak*, there have been two doctoral dissertations (Mueller 2013; Yoonjah Choi 2014) and one master's thesis (Jungwon Kim 2012) solely devoted to female *gugak* musicians.

In her doctoral dissertation, Ruth Mueller (2013) examines the gender shift of *gugak* musicians in relation to the changing sociocultural environment from the late Joseon period (circa nineteenth century) to the present day. Instead of focusing on one specific genre or tradition, her work addresses a broad range of *gugak* from aristocratic vocal music to modern developments. Although she discusses contemporary practices of *gugak*, her work is largely based on historical documentation and secondary literature.

In contrast to Mueller, who covers a vast array of genres and time periods, Yoonjah Choi (2014) and Jungwon Kim (2012) narrow down their focus. Choi investigates how female drummers conceptualize, perform, and resist gendered practices in the male-dominated drumming realm in Korea. Based on personal interviews and observation, she captures how female drummers negotiate their femininity and masculinity in order to survive in this realm. Kim focuses on three female fusion *gugak* groups and examines their roles and popular discourse on the genre in relation to three themes: national identity, mothering, and sexuality.

When addressing gender issues, it is not difficult to find that, in most writings on *gugak*, gender often refers only to women. For instance, as discussed above, the primary focus of Mueller, Choi, and Kim is female *gugak* musicians or, more specifically, relatively well-established female musicians who are either well-respected in the field or sponsored by the Korean government. Studies on masculinities or male performers, in both Korean- and English-language scholarship, can be found in a larger range of Korean music, especially K-pop (Sun Jung 2010; Kim Sooah and Hong Jong-Yoon 2014; Lee Suan 2014; Chuyun Oh 2016). However, most of the previous studies are based on analysis of musical performances, choreographies, and films, and lacking in discussion of

gender identity or gendered experiences of performers as individual agents offstage through in-depth interviews with them.

In this regard, I contend that my work differs from the previous scholarship in the following perspectives. First, this project brings in male musicians who have been often neglected in the study of gender and music. By carefully listening to experiences of individual musicians, I examine various forms of masculinities portrayed not only in prescribed performances on stage but also in their everyday lives offstage in relation to complicated interactions in society. Second, instead of focusing on mainstream musicians, I pay equal attention to a marginalized group of female musicians in the *gugak* field who are often criticized for being “too sexual and commercial.” Third, by juxtaposing the experiences of male and female *gugak* musicians and their ideas of masculinities and femininities, I believe that this dissertation provides a more comprehensive picture of the contemporary *gugak* scene.

I feel that it is ironic to hear “men have gender, too,” in discussions of possible topics for gender studies, encouraging studies on men or masculinities, because ethnomusicologists have long pointed out women’s exclusion from the field, and advocated for study of women’s contributions to music making. In ethnomusicology, there have been several edited collections dealing with gender in cross-cultural perspectives (Koskoff 1987; Moisala and Diamond 2000) and in particular regions or countries (Magrini 2003; Harris, Pease, and Tan 2013). Studies on women’s issues make up the majority of earlier works on gender: for example, the title of Ellen Koskoff’s seminal edited volume, *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (1987), clearly indicates its agenda as “women and music.” Recently, research on men or masculinities

in musical performances have increased, providing diverse perspectives, although monographs on masculinity and music, such as Henry Spiller's *Erotic Triangles* (2010), are still rare.

There are a few book-length ethnographies dealing with gender and music that are particularly relevant to my work. Jane Sugarman examines, in her book *Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian Weddings* (1997), how musical traditions reinforce Prespa notions of masculinity and femininity and, at the same time, actively engender individuals who participate in them. Christina Sunardi's book, *Stunning Males and Powerful Females: Gender and Tradition in East Javanese Dance* (2015), demonstrates the contingency of gender and sex and how performance reinforces, resists, and transforms the idea of femaleness and maleness in East Java. Sydney Hutchinson's recent book, *Tigers of a Different Stripe: Performing Gender in Dominican Music* (2016), investigates not only how gender interacts with performance, but also the intersections between performance, gender, race, class, and postcolonial relationships through *merengue tipico* in the Dominican Republic and its diasporic communities in New York. My dissertation converges with these previous works on gender by ethnomusicologists in terms of the ways in which I approach gender and performance as mutually constitutive while focusing on both femininity and masculinity. Additionally, I further interrogate conflicts when individual musicians fail to meet the gender norms in a given society.

1.3. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This work is based on multiple periods of fieldwork in Korea as an ethnomusicologist trained in the American academia and my eighteen years' involvement in the *gugak* field as a female *gayageum* player. Since I left Korea to study ethnomusicology in the United States in August 2011, I have visited Korea once or twice a year and kept myself updated with ongoing issues in the field. For eight months in 2016 (May-December), I conducted extensive field research for my dissertation, attending performances, conducting interviews with various *gugak* professionals, and collecting archival materials.

Although many ethnomusicologists spend one year or more in the field, eight months of fieldwork have been adequate for my project since 1) I have engaged in *gugak* for an extended period of time as a musician as well as a graduate student in ethnomusicology; 2) I already knew several musicians whom I planned to interview, and had a good network of people who were willing to introduce other musicians to me; 3) as a native of Seoul, I am fluent in the Korean language and already familiar with the culture, which means that I did not need extra time to adjust to a completely new foreign environment;⁵ and 4) I could follow up with my interlocutors via social media and applications providing free text and call features.

My project is based on ethnographic methodologies consisting of participant-observation, approximately fifty in-depth interviews, informal conversations, and archival research. During my fieldwork, I was based in Seoul, since the majority of

⁵ Although I had a reverse culture shock for a short period of time immediately after I arrived in Korea, it actually provided me with a valuable opportunity to look at ordinary subjects from a fresh perspective.

musicians I study live and perform in or near Seoul. As an artist liaison and translator, I also engaged in music festivals featuring *gugak* musicians and international musicians from around the world. In addition, I include my personal experience as a female *gayageum* player in Korea and the US.

Moreover, I should acknowledge that I have substantially benefited from the development of technology which allowed me to easily connect with musicians in Korea, be constantly exposed to updates on performances and musicians via social media, and search old newspapers published at the turn of the twentieth century. In particular, as I am “friends” with several musicians on Facebook where they post not only their pictures but also frank thoughts as if writing a diary, Facebook became a valuable fieldwork site. In 2013, I saw one posting by a friend of mine who became a subject of gossip among the fellow *gugak* musicians after she joined a fusion *gugak* group. Her posting was about how opinionated she was in defining “proper” performance and how she determined to pursue her dream and value without being swayed by others’ views and prejudices. This struck me as I read her posting in 2013. In 2016, I met with her and had an in-depth, intimate conversation regarding her genuine thoughts on being in a position where everyone around her, including her closest friends, did not support her decision. Her postings and our conversation became a tremendous help in navigating fusion *gugak* musicians’ experiences, which is the main thrust of Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

My background in *gugak* has been of considerable benefit in building intimacy with interviewees and being able to hear honest thoughts and feelings from them. I believe that the fact that I graduated from Gugak National Middle and High School and majored in *gugak* at Ewha Womans University facilitated rapport building, as many of

them treated me as an insider, knowing inside jokes, rumors, and systems, once I told them my background. One musician, for instance, stopped explaining “*baji jeomsu*” (lit. “pants score,” discussed in Chapter 2) as someone notified him of my background, since he then assumed that I would be already familiar with the concept.

At the same time, my positionality as a US-trained researcher provides musicians with a safe space to talk freely about their thoughts, as I was not a complete insider, staying a few steps away from the scene. Moreover, with my university business cards written in English, I was seen as a “smart, interesting, and quite unique person” who lives in the US after finishing intense training in *gugak* throughout college. Coinciding with a “*tal Joseon*” (escape from Korea) phenomenon, several musicians expressed their hopes to live overseas, and consequently, I was considered as being on a roll regardless of my attempts to demystify fantasies about living in a foreign country and myself.

Although prior to my fieldwork I already knew some of the musicians from schools whom I wanted to interview, there were more musicians I did not know in person in advance. At first, most interviewees knew me as someone from the US conducting research on *gugak* and did not know my background in *gugak* at all. One day in the middle of an interview, I revealed my background as a *gayageum* player who graduated from Gugak National Middle and High School and my relationship with other *gugak* professionals, and I could notice an immediate change in their attitudes towards me. They seemed more relaxed in talking about schools, and some of them even started calling me *eonni* (older sister, a friendly way to address older female friends). From this relationship, I was finally able to interview a member of a group with whom I had a hard time connecting.

In this dissertation, I draw on multiple theories to support my discussion of male *gayageum* players and fusion *gugak* musicians. Focusing on R. W. Connell's (1995) idea of multiple masculinities coexisting in a given setting, in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 I discuss different forms of masculinities presented by male *gayageum* players as they interact with larger social changes and gender role expectations. I also pay attention to "horizontal segregation" within the *gugak* community which is, according to sociologist Karrie Snyder and Adam Green (2008), a tendency for men in female-dominated occupations to specialize in more "masculine" tasks which are thought to be more "appropriate" to their sex.

From Chapters 5 to 7, I take Michel Foucault's (1990, 1995) idea of discourse and disciplinary power as an overarching framework to examine fusion *gugak* musicians' experiences.⁶ Foucault argues that power is productive, producing certain types of knowledge and reality. Moreover, Foucault discusses discursive productions and the effects of power, the way in which certain knowledge is "put into discourse." By tracing a discursive formulation of discourses on fusion *gugak* musicians, I investigate how a certain kind of knowledge and perspective becomes a "norm," and examine the kind of power exercised behind this process.

Chapter 7 draws on the concept of "narrative resistance," which is, according to sociologists Carol Ronai and Rebecca Cross, an identity management technique that serves to "decenter the authority of specific individuals or society to dictate identity"

⁶ Although Foucault's redefinition of concepts, such as subjectivity and truth, has provided feminists with a useful means to engage in gender analysis, there have been some feminist criticisms of Foucault, concerning the viability of Foucauldian approaches to feminist politics (Hekman 1996).

(1998: 105). By analyzing narratives of fusion *gugak* musicians, I discuss how they defy negative discourses surround them and ultimately empower themselves.

1.4. Overview of Chapters

This dissertation consists of seven chapters, including Chapter 1 as an introduction. The second chapter, “Gendered Instruments and Experiences of Male *Gayageum* Players,” focuses on male *gayageum* players’ experiences as they enter the female-dominated realm of *gugak*. I first investigate the gender imbalance in *gugak* and the *gayageum* in particular, by tracing a transition in the gender composition of the field in relation to changes in gender role expectations in Korea. Among the various instruments played in Korea, many Koreans consider the *gayageum* as one of the most “feminine” instruments, which puts male *gayageum* players in a position of being a doubly marginalized group within Korean society. This chapter introduces the all-male *gayageum* ensemble Chunhogarang and pays particular attention to their experiences within the *gugak* field as well as in Korean society at large, which are closely related to the content of the following chapter.

The third chapter, “Living and Surviving as Male *Gayageum* Players,” explores the ways in which Chunhogarang’s members navigate their career by accentuating their “masculinity” through their performance. If the previous chapter focuses on individual stories of the male *gayageum* players, this chapter analyzes their experiences in relation to a crisis among Korean men in general, represented by a failure to enact hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995). Within this circumstance, I examine how these experiences have influenced their career choices and performance. Unlike a common belief that male

musicians in female-dominated *gugak* will easily reach top-level positions in the field, this chapter sheds light on their efforts to survive in the field on the same level as their female counterparts by analyzing their performative behaviors. In this process, I demonstrate how male *gayageum* players construct the idea of masculinity and how they express it through their performance.

The fourth chapter, “Other All-Male *Gugak* Ensembles,” provides more dynamic pictures of all-male *gugak* groups by featuring two other groups: Bulsechul and Acoustic Ensemble Jebi. Having different musical styles and histories, these two groups’ stories offer more diverse perspectives that have not been fully explored in the discussion of Chunhogarang. At the same time, as contemporaries of most Chunhogarang members, their experiences complement those of Chunhogarang members, allowing a comprehensive understanding of male *gugak* musicians who are currently in their late twenties and early thirties.

The fifth chapter, “Examining ‘Fusion *Gugak*,’” sets the stage for the following two chapters by interrogating the current status of fusion *gugak*, especially within the *gugak* field, and gendered aspects of its performance practice. I first discuss a definition of fusion *gugak* while pointing out a discrepancy between the academic use of the term and the conventional use among *gugak* musicians, and how it has been “otherized” by scholars as well as musicians in the *gugak* field. I provide profiles of four fusion *gugak* groups to highlight unique characteristics of each group that are not easily recognizable from narratives of individual musicians. This chapter also demonstrates how their performance practice enacts the notion of the “ideal” feminine body in Korea.

The sixth chapter, “The ‘Disciplinary Society’ and its Discourses on Fusion *Gugak* Musicians,” investigates discourses on fusion *gugak* musicians and analyzes them by drawing on Foucault’s notion of power, discourse, and discipline. Unlike the previous chapter concentrating on broader concepts such as fusion *gugak* as a style and musicians as a group, in this chapter I pay particular attention to individual musicians whose individual modes of behavior are subject to the disciplinary power of society. Based on archival research in addition to interviews, this chapter traces the discursive formation of negative discourses on fusion *gugak* musicians and explores how the *gugak* community functions as a “disciplinary society,” producing particular knowledge and perspective as a “norm” (Foucault 1995).

The seventh chapter, “Narrative Resistance of Fusion *Gugak* Musicians,” examines fusion *gugak* musicians’ struggles to resist the negative discourses by focusing on the narratives of individual musicians. For many fusion *gugak* musicians, these discourses function as a “discursive constraint” which has a negative impact on the self-identity of the musicians. Drawing on the idea of “narrative resistance” (Ronai and Cross 1998), this chapter addresses four different types of narratives which repeatedly came up during in-depth interviews with the musicians. Through close examination of each narrative, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which the musicians attempt to defy discursive constraint and construct their own identities.

In this dissertation, I explore how cultural ideals of gender role expectations intersect with different layers of society, and how individual musicians interact with these ideals by focusing on two understudied groups in *gugak*: male *gayageum* players (Chapter 2-4) and female fusion *gugak* musicians (Chapter 5-7). Although the overall

structure of this project may seem binary, it is not my intention to imply gender binary. I do not intend to suggest there are only two discrete forms of masculinity and femininity or to demonstrate how different male and female musicians are. Rather, by shedding light on individual musicians' struggles in relation to gender ideals imposed on them by larger social forces, I hope to provide common ground for understanding seemingly discrete groups of musicians.

1.5. Stories of Two Musicians

I will conclude this introduction with the narratives of two imaginary Korean musicians, which will illustrate many of the central themes discussed throughout this dissertation and convey a holistic picture of musicians' experiences. It is important to note that these are composite narratives of male *gayageum* players and fusion *gugak* musicians in a monologue recreated based on actual conversations with musicians during my fieldwork.

Story 1: Musician L, 29-year-old Male

I am a musician who plays the *gayageum*. Yes, I am a “male” *gayageum* player. So what? People look at me curiously whenever I tell them that I play *gugak*. They look at me with even more curiosity when I tell them that I play the *gayageum*. Now I can nonchalantly respond, “What is the big deal?,” but it was not easy at all in the first place. I started taking *gayageum* lessons when I was in elementary school, because I simply liked its sound. But as my friends found out about it, they started to make fun of me for playing a “women’s instrument.” My elderly neighbors were also concerned about a boy

playing a “*gisaeng*’s instrument.” A series of similar experiences eventually made me hide what I played, and I used to answer “just music” when people asked me what my major was.

Entering Gugak National High School was an eye-opening experience for me in many ways. It was always me alone practicing and playing the traditional instrument, but this school was always filled with sounds of *gugak*. It was a completely different world. But there was something else that surprised me even more, and these were not always pleasant memories. I was the only male *gayageum* student in my grade with twenty-three other female *gayageum* students. As I entered the school, suddenly I was at the center of all the attention from teachers, classmates, and senior students. I did not know who they were, but they seemed to know who I was. One day, I was practicing alone in a practice room at school, and some random female students walked in, asking me to play the *gayageum*, and left shortly thereafter.

Indeed, I cannot entirely deny that there have been some advantages in being a male *gayageum* player. I believe that I have enjoyed more opportunities to develop my career as a musician because of the particular attention I received from my teachers. But because of this, some female students accused me of unfairly getting higher scores than I did not deserve in competitions or exams. They believed that the reason why I could receive the higher scores was because I was a man. It might be true that I stood out more easily because I was one of the three male *gayageum* students at school among roughly seventy female *gayageum* students. But it does not mean that I did not try my best. I spent most of my time honing my skills, and it should not be dismissed.

Some female *gugak* musicians assume that men are in a better position for finding a job. Maybe that is true for some musicians playing wind instruments or percussion, but certainly not for me. Since it is difficult to make a stable income as a performer, I have been looking for teaching jobs. But I have been rejected from schools and students' parents because I am a "potential sexual predator." People quickly make a judgement based on the fact that I am a male *gayageum* player, and this is not something that I can change or improve regardless of how hard I work on it. I have heard that male musicians are the least favorite men to marry, and I am sure having an irregular income is one of the major reasons. To be honest, I wish I had a wife who could financially support me, but I know that it would be nearly impossible.

I am aware that I would not be able to make a lot of money by playing in an all-male *gayageum* ensemble. I also do not have a grandiose goal that I want to achieve through this ensemble. I simply do it because I believe that it will eventually lead me to somewhere. We can demonstrate how a male *gayageum* ensemble sounds different from that of female players. Who knows if our performance will break the stereotypes placed on us and make my life slightly easier?

Story 2: Musician K, 29-year-old Female

If you want me to identify myself, it would be more accurate to say that I am a fusion *gugak* musician, because that is what I mostly do these days. Like everyone else, I did not think that I would have a career playing fusion *gugak*. In fact, no one could, because there was no such thing as fusion *gugak* when we started to study *gugak* at a young age. I started to learn to play the *gayageum* as I entered Gugak National Middle

School in 1999 at the age of 12. Since then, my life was pretty much the same all the way through high school except for the intensification of pressure on entering a prestigious university. My daily routine was built around traditional music. I spent most of my time practicing particular types of traditional music for school exams, competitions, and ultimately college entrance exams. The majority of performances I attended were on traditional music. My teachers told us that our job, as “national” *gugak* school graduates, was to protect and develop *gugak*. One of them even told us that, in order to do that, we would not have to be a *gugak* musician per se, but we could become the first lady, so we could promote *gugak*. I did not have any doubt about their words because I believed that that was what we were supposed to do.

Things started to change, however, as I entered a university. In fact, nothing was completely new. I already knew the majority of students in my major because we all went to the same middle and high schools, and the subjects of study as a *gugak* major were a continuation of high school except that I had to learn the 25-string *gayageum*. But I started to face real life issues—finding a job. There was seemingly no job at orchestras or universities. Even if there was an opening, there were too many competent musicians to compete with, and more importantly, I did not have a strong personal connection to the hiring committees, which I heard was crucial. I had been making some money by performing covers of popular music at weddings and commercial events, but it was no more than a mere source of extra income as a college student. As we got closer to graduation, people started to choose different career paths. Many of them decided to stay in the academic realm of *gugak* by continuing to graduate school. A few lucky ones

entered orchestras or found a teaching position. And I decided to pursue a career in fusion *gugak* more seriously.

As a group, we perform at various occasions, ranging from local festivals to international cultural events. We play covers of popular music as well as traditional *gugak* depending on the theme of each event. Now, I can openly talk about this, but at first it was not easy at all. When I started doing this, almost everyone around me, from my teachers to close friends, insisted on me quitting it. They frowned at me and asked me why I, after graduating from a prestigious university, wanted to “play cheap music while dancing on stage wearing revealing dresses.” Some of them also gave me a pitiful look because they thought that I was in desperate need of money. Although it was not true, I was ashamed. I might have played traditional *gugak* if I had enough opportunities. But I did not, so I chose to play fusion *gugak*. I knew all too well that fusion *gugak* was not the kind of music that would be accepted or respected in the mainstream *gugak* community. I knew it. I knew it so well that I did not want anyone to see me performing fusion *gugak*. I did not tell anyone openly about it because I did not have confidence in myself, even though this was what I decided on.

But now, I am confident. I even think that I am better off than many musicians pursuing traditional/academic paths. In reality, a lot of my female friends who went to graduate school have given up their careers in *gugak*. Many of them got married and stay at home, or work in completely different areas. But here I am, traveling overseas to perform at Korean embassies and actively interacting with a variety of audiences at various events, which I could not even imagine before. Also, I have seen so many traditional musicians making themselves self-contradictory by frequently performing

what they call “cheap music” (*ssaguryeo eumak*) at weddings and commercial events.

They look down on us, assuming that we are incompetent musicians. But, no. Certainly, there are some groups who tarnish the reputation of the entire community of fusion *gugak* groups. But do not compare us with those groups. We are competent musicians, devoted to both traditional and other styles of music, who put continuous effort into improving our performance.

Chapter 2. Gendered Instruments and Experiences of Male *Gayageum* Players

A father and son are in a horrible car crash that kills the dad. The son is rushed to the hospital; just as he is about to go under the knife, the surgeon says, “I can’t operate—that boy is my son!” How is this possible?

The answer is that the doctor is the boy’s mother.¹ This is an old riddle and meant to be tricky. But why do many people find this question tricky? This short example reveals how stereotypes work in society. The images often associated with a doctor are those of male doctors, whereas the images of nurses are often associated with women. Also, this riddle assumes that the son’s parents are a heterosexual couple. Granted, these images are not fixed and have been changing in recent years. But it is true that we still hold certain gender roles and stereotypes. According to psychologist Virginia Valian (1998), people need a conceptual framework—what she prefers to call the “schema” rather than “stereotype”—to live in this world: to know how to behave properly and what to expect in various situations. However, what are the consequences if men break such stereotypes and enter what has been considered as a “feminine” sphere?

In this chapter, I examine how male musicians negotiate gender stereotypes when they enter the female-dominated sphere of *gugak* in Korea. The first part of this chapter examines the gender imbalance in the *gugak* community as a whole and in instruments, especially the *gayageum* (twelve-stringed zither), which is often considered the most “feminine” instrument in Korea. In the following section, I closely examine the common experiences of male *gayageum* players in the field. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are largely based

¹ As same sex marriage became legal in some countries and the understanding of what a “family” is changes, multiple answers could be suggested.

on in-depth interviews with the members of Chunhogarang, an all-male *gayageum* ensemble, on June 27, July 9, and July 16, 2016. I also conducted small-group interviews with two all-male ensembles, Bulsechul on October, 29, 2016, and Acoustic Ensemble Jebi on August 13, 2016.

2.1. Gender Imbalance in Gugak

2.1.1. Historical Transition

Korea underwent a rapid transition in all aspects of society from the late nineteenth century with the establishment of diplomatic ties with Western powers. Through the Japanese occupation, the liberation, and the Korean War, Korea was transformed from the Joseon Dynasty to a modern nation state. During this transition, the status of *gugak* and *gugak* musicians changed quite dramatically: the music became something that we have to “protect,” and female musicians started to outnumber male musicians.

Historically, *gugak* was dominated by men. Because of Confucianism, especially the *ye-ak* philosophy,² in the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), social roles were divided by a strict social order, including gender and class. According to the fifteenth-century *Gyeonggukdaejeon* (the code of the Joseon Dynasty), there were 981 male court musicians and approximately 150 female musicians at that time. While the male court

² *Ye-ak* philosophy was the ruling principle of the Joseon Dynasty, emphasizing the harmony of etiquette (禮, *ye*) and music (樂, *ak*). According to this ideology, music was an essential part of court rites.

musicians belonged to the governmental offices, the female musicians were *gisaeng*, members of the lowest class of the Joseon Dynasty (Song Jiwon 2013: 32).³

Although *yeo-ak* (女樂, groups of female musicians, or performances by these groups) existed since the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392), their existence was continually complained by many scholars/officers during the Joseon Dynasty. Kim Jongseo, one of the well-known scholars in the fifteenth century, argued that *yeo-ak* contradicted the *ye-ak* ideology and was considered vulgar in China; thus, it had to be abolished in order to govern properly (Han Heung-sub 2013c: 441). This perspective continued until sixteenth-century Joseon, when it was condemned as “decadent, vulgar, ruinous pornography” (ibid.: 443).⁴ Moreover, the *yangban* class (aristocrats) enjoyed playing stringed instruments, mostly *geomungo* (Korean zither played with a bamboo stick), as part of the *pungnyu* culture of the Joseon period (Jeong Woo-rak 2016).⁵ Thus, it is plausible to say that until the social upheaval of the nineteenth century, music—what is called “*gugak*” today—was developed, played, and enjoyed mostly by men despite the existence of female musicians.

³ *Gisaeng* are professional female entertainers, similar to *geisha* in Japan. Their role is often misunderstood as that of prostitutes.

⁴ Han Heung-sub argues that the existence of *yeo-ak* was a symbol of political toadyism towards China (Ming Dynasty). The Joseon kings had to maintain *yeo-ak* despite condemnation from the officers/scholars, because it was an important part of banquets for the envoys from China (Han Heung-sub 2013a, 2013b, 2013c).

⁵ *Pungnyu* (風流) epitomizes utopia in Korean culture, such as nature, music, arts, leisure, and beauty. It pursues a complete unification of nature, life, and arts, based on pleasure (Kwon Yun Hee 2016: 19).

Towards the end of the Joseon Dynasty, the demand for music had increased with the accumulation of wealth among the middle class (Kang Myeong-gwan 1992).⁶ Music that the *yangban* class enjoyed was no longer exclusive to this particular class. Instead, its audience had greatly expanded to include not only the middle class but also wealthy merchants and slaves (Kim Jong-su 2002). From the eighteenth century on, the participation of female musicians showed a notable increase as they started to perform on various occasions and to be accepted as musicians (Kwon Do-hee 2012: 37-41). As *gisaeng* were officially emancipated in 1894, they established their own organizations to stabilize their presence and income and to teach music to young female musicians systemically (Kwon Do-hee 2009). With the introduction of a capitalist economy, female musicians—mostly emancipated *gisaeng*—performed various types of music suited to the taste of consumers. In the early twentieth century, a number of female musicians made recordings with foreign labels, such as Nipponophone (Japan), Columbia, and Victor (USA) (Kwon Do-hee 2012: 131-40). As described above, the involvement of female musicians had continuously grown towards the end of the Joseon Dynasty.

Female musicians' role became more significant after the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) and Korean War (1950-1953). In undergoing the two major historical events, Korea faced the rapid decline of traditional arts under modernization. Western music became “the music” in Korea while traditional music lost its popularity among the public.⁷ Many Koreans feared the loss of traditional music and were concerned about

⁶ The middle class (*junggan gyecheung*) included local officials, wealthy merchants, and technical workers.

⁷ Since the introduction of Western music in the late nineteenth century, *eumak*, the Korean word for music, mainly refers to Western music. Although there is a word specifically for Western

how to “rescue” it from Western influences (Finchum-Sung 2002: 31-32). In 1962, the Park Chung Hee regime promulgated the Cultural Property Preservation Law (*munhwajae bohobeop*) to protect both tangible and intangible cultural properties, which included traditional music. In this process, many female musicians were designated as holders of an Intangible Cultural Property and gained recognition as professional musicians (Pilzer 2006: 306). The role of women as preservers of culture in Confucianism also aided the acceptance of female musicians (Mueller 2013: 23).

Today, *gugak* is largely a female-dominated sphere in terms of the number of musicians.⁸ In 1990, among 1938 members of the Korean Traditional Music Association (*hanguk gugak hyeophoe*), 70 percent were women. Moreover, female students of *gugak* performance and *gugak* theory comprised 81 percent of the total 1,802 students in the same year (Pak Yeonghye 1993: 46-47).⁹ This tendency of female domination in *gugak* has still not changed, as female students comprised 56.2-82.7 percent of students out of 29-32 in total in the *gugak* department of Seoul National University between 2010 and 2013 (Yoonjah Choi 2014: 51).

The gender imbalance is even more significant in secondary educational institutions, such as Gugak National Middle and High School (*gunnip gugak*

music (*yang-ak*), it is rarely used. To distinguish traditional music from Western music or just “music,” the term “*gugak*” started to be used.

⁸ Despite the relatively small number of male *gugak* musicians, men tend to occupy important positions in major orchestras and institutions. In recent years, however, this has been changing. In 2014, Kim Hae Suk was appointed at the National Gugak Center as its first female director since its establishment in 1951. In addition, more and more female professors are hired at major universities.

⁹ According to *Mungyotonggyeyeonbo* (1990), among the students majoring in *gugak* performance (1,516) and *gugak* theory (286), female students comprised 79% (1,205) and 87% (249), respectively (Park Yeonghye 1993: 47).

jung-godeunghakgyo). These institutions have not received much attention from scholarly discussions of gender in *gugak*. However, I believe that they are worthy of investigation because most *gugak* musicians begin to study *gugak* from a young age, and several musicians I have interviewed mentioned their time in these institutions.¹⁰

Gugak National High School is an institution specialized in *gugak*, from which a large proportion of active *gugak* musicians have graduated. It was founded in 1955 as a training school for *gugak* (*gugaksa yangseongso*) and upgraded to a high school in 1972. Since the School accepted women in 1962, a total of 936 male students and 4,332 female students have graduated as of 2017.¹¹ In other words, female students comprise 82 percent of the total number of graduates. As part of early *gugak* education, Gugak National Middle School was founded in 1991 and has an even higher proportion of female students.¹² In 2017, there are 65 male students (14.5%) and 384 female students (85.5%) enrolled in Gugak National High School, and 44 male students (12.6%) and 304 female students (87.4%) in Gugak National Middle School.

¹⁰ I return to other issues related to Gugak National Middle and High School in Chapter 6.

¹¹ When the school was first founded, only male students were accepted (a maximum of 30 students per year). From 1962, the school started to accept female students (40 male students and 20 female students per year). Today, the school accepts 450 students each year regardless of their gender (Encyclopedia of Korean Culture. <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents>).

¹² From 1991 to 2007, 180 male students (12%) and 1,305 female students (88%) had graduated (Gugak National Middle and High School 2007: 561-63).

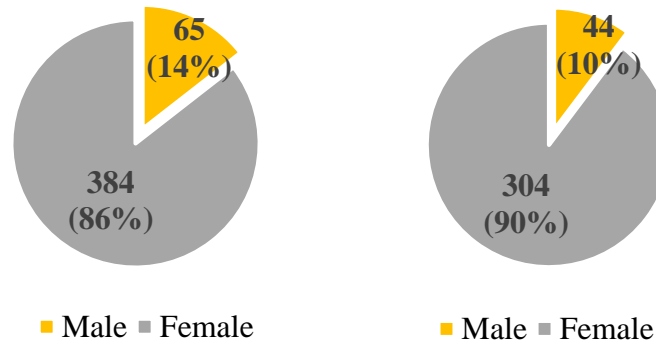


Figure 2.1. Student Enrollment in Gugak National High School (left) and Gugak National Middle School (2017).

2.1.2. Reasons for the Gender Imbalance

I have discussed a gradual increase in women’s involvement in *gugak* from a historical perspective. But this does not explain why the number of male *gugak* musicians has suddenly plummeted, while women’s participation continues to grow. In order to explain the discrepancy, it is important to understand what it means to major in music in Korea. For women, majoring in music has been a way to consolidate their high-class status or to pursue upward mobility through marriage (Choi SetByeol 2002). In Korea, it is not hard to hear that female music majors tend to get married earlier than non-music majors. Moreover, it seems that people tend to fantasize about female music majors. As a female music major myself, I have heard how I fit into or do not fit into the images of female music majors. Although these images are not always positive and sometimes bring adverse consequences, female music majors seem to have fewer disadvantages in Korean society than male music majors.

In her dissertation, Okon Hwang briefly notes that men were discouraged from pursuing music and they were “totally ignored and held in low regard” (2001: 167).

Moreover, R. Anderson Sutton points out that while the vast majority of *gugak* majors have been women, men have pursued degrees primarily in economics, engineering, and the sciences (2008: 18). In comparison to the late 1990s and early 2000s when Hwang wrote her dissertation, the social stigma attached to male music students may have lessened considerably today.¹³ However, there is still a tendency to put an emphasis on the competence in and responsibility for economic matters as an “ideal” masculinity which prevents men from pursuing music.

As Korea became Westernized, an ideal type of masculinity defined a man as a breadwinner, characterized by responsibility, determination, independence, power, and rationality. This new type of masculinity differed significantly from the traditional masculinity, described as being idealistic, relational, and vulnerable to reality (Cho Hyejung 1988: 250-1). Many scholars argue that the breadwinner model has collapsed, and investigate multiple masculinities in Korean society (Shin Kyung-Ah 2007; Min Ka Young 2008; Kim, Kim, Sohn, and Yoon 2014). While new types of masculinities have appeared, and traditional gender roles have weakened, at the same time men’s competence and responsibility in economic affairs still remain as essential elements that determine the ideal masculinity (Han KyungJung and Cho Chang-Hoan 2010).

According to Jung Han-Ho and Choi Jin-Ho’s study on college Western music majors’ career preferences and choices, more than half of the students (52%) answer that

¹³ According to a study of job preference among college students, professions related to culture, arts, design, and broadcasting are the second most preferred jobs (13.11%), following accounting and business management jobs (14.6%), among 8294 college students. In terms of the relationship between gender and job preferences, female students (17.68%) designate culture, arts, design, and broadcasting professionals as their most preferred occupation, while most male students (13.87%) prefer the accounting and business management professionals (Korea Employment Information Service 2008: 11-12).

they prefer to study abroad after graduation. Those who want to be professional musicians comprise 18 percent, followed by those who want to work at music related businesses (15%), be freelance musicians (9%), choose another profession, (3%), enter a graduate school in Korea (2%), or work in non-music related businesses (1%). Their actual career choices, however, reveal some discrepancy between the ideal and the reality. Given their ability and circumstances, those who choose to be freelance musicians comprise 28 percent, followed by entering a graduate school in Korea (25%), studying abroad (20%), working in music related businesses (18%), working in non-music related businesses (6%), others (2%), and professional musicians (1%) (Jung and Choi 2014: 169). Unlike their preferred careers, 73 percent of music majors end up choosing careers that do not guarantee a stable income.

Similarly, Chu Heesun points out that music majors are concerned about taking temporary jobs and contract positions, and they experience more difficulties in finding a secure job than non-music majors (2013: 115). This runs completely counter to the current tendency to prefer a secure job, exemplified by civil servants (*gongmuwon*). About 43 percent of people indicate civil servant as their or their children's ideal job, because it guarantees working until the full retirement age and receiving a higher monthly pension from the government (Hwang Inhak and Song Yongju 2014: 54). Recently, this has risen as a serious social issue in Korea. Many elementary school students answer that their dream is to be a landlord (*geonmulju*) because "they can make lots of money easily." This tendency to prioritize job stability and higher income is more salient among high school students. Civil servants and property owners/landlords are the two most popular occupations among the high school students (Yoon Saemina 2016).

There are several cases that demonstrate the increasing significance of economic stability and job security. A recent study shows that men's economic competence has become more important in Korean society today. In the past, women preferred men who had higher educational backgrounds than themselves. As women outnumber men in college graduation, men's educational backgrounds are no longer a crucial factor of marriage for women in their late twenties. Consequently, marriage between female college graduates and male high school graduates or female high school graduates and male middle school graduates has increased from 7.5 percent in 1996 to 11.6 percent in 2015.¹⁴ This demonstrates that, after an increase in the unemployment rate and the massive retirement of college graduates since 1997 (Kim Dongseop and Choi Wonwoo 2017), men's economic power and job stability have become more crucial than their educational backgrounds for being viewed as good marriage partners.

The neologism, *chwijip*, also reflects a current tendency that puts more emphasis on men's economic power. The term is a combination of two Korean words, *chwieop* (employment) and *sijip* (women's marriage). It means "getting married instead of getting a job," which refers to women who completely rely on men, especially in economic aspects. Initially, the term had negative connotations that encouraged the Cinderella complex, but as more women experience hardships in the job market, *chwijip* becomes a safe choice for women (Ha Dongwon 2015; Lee Hyunwoo 2017). According to a survey in 2015, among 208 unmarried female job seekers, 61 percent answers that they are

¹⁴ Marriage between a couple with the same educational backgrounds accounts for 73.3 percent in 2015, very similar to the figure of 73.5 percent in 1995. Marriage between men with higher educational backgrounds than women has dropped from 19 percent in 1995 to 15.2 percent in 2015 (Kim Dongseop and Choi Wonwoo 2017).

willing to *chwijip* if it is possible (Kim Juyeon 2015). As discussed above, various social issues have reinforced the expectation for men to have a secure job and, ideally, a higher income. Thus, considering the social pressure on men, I argue that men are likely to face more hindrances in majoring in music in a society where they are expected to be competent in earning a sustainable income and supporting family members.

2.2. Gayageum as a “Feminine” Instrument

If *gugak* has been predominantly a women’s major, what about the gender balance within *gugak*? Among the instruments frequently played today,¹⁵ the *gayageum* is the one that has the highest gender imbalance.¹⁶ As of 2017, among 70 students majoring in *gayageum* at Gugak National High School, only six are male. Gugak National Middle School has even fewer male *gayageum* students: two male students among 65. From 1994 to 2005, the number of male *gayageum* students remained under three, with an exception in 2004 when four male students were enrolled (Gugak National Middle and High School 2007: 564-66). In six major *gugak* orchestras based in Seoul, 90 percent of *gayageum* players are women.¹⁷ Excluding the two orchestras—the Court

¹⁵ Those are the *gayageum*, *geomungo*, *daegeum*, *piri*, *haegeum*, *ajaeng*, and percussion.

¹⁶ In contrast to the case of *gayageum*, Korean drumming has been performed predominantly by men, and Yoonjah Choi discusses this extensively in her dissertation “Gendered Practices and Conceptions in Korean Drumming: On the Negotiation of ‘Femininity’ and ‘Masculinity’ by Korean Female Drummers” (2014).

¹⁷ The six *gugak* orchestras are three orchestras from the National Gugak Center (Court Music Orchestra, Folk Music Group, and Contemporary Gugak Orchestra), the Seoul Metropolitan Traditional Music Orchestra, the National Orchestra of Korea, and the KBS Traditional Music Orchestra. The ratio of female *gayageum* players increases when non-Seoul-based orchestras are included, such as Busan National Gugak Center, Namwon National Gugak Center, and Daejeon Municipal Yeonjeong Korean Traditional Music Center.

Music Orchestra and Folk Music Group from the National Gugak Center—that have been historically male dominated, the proportion of male to female *gayageum* players is 1 to 26. Moreover, there have been a number of female *gayageum* ensembles, such as Sookmyung Gayageum Orchestra, Sagye, Yeoul, Aura, and recently 5drey.



Figure 2.2. Sookmyung Gayageum Orchestra. Source: Sookmyung Gayageum Orchestra’s Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/smgo98/> (accessed April 7, 2017).

As Ruth Mueller (2013) points out, the *gayageum* is strongly associated with women, with its masculine counterpart being the *geomungo*.¹⁸ This perception of the *gayageum* as a feminine instrument is prevalent in Korea, and the word “feminine”

¹⁸ The *gayageum* and *geomungo* may look similar, as both of them are stringed instruments with a relatively long wooden body. But the *gayageum* has movable bridges (*anjok*) while the *geomungo* has frets (*gwae*). Other differences between the two instruments are their playing techniques and timbre: the *gayageum* is played with bare fingers while the *geomungo* is played with a bamboo stick and makes lower sounds than the *gayageum*.

usually comes along with a description of the *gayageum*. On their website, Gugak National Middle School describes the *gayageum* as a feminine instrument as opposed to the masculine *geomungo*.¹⁹ Ureuk Museum, a museum dedicated to the *gayageum* and the man said to be its creator, Ureuk, also describes the *gayageum* as a feminine, delicate, and calm instrument.²⁰ Such an image is reproduced by *gugak* teachers as well. During my fieldwork, I was invited as a translator to a *gugak* lecture for foreign students at a university. The lecturer introduced each instrument, and each instrumental player demonstrated a short piece. In her lecture, the *gayageum* was described as exactly what I expected: feminine.

There is another term often associated with the *gayageum*: *gisaeng*. KOCCA (Korea Creative Content Agency) indicates that women in general, Chunhyang (a female character of a folk tale), and *gisaeng* are the most popular images related to the *gayageum* due to its depiction in the media and traditional paintings.²¹ Prior to the Japanese colonial regime, *gisaeng* were female professional entertainers devoted to the traditional arts. But the colonial government registered and monitored *gisaeng* much as if they were prostitutes and forced them into sex work. Consequently, the principle of “sell one’s talent, not one’s body” fell away gradually (Pilzer 2006: 299). After the liberation from Japan, however, the sex-and-entertainment industry continued to flourish under the

¹⁹ Gugak National Middle School. *Gayageum* Major. <http://www.gugak.ms.kr/major/index.htm> (accessed April 7, 2017).

²⁰ Ureuk Museum. The History and Characteristics of the *Gayageum*. http://www.daegaya.net/02exhibit/03_03.asp (accessed April 7, 2017).

²¹ Cultural Architype Library. “*Sanjo*.” http://www.culturecontent.com/content/contentView.do?search_div_id=CP_THE008&cp_code=c_p0206&index_id=cp02060010&content_id=cp020600100001&search_left_menu=1 (accessed April 7, 2017).

occupying U.S. government, and *yojeong* (“*gisaeng* houses”) mushroomed all over Seoul. This industry began to fade with the Korean economic boom in the 1980s; however, there are still some *yojeong* in Korea, and an image of a young woman playing the *gayageum* is often included in their advertisements. Although the *gayageum* players’ reputation is certainly very different from that of the past, these negative images, once imprinted in people’s minds, seem to hardly disappear.



Figure 2.3. An advertisement for a *yojeong* (“*gisaeng* house”) which features a young female *gayageum* player at the center. It says, “the traditional beauty of Korea,” “famous for hospitality,” “45-year tradition of *yojeong*” and “master of hospitality.” (Names and contact numbers are removed by the author.)

From when did the *gayageum* start to be considered as a feminine instrument?

Unlike the popular perception of the *gayageum*, it is believed to have been created by a man named Ureuk, in the sixth century. Until the late Joseon period, the *gayageum* was

often played by men, and during the Goryeo period the noblemen enjoyed playing the *gayageum* more than the *geomungo* (Song Hyejin 1986, Moon Jae-sook 2015). The annals of King Sejo (*Sejosillok*) recorded that King Sejo enjoyed playing the *gayageum*, and it was often played at the private events for the royal household in the early Joseon period. As Neo-Confucianism was firmly established in Joseon as its governing philosophy, however, the *geomungo* became “the instrument of the noblemen (*gunja*),” whereas the *gayageum* became an instrument for entertainment (Moon Jae-sook 2016).

In her dissertation, Ruth Mueller (2013) examines how the association between the *gayageum* and women was further strengthened towards the end of the nineteenth century with the development of *gayageum sanjo* (solo instrumental music, accompanied by the hourglass-shaped drum called *janggu*). First, she provides several reasons that contributed to the association between the two: 1) the ease of emotional expression on the instrument; 2) the small size and folk associations of the *sanjo gayageum*; and 3) plucking playing techniques. She further discusses the relationship between women and *gayageum sanjo*. *Sanjo*, functioning as an expression of intellectual virtuosity in small, indoor spaces, was different from the genres aimed at entertaining mass audiences. Moreover, since *sanjo* was a relatively new genre that did not have a cultural association with male performance, women could have played a significant role in the performance and transmission of *sanjo*.

As a *gayageum* player myself, this strong association between women and the *gayageum* had not been an issue at all. In fact, I never thought that it could be an issue until I saw the all-male *gayageum* ensemble, Chunhogarang. I recalled my high school years in the early 2000s. When I studied the *gayageum* at Gugak National High School,

there were three male students among approximately 70 female students. At school, in general, female *gayageum* students were known as one of the most ardent student groups whose grades were higher than other majors. However, the few male students often seemed to do better in competitions than the female students, and many female students said, “Because they are men.” When there was an important performance, male students were often selected to perform, and female students said, again, “Because they are men.” Despite their small number, it seems that male musicians do well in *gugak*; however, what is it like for them to be a minority within this female-dominated structure?

A relationship between gender associations of musical instruments and instrument selection has been discussed extensively in academia (Zervoudakes and Tanur 1994; Koskoff 1995; Cramer, Million, and Perreault 2002; Graham 2005; Sinsabaugh 2005). Zervoudakes and Tanur (1994) argue that more girls than boys cross gender barriers, but they still prefer historically “female” instruments to “male” instruments such as the bassoon, French horn, and trumpet, indicating that boys are more likely to play “male” instruments. These gender stereotypes of instruments have been also observed in a similar study by Brenda Graham in 2005.

Some scholars have discussed instrument selection and the subsequent impact on players. Cramer, Million, and Perreault argues that male musicians playing “feminine” instruments are perceived as “less dominant and active and [having] less leadership skills” than female musicians playing identical instruments, while there are no significant differences in perceptions of male and female musicians playing “masculine” instruments (2002: 171). Katherine Sinsabaugh (2005) also points out that male flute students have been harassed by their peers because of their chosen instrument and contends that

students think that girls have more choices than boys in instrument selection. However, previous studies have not fully examined how male musicians' instrument selection influences their experiences in the larger society beyond their peer groups.

I should acknowledge that despite the relatively small number of male *gugak* musicians, men have occupied important positions in major orchestras and institutions. As Sherry Ortner (1996) points out, however, we should be wary of the “big man bias” that takes the privileges of certain men and applies them to men in general. Not all male musicians succeed in their career. In reality, many of them are struggling to survive within the gender-imbalanced environment. In the following section, I examine male *gayageum* musicians who are doubly marginalized by their gender and their instrument. To be more specific, I pay close attention to a group called Chunhogarang, an all-male *gayageum* ensemble.

2.3. Chunhogarang

“Chunhogarang, *gugak* idol, opens a new horizon for Korean *gayageum* ensembles.”

(*Golftimes* April 28, 2015)

“The first male *gayageum* ensemble is here in Korea.”

(*Segye Ilbo* May 29, 2015)

“Men rise up in *gugak*. Do not call us *cheongiljeom* anymore!”²²

(*Lara* June 18, 2015)

From the 1990s on, young *gugak* musicians in their twenties and thirties began to form small ensembles to create and play their own music. A large number of these groups

²² *Cheongiljeom* refers to the only man in a group. *Hongiljeom* is a female counterpart, referring to the only woman in a group.

have appeared; however, there have been only a small number of all-male *gugak* groups,²³ and among them I am particularly interested in Chunhogarang (춘호가랑). This group is worth investigating in particular because not only does it consist of nine male *gayageum* players (i.e., nine male players of the most feminine instrument), but they also all study with the same *gayageum* teacher—also male—despite the fact that they went to different schools. A *gayageum* player is often described as a nice, neat, gentle, and perhaps pretty woman. When the nine male *gayageum* players had their debut concert, breaking these stereotypes, the initial reactions from the audience were “fresh and interesting,” but “dull and unfamiliar” as well. In this section, I investigate the reasons why they make certain choices in relation to their experiences within the *gugak* community and to “masculine culture” in Korea.

Chunhogarang debuted in 2015, consisting of nine male *gayageum* players in their twenties and thirties: Kim Hyungsub, Lee Jun, Shin Changhwan, Lee Sooyun, Youn Sangyeon, Weon Meondongmaru, Park Hyeongeun, Rho Dogyun, and Kim Junhoe. The name of the group, Chunhogarang (春濤伽郎), refers to the burgeoning of young male (*rang*, 郎) performers who aim at broadening (*ho*, 濤) the scope of the *gayageum* (*ga*, 伽), as everything blooms to life in spring (*chun*, 春). Also, *chunho* is a pen name of their teacher, Lee Jonggil. Lee Jonggil, *gayageum* player at the National Gugak Center, is the first one who suggested this ensemble. As a director and teacher, he provides various kinds of support to the ensemble, from very practical matters, such as providing a place to rehearse and covering recording costs, to artistic advice.

²³ The majority of the *gugak* groups are either all-female or mixed gender.



Figure 2.4. Chunhogarang’s debut concert poster. Source: Chunhogarang’s Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/chunhogarang/> (accessed April 10, 2017).

Lee Jonggil says that the group has two goals. The ultimate goal is to present a more traditional interpretation of *gugak* in order to establish a new genre for men. Another goal is to expand their musical horizons together, ultimately to blend the new style with their lives. Leader Kim Hyungsub also echoes the idea that they try to show their identity as a male *gayageum* ensemble through compositions and themes in their performance. What does it mean to be a “male” *gayageum* ensemble? How is it different from that of female players? Also, what are their motivations? How do they affect their

identity as *gayageum* players or as males? Do their experiences as male *gayageum* players in a female-dominated realm change their behavior and influence them to make certain choices?

Extensive attention has been given to the relationship between gender associations/stereotypes and instrument selection in Western music (Abeles and Porter 1978; Zervoudakes and Tanur 1994; Koskoff 1995; O'Neill and Boulton 1996; Sinsabaugh 2005; Vickers 2015). In terms of studies on *gugak*, only a few scholars have discussed this issue. Yoonjah Choi's work (2014) is directly on the relationship between Korean drumming and female drummers. Other scholars have mentioned gender in discussing a broader theme, such as women's participation in traditional musical genres (Mueller 2013) and mask dance dramas (Saeji 2017). However, no one has yet discussed male *gugak* musicians from a similar perspective.²⁴ Based on my fieldwork and interactions with male musicians, in the following sections I discuss the Chunhogarang members' experiences as male *gayageum* players, something which has had a profound influence on the ways in which they navigate their career.

Each member has a different educational, regional, and family background, but they all have had very similar experiences as male *gayageum* players, ever since they started playing the instrument. Based on conversations with them, I have found six common experiences. As male *gayageum* players, they have 1) been ridiculed; 2) received excessive attention; 3) received "*baji jeomsu*," or "pants scores"; 4) been

²⁴ There are biographies of male *gugak* masters, such as Hwang Byungki by Na Hyo-shin in *Conversations with Kayageum Master Byung-ki Hwang* (2001) and by Andrew Killick in *Hwang Byungki: Traditional Music and the Contemporary Composer in the Republic of Korea* (2013). But these books tend to focus on Hwang's life and achievements as an exceptional musician, not as an ordinary man who plays the *gayageum*.

perceived as potential predators; 5) been associated with physical strength; and 6) been alienated from the marriage market.

2.3.1. Being Ridiculed

Several members of Chunhogarang had previous experiences with musical instruments before they started playing the *gayageum*. Some say that their parents suggested that they learn the instrument, and others say that they wanted to learn traditional instruments and the only one they knew was the *gayageum*. Only a few of them knew the gender associations of the instrument, and many of them say that they were completely ignorant about the instrument and *gugak*. They liked the sound of the *gayageum*, and that was the beginning of the story.

Whether or not they knew the gendered images of the *gayageum* before choosing the instrument, however, several members say that they were teased about playing a “women’s instrument.” When they were young, they had to hear “Are you a *gisaeng*? Aren’t you a boy?” or received strange looks from their friends and neighbors. Even after becoming professional musicians, they still have to deal with strange looks or questions such as “Do men play the *gayageum*? Don’t they play the *geomungo* or *piri*?”

Changhwan knew that the *gayageum* was considered a feminine instrument when he chose the instrument. He questioned why he had to play this instrument, because it was a women’s instrument. But he had to choose between music and engineering school and decided to do music. He went to a regular high school, and his friends (non-music majors) teased him for playing a “*gisaeng*’s instrument” as a man. Elderly neighbors in his town ignored him for doing something useless. When he came to Seoul to study the

gayageum in college, he hid his major and said “just music” (*geunyang eumakhaeyo*) because he was tired of these responses. But today he no longer hides his major. He even confidently repeats his major to a person who asks with surprise if men play the *gayageum*. Although he still receives strange looks, he notices some changes: “In the past, people looked at me like an alien when I said I studied the *gayageum*. But now they look at me with some interest.”

Hyungsub also expresses embarrassment when people see him as “very unique”:

Generally speaking, when I say that I am a professional *gayageum* player, initial reactions from ordinary people are typically “Wow, really? That’s really unique” (*dokteukhada*). I think this would be the same nationwide. Within the *gugak* community, when I say my major, people say “Wow.” Even male *gugak* musicians think that I am a little bit different. If men play other instruments like the *geomungo*, *haegeum*, *ajaeng*, and *piri*, people understand them, but if it is the *gayageum*, their responses are like “Wow! Really?” (June 27, 2016)

It is often said that the *gayageum* is the most common traditional instrument in Korea.

Hyungsub notes that he is just one of many people who play the *gayageum* for a living and wishes that people would not see him as being “different, unique, or strange.”

What these musicians have experienced can be explained as marginalization. R. W. Connell notes that when a group of men demonstrates characteristics that are different from those of dominant masculinity, they are expelled from the circle of legitimacy and marked by a rich vocabulary of abuse associated with femininity (2005: 79). Moreover, Christine Williams argues that when a man crosses over to a female-dominated sphere, he is, almost immediately, suspected of not being a “real man” and assumed to have something wrong with him (Williams 1993: 3). Male *gayageum* players are often associated with *gisaeng* and feminine characteristics, and considered as being “strange, unique, and different.” Despite the presence of male *gayageum* masters such as Hwang

Byungki, it does not have a trickle-down effect; it does not change social perception towards male *gayageum* players in general.

What is worth mentioning is that, despite the feminine associations attached to male *gayageum* players, they seem to be rarely seen as gay males. Although male *gayageum* players may seem unique and strange to the general public, it does not seem to conjure up an image of a gay man. I have seen one male *gayageum* player jokingly saying “he looks like a gay man” to refer to another male *gayageum* player because his playing style is “too feminine,” which I further discuss in Chapter 3. This was the only time that I heard a male *gayageum* player referred to as a gay man. But this is different from calling male *gayageum* players gay males, because this joke was made specifically to refer to his playing style, not to the fact that he was a male *gayageum* player.

As discussed above, male *gayageum* players are sometimes teased about playing an instrument of *gisaeng*, a very feminine and even sexual symbol. But why are they not teased for being gay? Unlike studies on men in non-traditional occupations, which show that males in professions such as nursing in the United States and the United Kingdom are sometimes mistakenly misjudged to be gay (Simpson 2005; McDowell 2015; Williams 2015), terms related to homosexuality are hard to find in similar studies conducted in Korea. Men in non-traditional occupations face gender stereotypes and conflicts similar to those in the United States and the United Kingdom, but it is hard to find case studies that mention being misjudged or mislabeled as gays (Kim Ji-Hyeon and Hwang Ok Kyung 2010; Lee Kyoung Ju and Kim Miyoung 2014; Yang Ji Woong 2015; Kim Ick Jee and Shim Hyung Wha 2016).

I suggest that this is because homosexuality is still not fully accepted in Korean society and is not a subject of everyday conversation. In the 1990s and early 2000s, homosexuality was merely a word referring to so-called perverted acts, and was seen as a crime and something that was abnormal and had to be suppressed. Although, in comparison to the past, the social perception of sexual minorities has improved slightly, the stigma against sexual minorities still remains strong, and there is no legal system that protects them from discrimination.²⁵ In this rigid social context, it might have been hard to openly joke about being gay, especially in the 1990s and early 2000s when most male *gayageum* players started learning the instrument (Park Ji Hoon and Lee Jin 2013).

Also, I argue that male *gayageum* players' appearances are different from those of gay males in Korea. It seems that people tend to picture very specific images of men as gays. In a study on images of sexual minority men in movies and dramas, Hong Eun-Jeong and Jin Yong-mi (2013) discuss three types of images: 1) men with traditional feminine characteristics (submissive and graceful), whose appearances are prettier than women; 2) men wearing feminine dresses and makeup and using exaggerated feminine gestures and words which contrast with their masculine body; and 3) metrosexual men who have a great sense of fashion and grooming. Although sometimes such discourses and stereotypes are directly refuted in other TV shows, discourses on sexual minorities are still at a basic level, and in many cases, as in Hong and Jin's study (2013), even reinforce the stereotypical images by reproducing what is supposedly "feminine" and "masculine" in Korean society (Park Ji Hoon and Lee Jin 2013). However, it is certain

²⁵ There have been two attempts to enact anti-discrimination laws in 2010 and 2013, but both attempts failed due to strong opposition.

that these studies demonstrate that there are certain “images” or “appearances” that are perceived to be those of gay men, and these images do not seem to correspond with those of male *gayageum* players.

2.3.2. Extensive Attention

Many of the members studied the *gayageum* from a young age and went to specialized school for *gugak*. Often, they were the only male *gayageum* student in their class. For instance, each of those who went to Gugak National High School was the only male student in a class with 23 female students. From around 2000, at least one male *gayageum* student was enrolled each year, but there had been only a handful of male *gayageum* players prior to that year. Within such an environment, it seemed inevitable for them to receive extensive attention from teachers and other female *gayageum* students. Several members told me that a random senior student or classmate entered their practice room out of the blue, asking them to play the *gayageum*, and left shortly thereafter.

Lee Sooyun compares the attention he received at the entrance exam of Gugak National High School to the island of Dokdo:

I did not know that the *gayageum* was played mostly by women. All I had met was two male *gayageum* players, Hyungseop and my teacher Lee Jonggil. But when I went to take the entrance exam, there were a lot of women. I saw that for the first time. Among them, I was the only man. I could feel the looks. You guys [me and friends of mine who went to Gugak National Middle School] seem to know each other very well, and there were some people who did not know each other here and there. It was like one big land and small islands here and there. I was like a tiny little anonymous island of Dokdo but received huge attention like Dokdo. (July 16, 2016)

Dokdo is a small island located in the east of the Korean peninsula. It has been at the center of huge controversy between Korea and Japan over the ownership of the island. In

the conversation with me, as a friend from high school, Sooyun recalls memories from high school and fills the gap that I was unable to obtain as a female *gayageum* player who graduated from Gugak National Middle School and was already familiar with the female-dominant environment.

I do remember Sooyun from the entrance exam. All applicants for a *gayageum* major were waiting for their turn in a large waiting room. I already knew the majority of applicants from the Middle School, and soon we began to talk about other applicants who did not go to the Middle School with us. There were various applicants, such as a daughter of a well-known professor, a younger sister of a senior male student, a female applicant who had an expensive instrument, and so on. But, among these applicants, Sooyun's presence was conspicuous. Even after the entrance exam, his presence was an issue among us. When the result was announced, my friends and I thought that he was not accepted because we did not see a male name on the list. At the entrance ceremony, however, we realized that the male student was accepted and his name was Sooyun, which was often a female name. We were busy with checking who he was, and so were senior *gayageum* students. At a gathering of all *gayageum* students at the beginning of each year, he was, again, at the center of the attention. But, during the interview, he repeatedly said that he tried to live a quiet life, avoiding standing out, during his high school years.

Junhoe agrees that he received a lot of attention when he entered Gugak Middle and High School and says that this continued in college as well. While female *gayageum* students tried hard to promote themselves to get their names remembered by professors, such an effort was unnecessary for him because professors already knew the male

gayageum students, including him. Moreover, at a gathering of all *gayageum* students (approximately 50-60 students), professors only checked the attendance of male students, and did not even remember all the names of the most senior female students. Sangyeon also had a similar experience in college. During a large group rehearsal, a professor told female students to take care of him because he was the only male and he was coughing. Because of his uniqueness, senior students treated him well, but the favor toward him was enough to arouse jealousy among his classmates. Although there were a few who said that he tried to enjoy this attention, most of the members said that it was too much of a burden for them.

2.3.3. “*Baji Jeomsu*”

This extensive attention often leads to more opportunities for male *gayageum* players. One of the members says that professors provided him with more opportunities for performances and employment than female students because “men have to raise a family, whereas women can get married” (July 16, 2016). He thinks that he has had more performance opportunities for being male than for his capability as a musician. This tendency to favor male students over female students can be epitomized by the term “*baji jeomsu*.”

“*Baji jeomsu*,” literally “pants score,” is a term used when male students receive a higher score in competitions simply because they are male. Many of the members acknowledge that male *gayageum* players seem to have more advantages than female

players because of their scarcity and ability to produce powerful sounds,²⁶ which would appeal to judges. Hyungsub explains the phenomenon, although he was not sure of the truth of *baji jeomsu*:

I think it can happen because there are truly a lot of female players. Men would seem to be a crane among a crowd of chickens.²⁷ People talk about it because, at competitions, the level of attention towards the only person wearing a *durumagi* [traditional Korean outer coat]—man—is different from that towards a group of people wearing skirts—women. (June 27, 2016)

When he entered the high school, there had been no male *gayageum* student before him for several years. Because of the uniqueness and scarcity of male *gayageum* students, issues around competitions and lopsided advantages always followed him.

Baji jeomsu is closely related to one of the social obligations applied only to men in Korea—conscription. Currently, Korean males between 18 and 35 are obligated to serve twenty-one-months of military service.²⁸ For male musicians in their twenties, the twenty-one months of military service leave a huge vacuum in their careers as musicians who must practice every day to keep up their skills. Moreover, this is usually a time in their lives when they could perform most actively, being free from the stresses and strains of studying and practicing for entering a college. Although it is an obligation for all Korean males, there is little doubt that their first goal after graduating from high school is

²⁶ This is not just a stereotype, but something that I have found to be true. Many *gugak* musicians often make statements regarding male *gayageum* players' physical strength and their ability to produce powerful sounds.

²⁷ He refers to a Korean proverb “*gungyeilhak*” (群鷄一鶴), which has a similar meaning to “a figure among ciphers” in English.

²⁸ The length of military service varies based on military branch: active duty soldiers serve 21 months in the Army and the Marine Corps, 22 months in the Navy, and 24 months in the Air Force.

to be exempted from the mandatory service if they can. When I was in college, it was not hard to hear male students saying, “I will work hard, so I can be exempted.” When a male student won a competition, I used to hear “he must have worked really hard to skip the military service.”

A problem has arisen here. When a male *gugak* musician wins the first prize at one of the three competitions designated by the MMA (Military Manpower Administration), he is exempted from the regular military service and allowed to serve as a public art service worker (*yesul yowon*, also known as *gongik*).²⁹ Although they can apply for the military bands, the best option would be to be exempted from the service by winning one of the competitions. As discussed above, *gugak* professors tend to favor male students and to give more opportunities to them because of their uniqueness in *gugak*. One of the members told me that he heard from his teachers that if two players tie for a competition, a prize will go to a male player because he can be exempted from the military service. A male *gayageum* player of a different ensemble acknowledges that he received *baji jeomsu* because he was male:

I have had many advantages. At competitions, too. So, when I receive my score, I subtract some of it. It really exists. It was when I participated in a *gayageum* competition. I know that it was a tie, but I received the first prize because I was male. [Hyunjin: How did you know?] I heard it from my teacher.

He continues to speak about his experience:

I have received many advantages as a male *gayageum* player. In general, teachers value male *gayageum* players more because they are unique. My teachers have told me several times that too many women quit [playing the

²⁹ The MMA has reduced the number of competitions and strengthened the qualification for the public art service worker position. In 2017, three designated competitions are *Onnara gugak gyeongyeonhaehoe*, *Dong-a gugak kongkureu*, and *Jeonju daesaseupnori jeonguk daehoe*. MMA website: <http://www.mma.go.kr/contents.do?mc=mma0000759> (accessed April 15, 2017).

gayageum] when they get married, but men are holding onto it. The teachers want to lead us to succeed in the field because men will not quit it and will linger somewhere in the field. (August 13, 2016)

Granted, not everyone agrees that they are the recipients of *baji jeomsu*. Whether they have received it or not, however, several members seem to acknowledge its existence.

From the interviews with several *gugak* musicians, I notice that there is a prevailing bias involved in *baji jeomsu*: the notion that women will become housewives and drop out when they get married. As mentioned in earlier quotes from male *gayageum* players, their teachers have told them directly that, based on their experiences, many female musicians quit their jobs after their marriage, while male musicians stay in the field regardless of their marital status. However, this does not seem to be only their teachers' personal perspective. Although male musicians understand that such a viewpoint is not fair, interviews reveal that a very similar viewpoint is prevalent among not only their teachers' generation but also younger musicians. A male *gayageum* player agrees that many women give up their careers as *gugak* performers and get married, whereas he has hardly ever seen men who changed or gave up their careers. But he does not think that the teacher should give less attention to female players because of this.

Moreover, Seonin, a *gayageum* player in Jebi, says that one of the crucial factors that the members considered when they started the group was whether the group would falter due to the members' marriages. All the members were either seniors in college or recent graduates who were still searching for jobs and developing their careers. It was unclear what they would do in the near future, but they believed that they—as men—would stay together and not easily give up their careers. I should note that he does not try to justify the current practice of *baji jeomsu* based on the belief that women are more

likely to give up their careers as opposed to men. But, his comments imply that he also believes that men are likely to stay in the field while women tend to drop out.

It seems hard to blame only teachers or a few younger musicians, because I have frequently heard similar comments not only from other male musicians but also from female musicians. After hearing about male *gayageum* players' struggles in the field, a female *gayageum* player expressed sympathy that it is hard for men to leave the field, even if they want to, because they have to make a living, while women could leave the field and rely on their husbands after marriage. Lee Il-woo, a male *piri* player in Jambinai, says that many colleagues and teachers were worried about being a group with two female musicians when he first started the group. To concentrate solely on the group, he left his job at a prestigious *gugak* orchestra, and people were concerned about his decision because those two female musicians could leave the group whenever they got married. It is possible that more women have dropped out because of the relatively large number of women compared to men in the field. As described earlier in the chapter, it could also be a social trend that reflects the economic hardships of women (*chwijip*). However, it is dangerous to make a hasty generalization, such as “a musician will drop out because she is a woman,” as proven by Jambinai, which is considered one of the most successful *gugak* groups, touring around the world all year long.

Although *baji jeomsu* becomes more of an issue for *gayageum* players because of the scarcity of male players, *baji jeomsu* is certainly not exclusive to the one instrument. Several non-*gayageum* players with whom I have spoken about the advantages of male *gugak* musicians brought up *baji jeomsu* as well. *Pansori* is another field where the male

presence is greatly valued.³⁰ A male *pansori* singer confirms what *gayageum* players have told me: if the two scores are tied, the first prize goes to a male because of the scarcity of male *pansori* singers. During the interviews with other musicians, the same narrative has been observed frequently. A male *daegeum* player explains that male players are trained under special attention. He says, “The intensity of the lesson is different. Teachers concentrate more on teaching male students than female students” (August 13, 2016).

It is plausible to say that *baji jeomsu* has been practiced tacitly within the *gugak* community. But it seems that either everyone in the *gugak* community already knows about it, or everyone assumes that everyone knows about it. During an interview, a male composer was explaining about *baji jeomsu* to me. When a person next to us told him that I also majored in *gugak*, he said, “Oh, did you major in *gugak*? Then I do not need to explain much about it, because you must already know this very well” (October 29, 2016). Although it is dangerous to generalize, *baji jeomsu* was certainly a common topic, especially during major competitions. Before going into fieldwork, based on my own experience as a *gayageum* player, I anticipated that male musicians would be reluctant to share their thoughts and experiences related to *baji jeomsu* because it could deny their efforts and make them seem to be mere lucky male recipients. However, several musicians not only affirm its existence, but also are willing to share their own experiences. They seem to be immune to controversies around them.

The existence of *baji jeomsu* was broadly known enough to create controversies and stir up jealousy among the musicians. In particular, female *gayageum* students’

³⁰ *Pansori* is a musical genre of storytelling performed by a vocalist (*changja* or *soriggun*) and a drummer (*gosu*).

frustration and jealousy towards male students seem more significant. A female *gayageum* player complains that she did not understand why teachers forced her to participate in competitions even though the prizes would go to male students. Hyungsub recalls an embarrassing moment when his female classmate told him directly that he won because he was a man. The controversy over *baji jeomsu* continued during midterm and final exams in school. Lee Jun shares a story of a female high school classmate:

During high school, right after I took an exam, a female classmate came to me and asked how long the teachers listened. It turned out that they listened to me longer than her. Then, she started crying because it seemed that I did better than her. Maybe she thought that was unfair? I think she had always compared herself with me. (October 29, 2016)

Another member of Chunhogarang had a similar experience in college. Since a conversation with him deals with both a suspicion that he might have received *baji jeomsu* and jealousy among female students, I quote a part of the conversation at length:

Member A [A]: When there is a woman among men, she becomes a princess. But when there is a man among women, he becomes a servant [*meoseum*]. They [his female classmates] really find me when they need me. . . . I did not know that class was canceled and went to school. But no one was there! It is not that they didn't tell me intentionally, but they heard it from someone. I guess I wasn't there when they talked about it. Senior female students [*nuna*] looked after me because I was the only male junior student [*hubae*], but my classmates were not like that.

Hyunjin [H]: I guess they were jealous of you because teachers liked you more.

A: Yeah, senior female students liked me [*nunadeuri yeppeohaesseoyo*]. But my classmates were . . . [not like that] because scores did not lie.

H: So, you must have been really good?

A: No, teachers gave me a higher score [*laugh*]. I was supposed to memorize a piece, but made mistakes while playing it. I was asked to do it again the following week, and I received a higher score than a classmate who memorized the whole piece on the first day. She was too greedy. Other classmates told me that I did better than her in terms of the

performance itself. But she was piqued by getting a lower score. But it was not me who gave that grade. I think that other students would have gotten a good score if they did well the following week. Well, it is true that my score was the highest, but some of the classmates were a little bit like . . . [offended]. (July 9, 2016)

It is hard to know whether he benefited from *baji jeomsu* or not. There are too many factors that could have resulted in the outcome. He could have deserved a higher score because he played par excellence. The female classmate could have thought that it was unfair to give him a higher score because he did not do the assignment in the first place. In such a circumstance, the subjectivity of grading performance catalyzes the controversy. But it is notable that he does say that it was because teachers gave him a higher score, but because he played well. He could have tried to be modest with me, but his words and attitude imply that he partially admits the possibility of benefiting from being a male.

The controversy over *baji jeomsu* is not limited to particular schools, majors, or ensembles. Jo Seonin and Oh Danhae, a *gayageum* player and a *pansori* singer in the all-male ensemble Jaebi, are familiar with the controversy, too. Seonin acknowledges that the tendency to favor males could have been an impediment for some female students. He endured hatred, jealousy, and complaints from female students because “he received more scores even though his performance was not any better than others” (August 13, 2016). Danhae says that this is what makes him most disturbed. He thinks that female students did not see him practicing all day long and denigrated his efforts, and this ill-founded hatred made him more devoted to music. Both Seonin and Danhae’s experiences coincide well with the several cases already discussed above, which demonstrates the prevalence of the custom, *baji jeomsu*.

I have discussed various stories of male *gayageum* players that are in concurrence with one another. It is important to remember, however, that these stories are mostly from their high school and college years, ranging from five to twenty years ago, depending on their age. Several musicians note that such controversy will ebb away gradually as the number of male *gayageum* players has increased today. In the past, it was very rare to see more than two or three male *gayageum* players at the same competition, whereas it is not unusual to see six or seven male *gayageum* students participating in a high school competition today. It is possible that what current high school students experience is different from what my interviewees think, and it would require in-depth interviews to examine the issue. Since the focus of this chapter is on Chunhogarang members in their twenties and thirties, I postpone this question for future research.

2.3.4. Potential Predator

As it becomes extremely hard to find a full-time job or to build sustainable income as a *gayageum* player, many musicians take temporary jobs, such as teaching *gugak* or *gayageum* for K-12 or giving private *gayageum* lessons. Certainly, it is not easy for female *gayageum* players to find these temporary jobs; however, it seems much harder for the male players because they are often seen as potential predators. In this circumstance, many of them state that they have failed to get a job teaching K-12 because teachers and parents prefer female players as their daughters' teachers. Whenever I asked whether male *gayageum* teachers are well accepted, they immediately replied "no."

Hyungsub and Sooyun note that they have earned more money by playing *janggu* (Korean drum) accompaniment than by playing or teaching the *gayageum*, because

people prefer a male accompanist, whereas the *gayageum* is “useless for males.”

Hyungsub says that one can barely earn a living as a *gayageum* performer unless s/he gets a stable job—usually in a *gugak* orchestras. If so, the only way to make money is teaching, which is not an easy path, especially for male *gayageum* players. Sooyun has been rejected several times because of who he was, not because of his skills or work experience:

You know, I work as an art instructor these days.³¹ I applied for a women’s middle school, and was accepted through the lottery. . . . I talked to one of the teachers at the school, and later I was told that I should not come because the principal said that they could not accept a male teacher because it was a women’s middle school. It is a real story. I have been rejected several times because I was male. One day, I was introduced to a student playing the *gayageum* as a hobby. It was okay when I just texted her. But after talking on the phone with me, she was like “Oh, are you a male teacher?” and canceled lessons. There has been quite a lot like this. (June 27, 2016)

Sooyun thinks that principals and vice principals do not want to hire male teachers, especially for afterschool programs, because they cannot control them and parents would see male teachers as potential sexual predators. He is aware of that some male teachers have had trouble in schools, and because of that he has to face frustration even if he keeps emphasizing that he is diligent and not a potential predator.

Moreover, the gendered image of the *gayageum* is a hindrance for male *gayageum* players. Similar to other members, Changhwan also found that female middle/high school students are reluctant to have him as their *gayageum* teacher. He says that male *gayageum* players are already seen as strange, and it becomes worse when an unmarried

³¹ The Art Instructor program is the government-led program, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Ministry of Education. Qualified musicians can apply for the program, and after passing the exams, they are allowed to teach at designated schools.

man teaches the *gayageum*. Junhoe, the youngest member of the ensemble, recently started to look for a part-time job at afterschool programs and private institutes, and already encountered the same difficulty. Even though younger students prefer female teachers over males, he thinks that they would prefer male teachers if it were drumming. He believes that female teachers are preferred “because it is the *gayageum*.” Ironically, however, he says that he would also prefer female teachers if he had a daughter because they seem nicer to students and reduce worrying about sexual harassment. Because of such difficulty in finding a job as a *gayageum* player, some musicians have considered or are currently considering switching their careers.

This tendency to avoid male teachers is closely related to current issues in Korean society. Every year, one can frequently hear from news reports that female students, from daycare centers to college, are sexually harassed by their male teachers (Lee Hongwon 2015; Lee Daehee 2016; Kim Jongwon 2017). Ryu Wang-Hyo and Lim Jung-Soo (2005) argue that parents’ preference for teachers’ sex differs depending on the sex of their children. Although all parents prefer female teachers, parents of sons show a higher preference for co-teaching of male and female teachers. Recent studies of strategies for supporting male teachers demonstrate that positive perception of male teachers has increased, but they also show that preference for female teachers is still the reality (Joo and Kim 2011; Kwak and Bae 2012; Ji and Kim 2016).

Parents’ concerns about having men as their children’s teachers and the bias against male teachers are stronger when their children are younger, and this phenomenon can be located in various places. In an online community where women—mostly mothers—share their thoughts on various issues, one of the postings received

significantly more attention. The writer was asking whether people did not like male teachers at daycare centers, because she received a complaint from one of the girls' parents. Most of the comments were negative: "Of course, I do not like it," "If so, I would move to another daycare," "Parents of sons would be fine, but not the parents of daughters. I would reconsider sending her there [to a daycare center having male teachers]." ³² Moreover, on a TV show, a male kindergarten teacher complained about the bias against his job, which makes his behavior often seem suspicious. When he walked around a town with his student to get to know her better, he was asked to present his ID to the police officers. Neighbors found him suspicious and reported him to the police, and the police officers did not believe that he was an actual kindergarten teacher (Park Shinyoung 2015).

Because of the belief that male teachers could do "something wrong" to female students during private lessons in a closed space, young, unmarried men are the least favorite candidates in this market. Lee Jonggil notes that this is nothing new, and that it was a very sensitive issue, especially before his marriage. He says that he always left doors open during private lessons to protect himself from any unwanted scandals. Other male teachers warned him, too, that he had to be more cautious about his words and any types of physical contact with female students. He recalls when he was scolded by those male teachers when he held the hands of foreigners on a TV show by request. They called him and said "Professor Lee, you really should not do that. I told you not to do something like that!" (July 21, 2016). Moreover, due to the social stigma, he cannot introduce a new

³² "Eorinijip namja seonsaengnim sireusingayo~?" (You Don't Like Male Teachers at Daycare Centers?). <http://www.82cook.com/entiz/read.php?bn=15&num=2085556> (accessed April 18, 2017).

student to one of his male students because her parents will not like it. The only position for which he can safely introduce his male students is that of drum accompaniment.

Despite these efforts, the perception of male teachers seems negative even within the *gugak* community. When I studied the *gayageum* in Korea, it was not hard to hear gossip that some male professors touched female students, asked them to serve drinks (*sulsijung*), made inappropriate comments, or even slept with their students. I was too young to know, but one of my middle school teachers was accused of sexual harassment. During my fieldwork, I told *gugak* musicians who were close friends that I planned to interview male *gayageum* professors. They seemed puzzled and asked me whether I would go there alone and why I would ever want to meet them. I asked them whether there was any problem, and they started sharing what they had heard about those professors—mostly negative—with me.

As Korean society becomes more sensitive to the rights of minorities, many cases that could have previously been disguised or ignored are uncovered and treated as a serious social issue. Within this social atmosphere, the conversations with the male *gayageum* players have revealed that they are very cautious about their behavior, just as parents are very circumspect in choosing their children's teacher. Changes in perception take a longer time, but I believe that their efforts and more positive experiences with male *gayageum* teachers will eventually lead to relieving the current tension.

2.3.5. Physical Strength

Even though male *gayageum* players are often described with feminine characteristics, they are also associated with physical strength and expected to perform

physically demanding work, such as carrying instruments and working backstage. Several members recall that they carried their female classmates' *gayageum* and tuned their instruments in high school for them many times. Jun says that he played the role—"men's role"—as a male student majoring in *gayageum*. Sooyun also notes that his teacher asked him to tune her *gayageum* and to do various chores for her because he was the only male student in class during high school.

Since most of the members went to a high school specialized in *gugak*, working backstage was one of the jobs they were accustomed to doing. Jun points out that only male students were assigned to work backstage and expected to do physically demanding and dirty work. It seems that he did not deeply ponder the implications of what he was expected to do since he entered the female-dominated field of *gugak*, specifically the *gayageum*. At the beginning of the interview, Jun seemed doubtful about my question on his experience as a male *gayageum* player—he did not think that there were many differences between female and male *gayageum* players. But as we continued our conversation, he recalled old memories from middle and high school, such as working backstage and carrying his female friends' *gayageum*. As if he was suddenly enlightened, he said that society shaped these roles based on a patriarchal social order. Since it was so natural for male students to do physically demanding work or dirty work, he could have taken it for granted and served the assigned role.

Because backstage work has been strongly associated with men in many schools, it even resulted in the birth of the all-male *gugak* ensemble, Bulsechul. In college, male students spent most of the time together backstage, assisting various performances, which led to a recital for male musicians themselves instead of just helping others backstage.

However, such an association between men and hard work is a socially constructed outcome. In the Korean Traditional Music Department at Ewha Womans University, female students do various jobs that are often assigned to male students in coeducational universities. For performances, female students quickly set up a large and heavy folding screen and a mat on stage, and move the piano and many stage props. I cannot forget when friends of mine—both male and female—who studied *gugak* in coeducational universities were surprised at seeing female students setting a stage and sawing some wood for levelling floors. Certainly, it must have been a surprising experience for them to see female students doing physically demanding work.

Associating men with physical strength is not limited to physically demanding jobs. Although there are some exceptions, many Chunhogarang members have been told to “play like a man,” meaning playing louder and more powerfully. Hyungsub notes that his teacher, Kim Jeongja, told him to make firm sounds by using his strength, and not to reduce the maximum sounds he could produce. He took a lesson with two other female students, but his teacher did not give the same instructions to them; instead, she gave very different comments on techniques and sounds to the female students. Beomsu, a member of Jebi, says that Jebi has been asked to show masculine characteristics in their performances. What the performance organizers expect from the ensemble of nine male musicians is often an energetic and powerful performance which will appeal to the general public. Although Jebi has many pieces which require detailed expression, they organize their performances according to the organizers’ requests.

Some male *gayageum* players note that they have intentionally used their physical strength to stand out from the female students. Hyungsub says that when he entered

Gugak National Middle School, he faced frustration because the majority of *gayageum* students had already studied the *gayageum* before. He had to start from the very basics of the instrument, and it seemed hard for him to catch up with others. He knew that he was stronger than his female peers and began to play louder so he could beat his peers in terms of volume. Making loud sounds without any other skills did not help him but instead brought criticism from his teacher: he had to hear from his teacher that she did not like to listen to his playing because he played too loudly. After this he realized that loud volume itself is useless unless combined with other skills.

Jun says that he also tried to play loudly when he was in school. To increase the volume of the instrument, he used to tune the strings very tightly. Today, he does not do this anymore; instead, he uses very loose strings, so he can create various sounds. Recalling old memories from middle school, he notes that he may have been influenced by his surroundings that divided and assigned gender roles to students. Seonin, a *gayageum* player in Jebi, shares a very similar experience. To show off his physical strength, he switched strings on the *sanjo gayageum* to the thickest strings he could get and tightened them. He notes that he felt proud when female students could not even press the strings down. Because of the increased tension of the strings, when an *anjok* (bridge) fell, it created a dent on the wooden body of the instrument.

Although it may not be directly connected to physical strength, my own experience also reveals an implication relevant to the gender roles in *gugak*. When I went to Gugak National High School, there were weekly sessions where individual students played their instruments for ten minutes in front of the entire student body. For each session, someone was needed to set up microphones and to solve technical issues during

performances. In my senior year, a teacher assigned me to this position because I was a senior technician in a broadcasting club in my high school. Additionally, the teacher also assigned one male student to the same position. I thought I could handle the job well enough because it was not a demanding work at all, but sometimes two could be better than one. On the first day, the male student told me that he would set up the microphones on stage, and I could control volumes during performances. At first, I actively performed the job. As time went by, however, people started to treat him as a stage manager, while asking me what I was doing in the control booth. Gradually, he took my role, and I felt embarrassed sitting in the booth and doing nothing. Eventually, two male students occupied the control booth. People could have found it strange to see a female student in the control booth because it had been considered a man's job; or it could have been the male student's "careful consideration" for me because he believed that it was men's duty to do backstage work or other chores. It is certain, however, that a certain type of gender role expectation was implicit in this story.

I believe that it is worth mentioning that some *gugak* musicians are concerned about the "feminization of *gugak*." While male musicians are expected to perform male gender roles, associated with physical strength, their music has become more "feminized"—being soft and delicate. Choi Deokryeol and Jeon Wooseok, a composer and a *geomungo* player in Bulsechul, note that the number of male students studying with female teachers has increased as more female musicians dominate *gugak*. Consequently, male students emulated their female teachers' musical styles, which led to the feminization of *gugak*. Han Seungseok, a well-known *pansori* singer, points out that the increasing number of female music directors of major orchestras is also a contributing

factor to the feminization of *gugak* (interview, October 9, 2016). Despite these concerns, however, all-male ensembles such as Chunhogarang strive to demonstrate masculine qualities in their music, a theme which I will discuss in Chapter 3.

2.3.6. Alienation from the Marriage Market

“Musicians are worse than farmers.” Several male *gugak* musicians told me with a self-deprecating smile when I asked them about their marriage and dating life. As discussed above, job security is the foremost requisite in Korean society in recent years. Moreover, despite the weakening of traditional gender roles and the emergence of new types of masculinities, women select men’s competence and responsibility in economic affairs as one of the crucial elements defining ideal masculinity (Han KyungJung and Cho Chang-Hoan 2010). Being aware of this ideal masculine figure that society wants, male *gayageum* players confess the difficulty of meeting a partner who understands and supports their career.

Many of them think that the lack of job security is a major impediment, especially for men, because men are still expected to be the breadwinners. Won Meondongmaru believes that he can get married only when he has enough money. But economic instability that he has observed among senior musicians makes him more concerned with his career. The anxiety increases even more when he compares himself with his non-musician friends who already earn a stable income. It is a source of stress for him because “it is quite common in Korea that men work outside and women do the housework.” A member of the ensemble has a very critical view of male *gugak* musicians, including himself:

I am a man doing *gugak*. But, to be honest, male *gugak* musicians are not good from an objective standpoint. [Hyunjin: I will save my comments.] Why? What are you saving for? It is too obvious. First of all, it is insecure. The market is too small. They might be outstanding in their field, but do not know other fields at all. . . . My job is not stable. A freelancer. My income is uneven. I have a lot of spare time, but am too busy when I have a performance. If not, I am just bumming around. It would be great if there is a high-income woman saying, “It is okay, I will make money.” But there is no one like that, or if so, such a woman would not date me.

He adds a comment on how people see a *gugak* musician as their future spouse, and on gender roles expected in society:

I try not to arrange a blind date with male *gugak* musicians. If I ask my female friend to arrange a blind date for my male friend doing *gugak*, she does not want to do it. No one wants it already, and even I do not like it. . . . Finding a job is a big deal. Even in a tribal society, women followed strong men who could build a house and hunt well. We live in a different era, but still it is similar. I am okay with doing the housework and raising a kid.

He repeatedly complains that the society pressures men to be primary breadwinners for their household. For those like him who have an unstable income, the social expectations placed on men make them have doubts about their career, capability, and eventually marriage.

Junhoe takes it for granted that male *gugak* musicians are not popular as marriage partners. Referring to a rating from matchmaking companies, he says that “male *gugak* musicians are ranked the same as farmers, while female musicians are ranked high.” He adds that he has seen many female *gugak* musicians dating/marrying non-musicians, but has rarely seen male *gugak* musicians dating/marrying non-musicians. I should note that I have heard the exact same comment from several male *gugak* musicians, and they certainly do not mean to disrespect farmers. During the rapid industrialization, the Korean government sacrificed the agricultural sector. A lower marriage rate among male

farmers became a serious social issue, resulted in a higher rate of international marriage between Korean male farmers and women from developing countries (Lee Jeonghwa and Park Gongju 2003; Kim HanGon and Seo JeongYeon 2014). Moreover, the reliability of the rating is less convincing. Multiple ratings for both men and women are flooded online every year, and it is hard to find meaningful data. Hence, I argue that it should be understood as an example of self-mockery, reflecting the unpopular reality of male *gugak* musicians.³³

Unlike the previous five categories of experience that are most relevant to male *gayageum* players, alienation from the marriage market seems applicable to male *gugak* musicians more broadly, regardless of their major. Kim Beomsu, a *daegeum* player in the ensemble Jebi, states that there are different social expectations for male and female musicians. According to him, female musicians tend to be well-respected and even admired if they make money from music and enjoy leisure time. But this is not applicable to male musicians unless they hold a position in a well-established orchestra or institution. Most of the *gugak* musicians started music from an early age, and this makes them less attractive outside the *gugak* or music community. Seonin notes that they are “fools” who devote everything to music. All he knows is music, but this is not attractive to women outside the music community, searching for someone who has a stable income and job. For this reason, he has considered giving up on getting married.

³³ Similarly, some Korean graduate students in the United States say that they are ranked lower than “farmers without a rice paddy” (tenant farmers).

등급	직업 종류	공무원 급수
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4등급	변호사 / 의사 / 치과의사 / 한의사 / 변리사 A급 / 5급 지역 합격자 / 군의관 중위 (6급) / 외교관후보자시험 합격자 / 서울대 정교수 / 메이저 법의치한 (법학전문대학원, 의대, 치대, 한의대) 정·부·조교수 (자격증 미소지자) / 비메이저 법의치한 진료파트 정·부·조교수 (자격증 소지자) / 외국계 투자은행 입사자 / 스타급 연예인	사무관 (5급) 주사 (6급)
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6등급	약사 A급 / 수의사 A급 / 메이저 대형병원 (서울대·아산·삼성) (수간호사, 간호과장 이상) / 공인회계사 / 7급 (검찰, 국정원, 국세청) 합격자 / 기타대학 정·부·조교수 / 메이저 언론사 아나운서 / 뉴스 앵커 / 유명 예술인	주사보 (7급)
7등급	약사 / 수의사 / 수간호사, 간호과장 이상 / 세무사 A급 / 7급 합격자 (지역 제외) / 공기업 입사자 / 외국계 중견기업 입사자 / 아나운서 / PD / 감독 / 인기 연예인	주사보 (7급)
8등급	대형병원 간호사 / 세무사 / 법무사 / 감정평가사 / 보험계리사 / 7급 지역 합격자 / 군인 간부 (중위) (6급) (만 40세 미만 기준) / 경찰 간부 (경사) (7급) (만 40세 미만 기준) / 명문대 출신 대기업 입사자 / 메이저 시중은행 입사자 / 스타강사 / (서울대, 과기원, 포항공대, 대학병원, 대기업 부설) 박사급 연구원 / 스포츠 국가대표	서기 (8급)
9등급	관세사 / 노무사 / 9급 (법원, 검찰, 국세청, 서울시) 합격자 / 군인 간부 (소위, 준위) (7급) (만 40세 미만 기준) / 경찰 간부 (경장) (8급) (만 40세 미만 기준) / 대학 강사 / 조중고등학교 교사 / 메이저 공단 입사자 / 비메이저 시중은행 입사자 전문예술인	서기 (8급)
10등급	간호사 / 치과위생사 / 조산사 / 50대 기업 입사자 / 증권사 영업직 / 보험 영업관리직 / 기자 / 인서울 상위권 대학 출신 연구원 / 유명 디자이너 / 방송작가	서기 (8급) 서기보 (9급)
11등급	9급 합격자 / 마이너 공사 입사자 / 소규모 사업 운영자 / 기타 연구원 / 디자이너 / 연예인 / 작가	서기보 (9급)
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14등급	직업군인 (하사) (9급) / 중소기업 비정규직 입사자 / 비정규직 노동자	(무급)
15등급	군인 (이등병, 일등병, 상등병, 병장) (무급) / 실업자 / 무직	(무급)

Figure 2.5. A matchmaking company's table rating for men's occupation. Professional artists are ranked ninth, and people working in the art industry are ranked twelfth. These ratings can be easily found online.
Source: <http://pann.nate.com/talk/331571003> (accessed April 26, 2017).

Several musicians point out that men tend to devote more time to music as they enter college because of concerns about the military service and jobs. In addition, they are required to participate in most of the departmental events because of the small number of male musicians in the field. For these reasons, they are deprived of opportunities, voluntarily and involuntarily, to broaden their perspectives or social network outside the *gugak* community. As many musicians note, the relative easiness of

dating someone in the same field could have allowed male musicians to stay in their comfort zone.³⁴ During a group interview with Jebi members, they started to talk among themselves about a blind date, and it seems to sum up the current situation of male musicians well:

Member A: Have you gone on a blind date?

Many: No.

Member B: Once.

Member C: I haven't. Not even once.

Member D: I struggled a lot to do it once because I really hated this [not having gone on blind dates].

Member A: All of my female friends went on blind dates, but no one arranged it for men!

Member F: I told you. We are below farmers [laugh].

Member A: 10 years ago? [laugh] I didn't know that. Isn't it true that people of that age [twenties] don't even check with matchmaking companies?³⁵

The member A threw out a question in the context of discussing impediments to meeting partners outside the community. Blind dates are fairly common among young people in Korea, but only a few of members have done it “once after having some struggles.” Granted, there can be multiple reasons for the lack of the opportunity, but one reason seems clear: the discrepancy between the ideal masculinity and the reality. It is certain that multiple masculinities coexist in Korean society today, but there are hierarchies between masculinities: certain types of masculinities are thought to be “ideal” and more valued than others. In the next chapter, drawing on Connell (2005), I analyze male

³⁴ Many musicians note that it is common for male *gugak* musicians to date and marry someone within the *gugak* community. The lack of male musicians is what allows this trend. I, too, have witnessed that most of the male *gugak* musicians with whom I have an acquaintance are married to *gugak* musicians or someone in a related field.

³⁵ Matchmaking companies provide services to find marriage partners for their customers by using personal information and preferences.

gayageum players' experiences as a tension between hegemonic masculinity and subordinate masculinities.

Chapter 3. Living and Surviving as Male *Gayageum* Players

In the previous chapter, I have discussed male *gayageum* players' experiences in six distinct categories. Each case is unique to male *gayageum* players; however, at the same time, these experiences are a microcosm of the current state of the younger generation. From a few years ago, neologisms such as “*7po sedae*” (a generation giving up seven things), “*hel Joseon*” (hell Joseon), and “*sujeoron*” or “*sujeo gyegeumnon*” (spoon class theory) are frequently used by the younger generation themselves to depict their rough reality and to criticize the regressive aspects of society that they face today. In these circumstances, men are not likely to achieve what they have believed to be a standard or ideal model of masculinity that is also widely accepted in Korean society. To put it another way, most men in their twenties and thirties are deprived of a chance to enact “hegemonic masculinity,” but still envision themselves enacting that.

According to R. W. Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity refers to one particular form of masculinity, which is culturally exalted above others. Connell emphasizes that hegemonic masculinity “embodies a ‘currently accepted’ strategy” and argues that the construction of new hegemonic masculinity is possible when another form of masculinity challenges the old form and becomes dominant (ibid.: 77). In other words, the currently dominant form of masculinity—patriarchy—can be challenged when its bases are eroded. Considering the set of gender expectations currently dominating Korea, male *gayageum* players may seem far from enacting hegemonic masculinity. I argue, however, that their attitudes and experiences are examples of the tension between subordinate masculinity (reality) and hegemonic masculinity (ideal).

In this chapter, I first investigate the current social problems pervasive among the younger generations in Korea. In so doing, I demonstrate how male *gayageum* players try to enact hegemonic masculinity and argue that their experiences exemplify the crisis of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary Korean society. In the last section, I interrogate the ways in which the male *gayageum* players navigate their career within a female-dominated realm. I argue that their image as presented in their public behavior is part of their effort to advance in the female-dominated environment by emphasizing their masculinity. I analyze their experiences and behavior by using the concept of horizontal segregation and examine what it means to be “masculine” for the male musicians and within the *gugak* community as well as in Korean society at large.

3.1. Understanding the Experiences of Male Gayageum Players in Korean Society

Contemporary social problems of young people are epitomized by the neologisms that I briefly mentioned above: “*7po sedae*,” “*hel Joseon*,” and “*sujeoron*” or “*sujeo gyegeupron*.” The term “*7po sedae*” began to be used to refer to the younger generation in their twenties and thirties (2030 *sedae*). The term is a combination of two Korean words “*pogi*” (to give up) and “*sedae*” (generation), referring to a generation that gives up seven things: dating, marriage, childbirth, owning a home, social relationships, dreams, and hopes. From “*3po sedae*” (giving up dating, marriage, and childbirth) and “*5po sedae*” (additionally giving up owning a home and social relationships), the younger generation has faced a society that forces them to give up their dreams and hopes. Today, they call themselves “*Npo sedae*” (*enpo sedae*), indicating that they face a situation that

makes them give up a number of things (n things) that they value (Hong Seokho 2015; Jeon Hyojin 2015; Lee Soa 2015).

“Hell Joseon” and “spoon class theory” also reflect a rough reality of the younger generation. Hell Joseon is a combination of the English word hell and the former official name of Korea, Joseon. By calling their country Joseon and a hell, young people express their frustration about misery and an unfair social structure, reproducing the rigid caste system of premodern Korea. Spoon class theory (*sujeoron* or *sujeo gyegeumnon*) describes a reality that one’s socioeconomic status is determined by the assets of their parents. One’s life is determined based on which spoon was s/he born with. Individuals are divided into four classes, ranging from a gold (*geum*), silver (*eun*), and bronze (*dong*) spoon to a dirt (*heuk*) spoon (Jeong Jeonghoon 2016; So Younghyeon 2016; Hyejin Kim 2017).¹ Frustration after facing the rigid social structure has led to a “*tal Hanguk*” (or “*tal Joseon*,” escape from Korea) phenomenon. According to a survey by JTBC, among 21,000 participants mostly in their twenties and thirties, 88 percent answered that they have considered emigration to other countries because they do not like Korea. 93 percent of participants answered that they have felt ashamed of Korea (Jeong Jeyoon 2015). Moreover, Jang Gangmyeong’s novel *Hanguki sireoseo* (Because I Do Not Like Korea, 2015), which tells a story about a woman who emigrated to Australia because she did not like Korea, became a best-selling book, attracting a lot of attention from the media. What do these issues tell us about Korean society and the younger generation?

These neologisms show that what has been considered as the “standard” lifecycle of Korean men is in the process of collapse. According to Bae Eun-Kyung, when a

¹ Recently, a diamond spoon has been added as being superior to a gold spoon.

person “finds a job, makes a stable income, gets married, becomes a parent, owns a home, and lives happily,” that was previously considered “normal.” But discourses on “*7po sedae*” delineate that such a “normal” lifecycle is no longer possible for the younger generation (2015: 16-17). In many cases, the failure to achieve this lifecycle is directly related to a crisis of masculinity. Ryu Seoung-Ho (2014) argues that more Korean men hold a more materialistic view than Korean women of the same age because men’s statuses are largely determined by their economic power. Men are required to be responsible for their families, and the responsibility and duty can be achieved through success in society. But it has to be a particular type of success which will free men from concerns about money and the hardships of life.

Eom Giho argues that men are assigned to two major roles based on the dominant heterosexual order in Korea: sons and fathers (husbands). As sons, they receive a symbolic authority as “the only heir in the earth” whose role and duty are to carry on their family name through marriage (2014: 367). The more they enjoy the status of “the only heir,” the more pressure they feel. As husbands and fathers in their family, they are often relegated to “someone who brings money” (ibid.: 368). In the Korean family, Eom argues that husbands and fathers are absent, and they are only breadwinners. Parenting is primarily the realm of mothers, and the role of fathers and husbands is limited to the economic aspects. For their economic success, the young males give up or defer a realm of intimacy, or build intimacy while constantly demonstrating that they have competitive assets within the neoliberal social structure. Meanwhile, the media portrays a friendly, caring husband who actively participates in parenting as an ideal husband. Young males,

who cannot live “like their fathers” in the labor market, face a demand for not living “like their fathers” (Bae Eun-Kyung 2015: 29).

Although only a few male musicians directly mentioned these neologisms during the interviews, many of these issues are closely related to their experiences. The advantages that the male *gayageum* players have enjoyed are based on the belief that they will become breadwinners in their family, and that women will depend on their husbands after marriage. Even though they are already marginalized in Korean society by their major, and their bubble started to burst as they graduated from college and entered the real labor market, they pursue hegemonic masculinity based on the patriarchal social order. Many male musicians think that they have to make money to take care of their family, while it is accepted for wives to be dependent on their husbands. Occasionally, such an attitude was revealed during interviews or informal conversations with male musicians:

Musician A: You look like Kim Jain [good-looking female athlete]. You speak English well, you are getting a PhD, getting married, living in the US. . . .

Hyunjin: I need to find a job. I need a job!

Musician A: Nah, it’s okay. Let your husband do the work. (October, 29, 2016)

Despite all the qualifications I had and my willingness to work, he denoted that work—making money—is a husband’s job. Moreover, at first glance, he seemed to compliment me on my appearance and language skills, but soon it became an expression of his enviousness towards someone who “gets married, lives in a foreign country, and does not have to work.”

As discussed above, several musicians have had much trouble in getting a job, especially as teachers, because of the social perception towards male *gayageum* players.

In order to survive and achieve economic success, they have devoted their time and efforts to music while giving up other aspects of life, such as leisure and social relationships. However, such devotion does not guarantee their success in society and recognition from women, the subjects of men's affection in a heteronormative society. One of the musicians told me that he has seriously considered giving up his career as a musician because he is not a "gold spoon"—his family cannot support him while he focuses solely on music. Making a stable income is one of the most crucial elements for men to demonstrate their masculinity, and the failure to accomplish the task leads them to have doubts about their future, such as dating and marriage.

Moreover, "*tal Hanguk*" is not foreign to musicians. Although the music they play is firmly rooted in Korea and they believe that they are the bearers of Korean culture, some musicians reveal their hope to escape from Korea and to live in a foreign country:

I will live in the US if there's a woman with a green card. . . . If a wife has a secure job [I can live in the US]. It's so hard to live these days. You know that I'm good at housework, right? There is an endless queue for a *tal Hanguk* rush. You made an excellent choice. Everyone will envy you more and more in the future. Don't come back to Korea, stay in the US. You should study hard and settle down there. You should know that you have succeeded so well. (Personal communication, June 20, 2016)

During an informal conversation with me, this male musician gave vent to his frustration. He said that he was exhausted in a competitive society, and wanted to marry a woman whom he could rely on, but it was even less likely to happen in a society where the patriarchal order still dominated. In this circumstance, emigration may be an attractive choice. Regardless of my reality, whether I confront economic hardships, an unpromising job market, and discrimination against foreigners in the United States, I easily become

the envy of people around me because I do not live in Korea. The fact that I live in the United States is enough of a reason for me to receive envious looks.

Although some musicians imply a different model of masculinities, hegemonic masculinity is the basis for the majority of male *gugak* musicians. For the younger generation, however, the feasibility of enacting hegemonic masculinity similar to that of their parents' generation is low. Recently, new types of masculinities have emerged, but there has not been a particular type of masculinity that takes the place of the existing hegemonic masculinity (Nho Nyung-Woo and Kim Woo-Jin 2014; Bae Eun-Kyung 2015; Kim Mi-Sun and Lee Kayoung 2016). In this context, the lack of alternative masculinities creates new social trends and problems, such as loser culture, survivalism, and misogyny.

3.1.1. Loser Culture

Loser culture is an apt example of a rupture in hegemonic masculinity. Being a loser has a double meaning. On the one hand, it refers to men who have lost in competition with “successful males” in a polarized society. On the other hand, they are men who are stigmatized as losers by women (Eom Giho 2014: 379). Males within the context of loser culture understand the characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity, and intentionally stay away from them. One of the crucial elements of loser culture is a smile of self-mockery and exaggerated parodies of oneself, a person whose characteristics are far from those of hegemonic masculinity. Ahn Sangwook (2011) points out, however, that such a distancing is not a denial or rejection of masculinity itself; rather, it can lead to an emergence of new masculinities, or to misogyny and a

defense of masculine identity. The rupture in hegemonic masculinity means that men are free from social norms, but it also means that there is no solid ground on which they can settle their identity. Hence, he argues that certain degrees of confusion and fear are inherent in this uncertainty, and the smile in loser culture is a way to confront and overcome the fear and uncertainty (Ahn Sangwook 2011: 87).

The self-mocking smile was observed in several places during the interviews. One of the most salient cases is in relation to dating and marriage. As discussed above, many male musicians have acknowledged their unpopularity as marriage partners and compared themselves to farmers who are thought to be far from hegemonic masculinity in contemporary Korean society. They feel pressures to have a secure job and a stable enough income to support their families, but they know that it is hard to achieve the goal that the society imposed on them. I tried to ask questions related to dating and marriage carefully, since these were private issues, but most of the musicians openly talk about these issues while making fun of themselves. The self-mocking smile often comes from describing themselves as “not-good-looking fools who know nothing but music and who are ranked below farmers.”

Another example is when musicians describe failing to get a job because they are seen as potential predators. During several interviews, the issue of being potential sexual predators came up repeatedly in a frustrated but humorous manner. For instance, one of the Chunhogarang members complained about prejudice against male *gayageum* teachers and said humorously, “We are all potential sexual predators. They are going to check our ankles first to see whether we have a charger there or not.” He added that he might have to “go to Starbucks to get the ankle bracelet recharged.” In Korea, sex offenders are

forced to wear electronic ankle monitors which must be charged at all times; otherwise the police will be notified. Even though he ended up cracking jokes, his jokes were based on his understanding of reality. As Ahn Sangwook (2011) argues, the fear and confusion in the uncertainty about the future that male *gayageum* players feel are manifested as a form of a smile.

3.1.2. Survivalism

The strong pursuit of hegemonic masculinity, accelerated by the lack of alternative masculinities, has also created survivalism among the younger generation. Kim Hong Jung (2015) argues that survival is the central problem of younger people. Discourses on survival or falling behind (*saengjon* or *nago*) are the basis of their everyday life, and competition is a key to divide the two. In a society where economic problems become the most crucial issues, the young people have struggled to get a stable job, or, to be more specific, to avoid the “failed situation” represented by unemployment. In order to avoid failure, accumulating “*seupek*” (qualifications) has become one of the most important tasks for the young people,² while the realm of intimacy, such as dating, marriage, childbirth, and parenting, is treated as a “risk” which needs to be managed logically (Kim Hong Jung 2015: 190). Many universities have become “institutions for raising future employers,” and university students devote everything to building better *seupek*. Individual identity is replaced with *seupek*, and people are not different from machines with specifications demanded by society (Han, Choi, and Kim 2011).

² “*Seupek*” (spec.) came from the English word “specification.” In Korea, it refers to a list of qualifications that are required to get a job.

Gugak musicians are not an exception to survivalism. As many musicians point out, after entering college male musicians tend to devote more time to music to win competitions, to prepare solo recitals, and eventually to get a job. Several musicians emphasize their efforts, in order to receive credit for what they have achieved. In many cases, marriage is postponed until they secure their jobs and make a stable income. I should point out that survivalism is prevalent among both men and women. One difference, however, is that women tend to seek other options broadly outside their major, while men tend to stay within *gugak*. In contemporary Korean society, passion and dreams are emphasized as the ethics of self-realization, but often they are used to justify one's failure by passing the buck to individuals following the neoliberal social order (Chung Gene-woong 2014). In this social atmosphere, the success or failure of musicians comes down solely to their efforts, not the absurdity of social systems.

3.1.3. Misogyny

An increase in misogyny can be interpreted in a similar vein. Kate Manne argues that misogyny occurs when women fail to live up to men's standards—patriarchal ideology. It “operates within a patriarchal social order to police and enforce women's subordination, and to uphold male dominance” (Manne 2017: 33). In other words, misogyny is closely related to the crisis of hegemonic masculinity within a patriarchal society. In Korea, starting from a “*doenjangnyeo*” (bean paste woman) discourse in the early 2000s, a “... *nyeo sirijeu*” (... woman series) has continuously intensified misogyny. Initially, the “... *nyeo sirijeu*” was used to criticize young women who crave Chanel handbags—a symbol of conspicuous consumption—and consume Starbucks

coffee—a symbol of vanity. But it has become diversified, including different types of women who are opposed to hegemonic masculinity and the patriarchal social order.

The term “*gimchinyeo*” (kimchi woman) is currently used and spread through online communities to refer to a woman who demands men’s economic power, is too self-centered, deviates from sexual norms, is incompetent, and is a member of “feminist organizations” which are often perceived to be anti-men. *Gimchinyeo* is often used with its counterpart “*gaenyeomnyeo*” (rational woman), which is similar to the virgin and whore dichotomy. *Gaenyeomnyeo* refers to a woman who internalizes and practices the Confucian and patriarchal values. Discourses on *gimchinyeo-gaenyeomnyeo* are often focused on economic aspects, especially in relation to marriage (Kim Soo-ah and Kim Sae-Eun 2016).³ Several scholars have argued that this “ . . . *nyeo sirijeu*” (“ . . . woman series,” as in kimchi woman and rational woman) reflects the reality of young males who feel uneasy about employment uncertainty caused by young females’ advance into careers in society (Eom Giho 2011; Yoon Bora 2015; Kim Soo-ah and Kim Sea-Eun 2016). Also, it reveals that the patriarchal order still remains powerful despite the collapse of the male breadwinner model (Bae Eun-Kyung 2015: 27).

Although no male *gayageum* players directly show a misogynistic attitude, their uneasy feelings about the advance of female players has been found among the musicians. Changhwan notes that there are only a few male *gayageum* players actively performing today. Most small ensembles prefer men to play wind instruments, and in those cases, female *gayageum* players are preferred to “balance” the ensembles.

³ When a woman suggests a desired salary for men, she is labeled as *gimchinyeo* and receives hostile criticism.

Consequently, male *gayageum* players are alienated and have limited opportunities in their careers. It could have been hard for male musicians to frankly speak about their feelings towards women because I am a female researcher as well as a female *gayageum* player.

In casual conversations, however, I could notice a certain degree of *gimchinyeo-gaenyeomnyeo* discourses from at least some musicians. For instance, a male musician told me that I would be a “good wife and mother” after I told him that I would not spend much money on my wedding (personal communication, June 27, 2016). I knew that people spend a lot of money for their weddings, but I was puzzled about what made him think like that. Another day, he said, “Wives should raise their kids well at home. Don’t they feel pity for their husbands? That’s not the family that I’m thinking of. Husbands are not machines for earning money. I shouldn’t have a baby or shouldn’t live in Seoul” (personal communication, July 16, 2016). He criticized those who treat men as “money making machines” and do not even appreciate men’s efforts. Simultaneously, however, he emphasized women’s role as mothers at home. I could understand the meaning of being a “good wife and mother,” as he mentioned earlier. In comparison to other women who spend a lot of money for their wedding, I am a “rational” woman (*gaenyeomnyeo*). His attitude is far from extreme, but resembles, to some degree, those who criticize *gimchinyeo* for being too materialistic.

Although his comment is largely based on a patriarchal social order, it also reveals a slight change in perspective towards men’s role in society. If it were in the 1980s, he probably would not have complained about men being money making machines, because this was believed to be men’s job regardless of how hard it was.

However, he questions and criticizes why the economic burden is solely imposed on men. He thinks that it is not right to reduce men's role in the family to money making machines, but cannot find other options. I believe that his case epitomizes the current state of the younger generation who can do nothing but hold onto hegemonic masculinity, based on the patriarchal social order, due to the lack of alternative masculinities, reflecting social changes. I have discussed male *gayageum* players' experiences in relation to the current social issues and the crisis of the existing hegemonic masculinity. In the following section, I examine how these experiences have influenced their careers and what kinds of strategies they employ in order to survive as male *gayageum* players.

3.2. Chunhogarang: Strategies to Survive

As described above, despite the advantages that they enjoyed at school, the ensemble members complain that there is almost no room for male *gayageum* players in the job market. I asked how they are going to make ends meet. Changhwan says, "That's why we're doing it [Chunhogarang]!" (July 9, 2016). Many members also note that they hope to find a breakthrough by participating in Chunhogarang. For Sooyun, Chunhogarang is what brought him back to the *gayageum* when he was agonized about his future after being discharged from the military service. He wanted to find a job and settle down as quickly as possible, and he believed that Chunhogarang would bring him opportunities to perform the *gayageum* on stage and, eventually, to get a job.

As an all-male *gayageum* ensemble, Chunhogarang holds a unique position in the *gugak* community as well as in Korean society in general. Their uniqueness is actively utilized for promotion of the group. Lee Jong-gil, director of Chunhoragang, introduces

the group as “the one and only *gayageum* ensemble for men in the entire world” (interview by *Arts Avenue*, Arirang TV, January 19, 2017). Also, the group states that they present a performance featuring male musicians’ inspiration and uniqueness, something that is beyond the common perception of *gayageum* performance as feminine. This is the male *gayageum* players’ strategy to survive in the predominantly female field of *gugak*, which I closely examine in this section.

Studies on men who enter a female-dominated sphere have gained more attention in other fields of study, including gender studies, education, psychology, and sociology. Extensive attention has been given to the so-called glass escalator (vertical segregation), but I want to focus on horizontal segregation in female-dominated occupations. Many scholars, including Christine Williams (1992, 1993, 1995), have examined how men in traditionally “feminine” occupations segregate themselves into masculine specialties, often better paying or prestigious specialties such as higher administrative positions, in order to maintain hegemonic masculinity despite their “nontraditional” roles.

However, sociologists Karrie Snyder and Adam Green (2008) argue that there is a pervasive pattern of horizontal sex segregation in female-dominated occupations. When men are in female-dominated occupations, they tend to navigate their profession through specialization in more “masculine” tasks, which are thought to be more “appropriate” to their sex. Their argument is not mutually exclusive to vertical segregation, but they emphasize the “horizontal sorting processes of acclimation” since these processes sort most male employees in female-dominated, bottom-heavy fields, such as nursing, because of a limit to the number of top-level positions in these fields.

Gugak, too, is a bottom-heavy field where only a few musicians can reach prestigious positions while most people, regardless of their gender, struggle to survive as ordinary musicians. Hence, I believe that horizontal segregation is a more appropriate and useful concept than vertical segregation to understand male *gugak* musicians, especially Chunhogarang's members. By examining Chunhogarang's music and performance on the whole, I argue that Chunhogarang is an example of this horizontal segregation, as they navigate their career by focusing on supposedly more masculine tasks that will distinguish them from female musicians.

3.2.1. Performative Behavior

“Of course, it is different!” When I asked Chunhogarang members whether they think men and women play the *gayageum* differently, many of them agreed immediately. Changhwan even says that he could distinguish male and female *gayageum* ensembles if they played the same piece because of the differences in touch, techniques, and detailed expression. He thinks that male *gayageum* players have a rough touch and are reserved when playing the instrument, while female players play delicately and beautifully. If women are good at playing arpeggios as if “marbles are rolling” [*guseuri gulleogadeut*], men play them as if “[bumpy] stones are rolling” [*dori gulleogadeut*]. He notes that there are certain expression and techniques that are hard for male players to capture, and male players find their own niche instead of competing with female players in the same domain. Like Changhwan, other members also acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses in playing the *gayageum* as male *gayageum* players.

As Director Lee Jong-gil notes, Chunhogarang aims to present a very traditional interpretation of Korean traditional music to establish a new genre for men (interview by *Arts Avenue*, Arirang TV, January 19, 2017). One of the characteristics of the new genre is the avoidance of the 25-string *gayageum*, and the use of the 12- and 18-string *gayageum* instead. There are four types of *gayageum* frequently played today: 12-string *jeong-ak gayageum* for court/literati music, 12-string *sanjo gayageum* for folk music, and 18- and 25-string *gayageum* for newly composed music. Among the four, Chunhogarang chooses to play the 12- and 18-string *gayageum*, while avoiding the 25-string *gayageum*. Because of its wide range and relatively large volume, the 25-string *gayageum* is preferred for new compositions, and is perhaps one of the most popular instruments today.

Nonetheless, several members note that many features of the 25-string *gayageum* are more favorable to women than men. One of the reasons stems from the current performance practice for the instrument. Hyungsub says that it has become too sexualized:

Hyungsub: For the most, audiences want to see female *gayageum* players wearing sleeveless dresses. For example, let's say a 25-string *gayageum* trio is invited to an evening event at Samsung C&T. Think about men wearing suits playing the 25-string *gayageum*.

Sooyun: No, no. It's too somber.

Hyungsub: It's somber.

Sooyun: I wouldn't like it either.

Hyungsub: Sleeveless dresses must come to invoke "Wow!" [in the audiences]. But I guess no one would come if we are invited. If Chunhogarang performs there, well, I'm not sure [if audiences would welcome us]. (June 27, 2016)



Figure 3.1. Five female *gayageum* players of the Sookmyung Gayagum Orchestra wear sleeveless dresses while playing the Beatles’ “Let It Be” at *Gugak Rakrak* (aired December 1, 2012). The Sookmyung Gayagum Orchestra is one of the first female *gayageum* ensembles who have contributed to shaping current images of *gayageum* ensembles. Source: <https://youtu.be/PPZdbcw3Tzc> (accessed June 2, 2017).

Wearing revealing dresses is one of the factors, but Hyungsub is even more critical of the prevailing expectations for performers’ gracious—or “feminine”—bodily movements. Specifically, he points out female musicians’ hand movements that slowly draw a circle in the air after plucking strings. Although this differs from person to person and music to music, it is common to see female players moving their bodies softly, following the musical flow. For instance, the female *gayageum* quartet Yeoul’s performance at *Gugak Hanmadang* (Korean Traditional Music Concert, KBS1, aired August 1, 2015) demonstrates the gracious bodily movements, including hand movements. While playing “Kkumgil,” mellow music in a slow tempo for the 25-string *gayageum*, both music and performers’ movements are soft and smoothly connected throughout the performance, not to mention their presentation with smiley faces and sleeveless dresses. To be more specific, their hand movements tend to slowly draw a circle in the air; this is what Hyungsub responds to critically (Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.2. *Gayageum* quartet Yeoul performing at *Gugak Hanmadang* (Korean Traditional Music Concert, KBS1, aired August 1, 2015).



Figure 3.3. The right-hand movements of a Yeoul member. She lifts her right hand after plucking a string and slowly and smoothly moves in a circular motion (clockwise from top left). This motion can be done with the right and left hand individually or both hands simultaneously, depending on the type of music.

Hyungsub criticizes the expectation that everyone has to follow the same hand movements as if this is a set rule, and notes that the current performance practice for the 25-string *gayageum* is a disadvantage for male *gayageum* players:

Initially, this is a problem. Why do we all have to play with the two hands like that [lifting hands in a circular motion]? . . . Men can't help but be at a disadvantage because everyone comes from the same approach. It seems that such a hand movement is meant to be a part of the music—something that's fragile and lovely. . . . Sound itself is a problem, but the feeling [of music is more problematic]. We can't make the best of it. But *sanjo* is nothing like that. It has to be more serious, which means there are more advantages for male players. If it's okay to play the 25-string *gayageum* like this [making a static hand gesture as if playing *sanjo*], that's fine with us. But if we have to play it like this [slowly moving in a circular motion], this is not for us, and this is why male players say that they can't play the 25-string *gayageum*. (June 27, 2016)

Because of this prevailing perception of the 25-string *gayageum*, Chunhogarang members have aimed at presenting their performance as more serious by wearing formal suits on stage. But the reaction from other musicians and critics was rather disappointing: they were told that their performance was “too much like students.” It was Chunhogarang's deliberate decision to avoid exaggerated body movements on stage. Their performance was seen, however, as lacking professionalism and not being ready for the public stage, as if students were playing at a school recital.

Hyungsub thinks that these reactions reveal how much people associate the 25-string *gayageum* with bodily movements and fancy costumes, and argues that the kind of perception should be changed:

I know it's unfamiliar to them [those who criticized their performance]. But I do think that what we did should be supported and become a norm in our community. Because of the stereotypes that the existing *gayageum* ensembles have established, if we do something different, people will be full of doubts when they see us. I want to point out that that's a problem, but when I receive such criticism at informal gatherings, I just say “Okay, I understand that.” But I don't really agree with them. (June 27, 2016)

Also, he points out a tendency for performative elements, such as costumes and body movements, to receive more attention than the quality of music itself:

Of course, if wearing suits is an issue, I could wear *hanbok* [traditional dress]. But I don't think what kind of costume I wear represents the kind of performance I do. Music should be the main focus, not other elements. A performance becomes successful when we can deliver our feelings and intentions to the audiences through sounds. But all they talk about is things like how we don't make the hand movements and how our performance is like that of students because we wear black pants and white shirts. (June 27, 2016)

Sooyun adds that because of the short history of the 25-string *gayageum*, it is currently undergoing a transitional period where different styles of techniques compete against each other. However, he thinks that regardless of the winner of this fight, the current condition makes it hard for men to lead the practice of the 25-string *gayageum* and to switch it to be favorable to men. Even if male players applied the same bodily movements to their performance, they would not be as competitive as female players.

Junhoe agrees that female players are better suited for the 25-string *gayageum*, but he gives a different reason. He finds that many male players give up playing the 25-string *gayageum* because the space between the strings is narrower than on the 12- and 18- string *gayageum*, which makes it uncomfortable to pluck the strings with their relatively larger and thicker fingers. It is less of an issue for him, however, because he believes that men are better positioned for playing pieces with large leaps with their bigger hands. Instead, he thinks that the actual reason for men's avoidance of the 25-string *gayageum* is because it requires a continuous time commitment.

Many *gugak* musicians I have interviewed believe that for good *sanjo* players, innate talents are crucial in addition to their efforts, but that the 25-string *gayageum* is an

acquired skill where the performance can be improved in proportion to the amount of time spent practicing. It is very common for *gugak* that musicians to play one particular school of *sanjo* for their entire life, since there is a “feeling” that musicians can acquire with their maturity. One of the musicians explains:

Playing traditional music well could take more than ten years. But once you understand the “feeling,” you can hang around as long as you don’t lose the feeling. There is a huge difference in playing traditional music with the understanding of the feeling and without it. You just have to be enlightened. It’s all about the enlightenment, not to mention the innate talents [as a prerequisite for great musicians]. (August 13, 2016)

Contrary to the prevailing belief about a good *sanjo* player, many musicians think that a crucial aspect of the 25-string *gayageum* is articulation with the left and right hands based on technical skills, something that one can acquire and improve through practice.

Many male *gayageum* players believe that it sounds good if men play court music or *sanjo* with their powerful styles, but if they play the 25-string *gayageum* with the same strength, the sounds will “break” and be unclear.⁴ For men to play the 25-string *gayageum* well, they would have to adjust their strength, but he believes that because of the “general characteristics of men,” that they are less delicate and sensitive than women, they tend to give up playing the instrument.

Seonin, a male *gayageum* player in Jebi, supports Junhoe’s view. For *daegeum* players, having larger hands is an advantage because one can easily reach distant finger holes. On the contrary, the larger hands of male players are cumbersome for playing the narrowly placed strings of the *gayageum*, which simultaneously requires detailed

⁴ This is an English translation of the Korean term “*kkaejida*.” If you pluck a string too hard, it creates a noise as a bridge vibrates on the wood. In Korean, people describe this noise as “*soriga kkaejida*” (sounds are breaking).

expression. He often mistakenly touched incorrect strings, and to avoid that, he ordered a customized *gayageum* suited to his hands. The standard *gayageum* has strings that are 1 centimeter (approximately 0.4 inches) apart, but the strings are 1.5 centimeters (approximately 0.6 inches) apart on his customized *gayageum*. He notes that although he rarely makes mistakes in touching the wrong strings anymore after customizing, another issue arises—it becomes hard to play faster notes, especially on the 25-string *gayageum*. This is critical because many pieces for this instrument require virtuosic—often fast—finger techniques. Although he is one of a few male *gayageum* players who is known for being a skilled 25-string *gayageum* player, he confesses several difficulties in overcoming his weaknesses.

It seems that, however, the most crucial reason for their preference for the 12- and 18-string *gayageum* is to achieve their ultimate goal: to present a more traditional interpretation of *gugak* in order to establish a new genre for men. Hyungsub believes that once they start a male ensemble, they have to “make it like men.” Emphasizing creation based on tradition, he differentiates Chunhogarang from “*pyujeon*” (fusion) ensembles, which he defines as “those who play slightly rearranged music—usually well-known Western music—which often involves a chord progression, instead of creating new music by themselves.” Considering the fact that many fusion ensembles, following Hyungsub’s definition of fusion, use the 25-string *gayageum*, as an ensemble centered around tradition their preference for the 12-string *gayageum* seems inevitable.



Figure 3.4. A group photo of Chunhogarang with two 12-string *gayageum*: the *sanjo gayageum* (left) and the *jeong-ak gayageum* (middle). Source: Chunhogarang’s Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/chunhogarang/> (accessed June 5, 2017).

Their preference for the 12-string *gayageum* is also reflected in their group photos (Figure 2.4 and Figure 3.4). Hyungsub notes that they decided not to bring the 25-string *gayageum* to a studio because they were certain that their music is firmly rooted in tradition. It does not mean that they will completely remove the 25-string *gayageum* from their repertoire. In fact, they played several pieces for the 25-string *gayageum* at their debut concert. However, as they pursued a “non-feminine” interpretation of the instrument, they faced some criticism for “not doing it right.” Redirecting their focus to the 12-string *gayageum*, which suits their purpose better, Hyungsub says that they will continuously present their own interpretation of the instrument and *gugak* step by step, and believes that, eventually, they will contribute to changing the rigid perception that currently permeates society.

3.2.2. Performance Analysis: “Chudeuri”

I have discussed the reasons for Chunhogarang’s preference for the 12-string *gayageum*. In this section, I briefly provide an overview of their performance styles, and examine this more specifically by analyzing one of their main pieces: “Chudeuri.” In general, in comparison to the examples of female *gayageum* ensembles, Chunhogarang members are on the whole more restrained in their facial expressions, body movements, and clothing. Their strategic choice of the 12-string *gayageum* allows them to adhere to more traditional techniques, which use minimal hand movements. Although they lift their hands occasionally as the music flows, they use quick straight up-and-down motions, instead of drawing a circle as female musicians do. In addition, they prefer heterophonic music to homophonic music. They believe that heterophonic music, which resembles traditional music, can maximize their strengths, such as being able to produce clear and solid sounds without big, expressive motions.



Figure 3.5. Chunhogarang plays “Chudeuri” at their debut concert at National Gugak Center on May 22, 2015. Source: <https://youtu.be/37PxfVL5U7c> (accessed June 23, 2017).

These characteristics are well featured in “Chudeuri,” composed by a member of Chunhogarang, Lee Jun. Combining “*chu*” (鍾, to balance) and “*Dodeuri*” (a title of a category of traditional music), this piece seeks to balance between traditional sounds and a contemporary *gayageum* ensemble while upholding the *Dodeuri* form which features repetition with variation. It borrows a motif from four *Dodeuri*-type pieces, including “Utdodeuri,” “Gyemyeongarak dodeuri,” “Yangcheong dodeuri,” and “Ujogarak dodeuri,” and is played on four types of *gayageum*: *jeong-ak gayageum*, *goeum gayageum* (higher register), *cheol gayageum* (metal string), and *jeoeum gayageum* (lower register).

Composer and *gayageum* player Lee Jun notes that he came up with *jeong-ak* (court/literati music) to meet the concept of Chunhogarang—a male *gayageum* ensemble—because he thinks that “women are far better than men in playing the 25-string *gayageum*” (personal communication, June 1, 2017), which corresponds to the previous discussion on Chunhogarang’s preference for the 12-string *gayageum*. Additionally, pointing out the scarcity of 12-string *gayageum* ensembles after the Seoul Saeul Gayageum Trio in 1989, he thinks that the 12-string *gayageum* itself has not been fully explored, thus leading him to engage more with the instrument before moving on to the 25-string *gayageum*.

The use of the 12-string *gayageum* and the motif from *Dodeuri* allow the performers to adhere to traditional techniques with relative ease. Especially, as the *jeong-ak gayageum* part uses melodies that are almost identical to the original “Utdodeuri” and “Yangcheong dodeuri,” they can easily maintain the traditional style of performance, with minimal hand and body movements, and techniques, such as *jeonseong* and

toeseong.⁵ Although this piece includes the three reformed *gayageum*—*goeum*, *jeoeum*, and *cheol gayageum*—the shapes and techniques of the instruments are very close to those of the traditional *jeong-ak* and *sanjo gayageum*: they all have 12 strings and use techniques from the *sanjo gayageum*. Since the players understand that “Chudeuri” is not a traditional piece, but a new piece based on tradition, they sometimes lift their hands slightly, something which is strongly discouraged in traditional pieces. In comparison to the 25-string *gayageum* performance, however, the performers’ movements are much more restricted, and the big, free movements observed in typical 25-string *gayageum* performance are absent from “Chudeuri.”

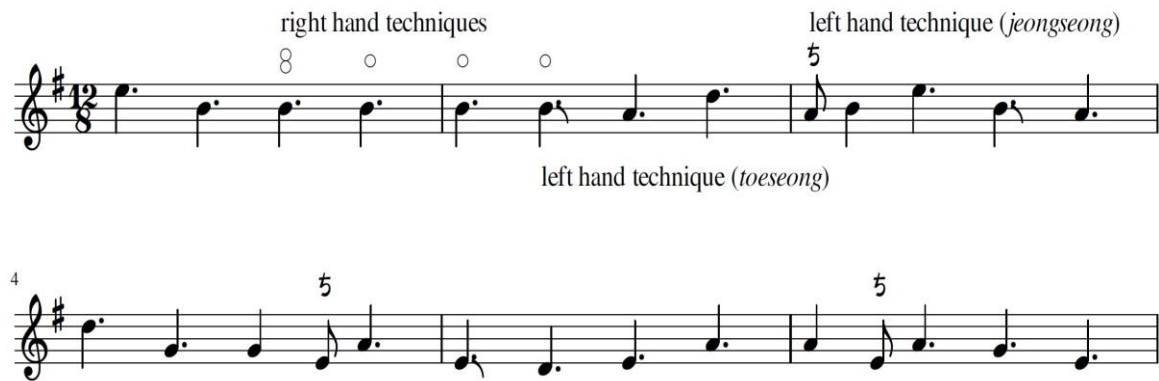


Figure 3.6. Motif from “Utdodeuri” played on the *jeong-ak gayageum* in “Chudeuri” (measure 17-22). This part is identical to the original “Utdodeuri” in terms of its melody, *sigimsae*, and tempo. Since *sigimsae* signs are omitted in the original score, I added them according to their actual performance practice.

⁵ Both *jeonseong* and *toeseong* are left-hand skills. *Jeonseong* refers to a rapid alternation between a note and the note above by quickly pressing a string down and releasing it. It sounds similar to the upper mordent. *Toeseong* refers to a descending slide to smoothly connect a note to the note below by pulling a string and slightly extending it.



Figure 3.7. Motif from “Yangcheong dodeuri” played on the *jeong-ak gayageum* in “Chudeuri” (measure 56-60). It combines the beginning and the end of the original piece.



Figure 3.8a and 3.8b. Close-ups of the *jeong-ak gayageum* techniques adopted in “Chudeuri”: the right hand thumb technique (left) and the right hand index finger technique with the left hand *toeseong* technique (right).

In addition to the use of particular instruments, to maximize their strengths as male *gayageum* players Jun focuses more on *sigimsae* (ornaments) and modulation than on detailed finger techniques.⁶ The motif from the four *Dodeuri* pieces is carried out by using three *gayageum* in turn. First, the *jeong-ak gayageum* plays “Utdodeuri” and the

⁶ Before the 1980s, *sigimsae* was special terminology, referring to a unique style of vocalization, including both techniques and ornaments. However, scholars in the 1950s misinterpreted *sigimsae* simply as ornaments, and this narrow definition of *sigimsae* is widely used in *gugak* today (Lee Bo-hyung 1999). Since Lee Jun also uses this term for ornaments, I use the narrow definition of *sigimsae* in this chapter.

goeum gayageum plays “Gyemyeongarak dodeuri,” immediately followed by “Ujogarak dodeuri” on the *cheol gayageum*. Towards the climax, the *jeong-ak gayageum* plays “Yangcheong dodeuri,” and finally all players play “Utdodeuri” in unison toward the end. Although those who are familiar with the *Dodeuri* pieces may recognize the motifs as they listen, each motif is slightly altered by changing the *sigimsae* and *jo* (modes).

“Gyemyeongarak dodeuri” is rearranged by using the *ujo* mode, known for its upright and “masculine” melodic progressions.⁷ *Jo* is a complex term whose definition includes not only scales, but also performance techniques, melodic progressions, and dynamics (Kim Haesuk 1982: 47). Thus, being rearranged in the *ujo* mode entails changes in multiple aspects of the music. Although it varies significantly for different instrumental genres (Sim Ji-woo 2013), there are a few features that characterize *ujo*. In general, *ujo* is thought to be “masculine,” and its overall atmosphere is described as being majestic, upright, and strong as opposed to *gyemyeonjo*, which is characterized by wide vibrato and known for its melancholic, or “feminine,” feeling. To be more specific, *ujo* features the following characteristics: 1) emphasizing the beginning of a passage by using techniques such as *ssaraeng* and *dwijipgi*;⁸ 2) avoiding a wide and heavy *nonghyeon* (vibrato); 3) avoiding slides in descending forms; and 4) avoiding intense embellishments, just to name a few (You SunMi 2010). These first three characteristics are well featured in the melody played on the *goeum gayageum*. Although intense

⁷ *Ujo* has multiple meanings in relation to different modes and emotions (Lee Bo-hyung 1998), and this is one of the most widely known meanings.

⁸ *Ssaraeng* is a right-hand technique to play an indicated note after quickly playing a note an octave lower. Similar to *ssaraeng*, *dwijipgi* is a right-hand technique to play an indicated note after quickly playing a note an octave higher. In *sanjo* notation adopting the Western notation system, it is written as a grace note with an oblique stroke.

embellishments are not used in this passage, it seems hard to conclude whether this is a part of the rearrangement, since the original “Gyemyeongarak dodeuri” itself has a rather plain melodic line without any intense embellishments.



Figure 3.9. Melodic motif from “Gyemyeongarak dodeuri” used in “Chudeuri” (at about 2:50, measures 24-27). The *ssaraeng* and *dwijipgi* techniques (indicated with a red circle) appear three times, at the beginning of each measure except the last measure.

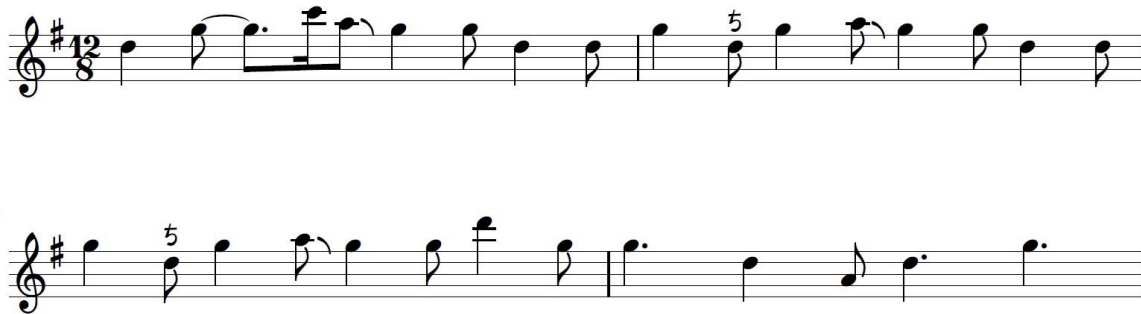


Figure 3.10. The original melody of “Gyemyeongarak dodeuri” used in “Chudeuri,” transcribed from traditional musical notation (Choi Chung-ung 2010) and transposed up to match the key of “Chudeuri.”

Although several notes are added to “Chudeuri” (Figure 3.9) and the tempo has been slightly increased (from ♩ = 120 to ♩ = 140), it is not difficult to locate the original melody (Figure 3.10) embedded in the new piece. The first three measures of Figure 3.9

are from the beginning of “Gyemyeongarak dodeuri,” and the last measure is borrowed from one of the melodic cadences in the original piece. In comparison to the original melody of “Gyemyeongarak dodeuri,” the melody adopted in “Chudeuri” clearly demonstrates some of the characteristics of *ujo* described above. First, the *ssaraeng* technique is added at the beginning of each melodic phrase—marked as a measure. This is one of the traditional techniques which ideally makes the most powerful and solid sounds at the beginning of new segments.

Moreover, not only does this passage have fewer notes with vibrato, but the vibrato is shallow and fast. Although “Gyemyeongarak dodeuri” is originally not known for its wide vibrato, the overall amount of vibrato is shrunk even more as a result of the addition of the *ssaraeng* technique. *Toeseong*, or descending slides, are also absent from this passage in “Chudeuri” because they could give a melancholic feeling, as opposed to *gyemyeonjo*. By adding the *ssaraeng* technique and lessening the existing embellishments, such as vibrato, *jeonseong*, and *toeseong*, “Chudeuri” successfully creates the “masculine” atmosphere of *ujo*, allowing Chunhogarang members to maximize their strengths as male *gayageum* players.

Immediately following the motif from “Gyemyeongarak dodeuri,” the *cheol gayageum* part uses a motif from “Ujogarak dodeuri.” If the previous passage is altered using *sigimsae* of *ujo*, the motif from “Ujogarak dodeuri” is altered with *sigimsae* of *gyeongdeureum* to give a lively feeling. *Gyeongdeureum* is known for its lively and cheerful atmosphere comparing to other modes, such as *ujo* and *gyemyeonjo*. Lee Jaesook writes, in the *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, that *gyeongdeureum* uses a pentatonic scale (GACDE), and in order to descend from C to G, it must pass A, which is a unique

melodic contour that distinguishes it from others.⁹ This descending stepwise motion is expanded and well embedded in “Chudeuri” (Figure 3.11).



Figure 3.11. Melodic motif from “Ujogarak dodeuri” used in “Chudeuri” (3:09, measure 28-32). Descending melodies in red boxes demonstrate the characteristic melodic contours of *gyeongdeureum*.



Figure 3.12. The original melody of “Ujogarak dodeuri” used in “Chudeuri,” transcribed from traditional musical notation (Choi Chung-ung 2010) and transposed to match the key of “Chudeuri.”

⁹ Lee Jaesook. “Gyeongdeureum.” *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*.
http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Index?contents_id=E0002382 (accessed June 26, 2017).

As discussed above, “Chudeuri” demonstrates Chunhogarang’s performance aesthetic which aims to maximize male *gayageum* players’ strength, as distinguished from that of female *gayageum* players, such as men’s ability to produce solid and clear sounds without big motions. Through the use of the 12-string *gayageum* and the rearrangement of a motif from the four *Dodeuri*-type pieces, they adhere to more traditional techniques which do not require the expressive, often exaggerated, body movements that Chunhogarang members hope to avoid. Moreover, by changing the modes and *sigimsae* of the original pieces, they create a “masculine” atmosphere which further strengthens their identity as a male *gayageum* ensemble.

3.3. Chunhogarang As an Example of Horizontal Segregation

I have examined the strategies used by the male *gayageum* ensemble Chunhogarang to survive in a female-dominated field, *gugak*. Their performative behavior, demonstrated by analyzing “Chudeuri,” clearly reveals their awareness of the current performance practice and the general perception of *gayageum* performance, which does not always work favorably for male *gayageum* players. As discussed above, Hyungsub knows that audiences may find something lacking in their performance because it does not satisfy their expectations for graceful hand movements and fancy sleeveless costumes. Common reactions to their performance include surprise and curiosity at seeing nine male *gayageum* players on stage. Some audiences say that their performance is too dull, but others say that they enjoyed its seriousness. Before Chunhogarang’s debut in 2015, no all-male *gayageum* ensemble existed, whereas female

gayageum ensembles have mushroomed since the 1990s. These ensembles tend to play easy listening and familiar music using the 25-string *gayageum* while wearing fancy—sometimes revealing—dresses, contributing to creating today’s perception of a *gayageum* ensemble.

Thus, for Chunhogarang, getting rid of stereotypes about a *gayageum* ensemble is the foremost step that needs to be taken in order to survive in this environment. They have done this through making themselves distinct from female ensembles by accentuating the masculine qualities of the instrument and performance, such as playing the 12-string *gayageum* and avoiding large body movements as previously described. In other words, male *gayageum* players have found that current performance practice is seen as “inappropriate” to their sex, and have made a strategic choice to adopt more masculine techniques and music that are more “appropriate.” Therefore, I argue that they navigate their career in a largely “feminine” structure by adhering to what they perceive to be “masculine,” and this is an apt example of horizontal segregation in bottom-heavy fields such as *gugak* (Snyder and Green 2008).

Contrary to the belief that men in female-dominated realms will quickly reach the top of the hierarchy or achieve their goals, I argue that male *gayageum* players are no different from female players in battling for ways to survive as musicians.¹⁰ In the past, there could have been cases where male musicians enjoyed structural advantages that allowed them to quickly attain prestigious positions and authority in the field. Today,

¹⁰ This statement refers to average musicians in the *gugak* community today and does not include those who are considered musical prodigies. I have witnessed two male musicians—non-*gayageum* players—whose extraordinary talents, combined with their sex, led them to faster promotion.

however, some musicians are concerned about the feminization of *gugak* as more female musicians occupy positions of power across the board, which can determine the overall direction of the field. As the number of male *gugak* players has increased, except for a few lucky musicians who obtain permanent jobs, most musicians struggle at the bottom, where a horizontal sorting process provides more meaningful implications than a vertical sorting process, represented by a “glass escalator” (Williams 1992). Most male players, who have been ridiculed and treated differently—either positively or negatively—because of their sex, now play an active role in seeking ways to succeed in the field by reframing the current performance practice and presenting their specialization as appropriate to their “masculine” identity.

During the interviews, male musicians have mentioned the term “masculine” or “masculinity” (*namjadapge, namseongjeok*) several times as musicians, men, and/or husbands. But what do they mean when they use the term? As multiple masculinities can coexist in a given setting (Connell 1995), male *gayageum* players also exhibit multiple forms of masculinities in different settings. For instance, one of the Chunhogarang members has repeatedly announced his willingness to be a househusband if a woman makes enough money to support her family. Other players criticize statements that discount women’s efforts to succeed in the field, based on the belief that women do not need to work because they will quit their job once they get married. In conversations with them, I notice that parenting is no longer a realm of mothers alone, and they wish to be friendly, caring husbands and fathers. Moreover, several musicians acknowledge that they feel that they are more sensitive (*seomsehan*) and meticulous (*kkomkkomhan*)—

attributes often associated with femininity in Korea—in comparison to male non-music majors.

What seems ironic is that despite the nontraditional gender roles they perform and their efforts to broaden and reconstruct existing notions through their various actions, the male *gayageum* players support traditional masculinity, or hegemonic masculinity, in opposition to characteristics associated with traditional femininity, such as being gracious, delicate, and emotional. Although they break gender boundaries by choosing one of the most feminine instruments in *gugak*, their strategies to emphasize “masculine” qualities reveal their adherence to traditional norms of masculinity, such as being emotionally constricted, physically strong and powerful, independent, careless, and so on.

Shen-Miller, Olson, and Boling’s study (2011) of male nurses has useful implications for understanding this phenomenon. Their study shows that all participants—male nurses—make reference to traditional notions of masculinity when describing themselves and their experiences in the workplace. They note that the result of their research was surprising, because many scholars have stated that men’s preferences for traditional or nontraditional occupations are directly related to their attachment to masculine norms. Moreover, they argue that even if participants have received support for their nontraditional beliefs, they are asked to engage in work reinforcing traditional masculinity. This demonstrates how traditional notions of a gender role—masculinity in this case—are perpetuated across nontraditional occupations. Through multiple interconnected systems on different levels, such as legislation and policies in the workplace, interactions among the people, and the cultural blueprints of society, gender roles are valued and can affect one’s self-efficacy.

Like those male nurses, Chunhogarang members, too, received support from their families and teachers when they made an unusual instrument choice for men. Many of them note that they have overcome negative reactions from friends and acquaintances and have tried to broaden the limited notion of male *gayageum* players. It seems, however, that a series of experiences they have had has reinforced their need to consider what “masculinity” is supposed to be. In school, male students were asked, not only by their teachers but also by their female colleagues, to engage in physically demanding work, such as setting up a stage and carrying instruments. Their teachers told them to play “like a man,” meaning to play louder, tougher, and more powerfully, and led them to a better position for getting a job because they would be responsible for their family financially. Many musicians started the *gayageum* from an early age, and these experiences may have played a crucial role in internalizing “traditional” gender norms, affecting their identity and self-efficacy.

In 2015, a special issue of the journal *Sex Roles* on men in female-dominated vocations was published. In the introduction to the special issue, Shen-Miller and Smiler (2015) point out that most researchers have focused on men in nursing and elementary education, and urge scholars to examine a broader spectrum of female-dominated occupations. Hence, I believe that my discussion of male gugak musicians will contribute not only to scholarship on music but also to other fields such as gender studies, education, psychology, and sociology.

Chapter 4. Other All-Male *Gugak* Ensembles

Until the early 2000s, most male *gugak* ensembles were percussion groups, as percussion had been historically dominated by men. However, as the overall number of male *gugak* musicians has increased today, it is not hard to find diverse types of all-male *gugak* groups, such as Dongbangbaksa (Asian Scholars), who won several prizes in 2016 by incorporating *piri* (vertical bamboo double-reed) and jazz. Among those male groups, I discuss two groups in this chapter: Bulsechul and Acoustic Ensemble Jebi. Both groups are relatively large in size, compared to recent groups that are trios or quartets, and combine various instruments, not just percussion. Although these two groups debuted much earlier than Chunhogarang (2006 and 2009, respectively), their members are contemporaries of most Chunhogarang members, and some went to the same schools together. I believe that the stories of these two ensembles, whose performers are part of the same generation of male musicians who grew up in the *gugak* community in the late 1990s and early 2000s, provide more diverse perspectives to understand male *gugak* musicians currently in their late twenties and early thirties. In discussing Chunhagarang, some of the stories of these two groups have already been introduced above and are expanded in the following sections.

4.1. Bulsechul

I still remember when I first heard about Bulsechul (불세출) in 2007. I was a sophomore in college, and some of my friends were busy with preparing some kind of competition as an ensemble. Since I was preparing for a competition for solo *gayageum*

players, and competitions for new ensembles were not popular at that time, I did not pay much attention to what my friends were doing. Later, I realized that there was a newly launched competition called the “21st Century Korean Music Project,” sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and Gugak FM.¹ Out of curiosity, I looked up the participants and found a group called Bulsechul. There had been several young *gugak* ensembles, but Bulsechul caught my attention because they were the only group composed solely of men. The rest of the participating groups were either mixed-gender or all-female. The image of seven young male college students and recent graduates of a prestigious college, wearing white shirts and jeans, and holding their instruments—including the *gayageum* at the center—was unique enough to hold not only my attention but also that of others in the field (Figure 4.1).

Reflecting on the uniqueness of the group, the members state that they are connected with their “unprecedented extraordinary ties” (*bulsechului inyeon*) to each other, from which the name of the group came. The Korean word “*bulsechul*” refers to the extraordinariness of something that is hardly ever found in the world. As the term implies, the relationship between the members that I discuss below is unusual. Initially, Bulsechul began with six members, but currently it consists of eight male musicians: Lee Jun (*gayageum*), Jeon Wooseok (*geomungo*), Kim Jinwook (*daegeum*), Park Jeheon (*ajaeng*), Park Gyejeon (*piri*, *taepyeongso*, *saenghwang*), Kim Yongha (*haegeum*), Choi Deokryeol (composition, guitar), and Bae Jeongchan (percussion, *sori*).

¹ Since its beginning in 2007, the 21st Century Korean Music Project has been held every year.



Figure 4.1. Photo of Bulsechul when they participated in the 21st Century Korean Music Project in 2007. Source: the 21st Century Korean Music Project website. 2007 Competition. http://www.kmp21.kr/kmp21/?sub_num=1156 (accessed July 6, 2017).

The inception of Bulsechul is deeply connected to their having been male students of *gugak* in college. As discussed above, male students are associated with physical strength and often mobilized to work backstage. As they were among the few male students majoring in *gugak*, Bulsechul members, too, were expected to play this role. The original Bulsechul members were six friends from the Korea National University of Arts (K-Arts) Class of 2004.² When they were freshmen in college, they worked backstage at the senior recitals. Unlike in the previous years, in that year many senior students incorporated other media, such as video and theatre, into their recitals. These recitals were performed on a black box theatre stage, and this meant extra work for the male students for creating everything from stage props to lighting. They spent extra hours together every day, and naturally started a conversation about having their own

² It is equivalent to the Class of 2008 in the United States. In Korea, they are referred as the Class of 2004 (04 *hakbeon*), according to the year of admission.

performance, not just helping someone else's. After two years of working backstage, in their junior year they finally had their first performance as "Class of 2004, Male Students Recital" (04 *hakbeon namhaksaeng yeonjuhoi*), titled "Bulsechul."

There are seven major instruments needed for the most common ensembles in *gugak*, especially *jeong-ak*: *gayageum*, *geomungo*, *daegeum*, *piri*, *haegeum*, *ajaeng*, and *janggu*. It was an extraordinary coincidence that, in the K-Arts Class of 2004, there were male students majoring in each of these instruments.³ Although it seems to be changing today, this kind of combination of instruments in a male group was considered very rare because of the lack of male *gayageum* and *haegeum* players in the field. Moreover, as one of the two male *ajaeng* players went to serve in the military, they now had the right number of male students playing each of the major instruments. Wooseok says that it would have been more difficult to form a group if there were two or three male students playing the same instrument. He also emphasizes that they did not intentionally exclude female players—it was very natural for them to hang out and make music together because many of them were friends from middle and/or high school. Multiple factors coincided, allowing the birth of the ensemble, connected by their "unprecedented extraordinary ties" ("*bulsechul*"*ui inyeon*).

Every Korean man is obliged to serve in the military for approximately two years. So were the Bulsechul members. Fortunately and surprisingly, all members but Jun won competitions and were exempted from the military service. In 2010, as Jun went to the military service, the absence of the *gayageum* became a huge issue for Bulsechul, since

³ There was no male percussion player in the K-Arts Class of 2004, but Kim Yongha played the *haegeum* and percussion, being trained in both.

every instrument had its own role in every piece. Especially, one of the most popular pieces, “Pungryu dosi,” was in serious trouble because the *gayageum* played a crucial role from the beginning of the piece. Although it was common to find a substitute musician, they decided to leave the *gayageum* space vacant until Jun returned from the military service. After some trial and error, they rearranged the piece with other instruments replacing the *gayageum* parts. Deokryeol recalls that it was a painful time for Bulsechul (Choi Deokryeol 2017).

During the interview with Bulsechul, I noticed that their members seem to have dichotomized ideas of being masculine and feminine, similar to the case of Chunhogarang. For instance, Wooseok associates being detailed and soft with femininity and being rough and powerful with masculinity. Although he acknowledges that there is no benefit in dichotomizing masculinity and femininity, he believes that the gender diversity in *gugak* should be retained for the sake of artistic expressions. His comment is based on a belief that *gugak* has become gradually feminized because female musicians are so dominant in the field. Wooseok continues, saying that it seems like “mimicking a woman” when referring to a male musician who precisely duplicates what he learns from his female teacher. After constructing the idea of masculinity as opposed to femininity, it is noticeable that several members agree that they have “feminine” characteristics as “sensitive/detailed” artists. It reminds me of their pamphlet where the two terms “powerful” and “detailed” are printed alongside each other. It seems to me, however, that the term “detailed” could only be used after “powerful,” as they acknowledge their feminine characteristics only after affirming their masculinity.

Moreover, they believe that feminine and masculine characteristics—or simply one’s gender—influence one’s career choice. For instance, female musicians have more advantages in becoming teachers because “women are more detail-oriented and good at preparing for different career options.” On the other hand, men tend to be “more indifferent to other options and focus on their music.” Wooseok insists that male musicians might have benefited from *bajijeomsu* in school; however, in the job market, they face disadvantages, since “most schools *want* to hire women.” What Wooseok refers to is schools and universities that professionally teach *gugak* majors, such as Gugak National Middle and High School and major universities in Seoul such as K-Arts and Seoul National University.

I have already discussed male *gayageum* players’ difficulty in getting a teaching job because they are seen as potential predators. Most of their cases are, however, concentrated on non-*gugak* majors who play the *gayageum* as a hobby. Some of them surmise that students majoring in *gugak* may be less sensitive to their teachers’ gender: other factors, such as one’s position, skills, and reputation, are also taken into consideration, as teachers often have a huge impact on the students’ future. But it seems that the preference for female teachers can be expanded, encompassing professional faculty members at college-level institutions. It is certain that today most faculty positions in major universities are filled by female professor-musicians; however, there can be several factors that contributed to this result. It would be hard to tell whether candidates’ gender is a truly determining factor in most schools, since they would want to hire the best candidate for fostering the younger generation of musicians.

Whether this is a reliable account or not, one thing seems clear: male musicians find that their career options are more limited than those of female musicians. They think that women have more options to be performers or teachers, while such options are not available for men. When I asked Jun about male musicians' chances for becoming teachers, he responded cynically: "If they hire men, there will be nothing but sexual assault scandals will erupt" (*namja aedeul sikyeo bwatja seongchuhaeng sageonina teoji mwo*). He does not believe that male teachers would actually be involved in sexual scandals; instead, he criticizes such a view by strongly stating it with irony. Unless they completely switch their career path, most men in the *gugak* world are likely to be—and want to be—performers.

I believe that *gugak* majors have great potential to contribute to other fields of society using their expertise, but many of them seem to have little interest in exploring other options. I suspect that how they are trained may have influenced their views. Many *gugak* musicians told me that, regardless of their gender, they have continued to play their instruments because "that is the only thing that they can do." The majority of musicians entered the *gugak* field at a young age and were trained to be professional musicians for several years, as if this is everyone's ultimate goal. Through intensive training in *gugak*, one may be able to get a significant amount of knowledge about the music. But at the same time, it is not hard to hear from those who experienced the training at specialized institutions about the drawbacks of lacking knowledge outside of *gugak*.

Because of this inclination, I have observed that many college students experience a crisis when they face a discrepancy between reality and ideals as they start to seriously

think about their careers.⁴ A female *gayageum* player says that although she was concerned about taking a completely different path in college, in the end she returned and decided to pursue a further degree in *gugak* performance, because that was what she had been doing and could do the best (interview, August 12, 2016). Although it is not quite fair to compare men and women directly, since the number of female *gugak* musicians is incomparably larger than that of men, men tend to hold on to the idea of being a full-time musician more than women. Several male musicians note that men seem to focus more on their instruments as they age, while women tend to explore other possibilities. A male *geomungo* player even says, “We [his male friends] did not study much and just played the instruments [in high school and college]” (October 29, 2016).

Bulsechul members are full-time musicians, but they say that Bulsechul is not intended to make a profit. Then how do they maintain their standard of living? There are a few options to make one’s living from being a full-time musician, such as entering an orchestra, teaching private lessons, and being a session musician.⁵ In many cases, it is likely that they have to play certain music regardless of their personal preferences. For them, Bulsechul is a vent where they can pour out their thoughts, emotions, and ideals. The members differentiate Bulsechul from their main sources of income and emphasize the meaning of the ensemble and its performances. Gyejeon says that Bulsechul was a pastime when he was in his twenties, but as he became a head of his family, he became more fond of Bulsechul. But he also notes that he does not completely rely on the

⁴ Jobs that many *gugak* students consider ideal, such as major orchestras and faculty positions, are fully saturated and rarely have an open position.

⁵ Session musicians accompany singers, soloists, and small ensembles and substitute for a missing member of an ensemble. *Gugak* percussionists have more options, as they can accompany soloists at competitions and recitals where a drum accompaniment is necessary.

ensemble to earn a living. If he earns a profit from Bulsechul, that would be nice, but he considers it as a bonus.

4.1.1. Bulsechul's Music

Bulsechul introduces themselves as a *gugak* ensemble creating music utilizing various sources and forms from tradition while upholding the uniqueness of traditional music. As they declare, most of their music takes its motifs from traditional music, except for a few pieces they created specifically for plays. For instance, “Pungryu dosi” (Urban *Pungryu*), one of their most popular pieces, is based on tonalities of traditional music. Traditional music pieces are valuable sources for their inspiration: “Take 3” takes its motif from Seong Geumryon School of *gayageum sanjo*; “Sincheon pungnyu” takes its motif from *Daepungnyu*;⁶ and “Jiokga” (Song of Hell) takes its motif from “Jiokga” of *Ogugut* of the eastern coast.⁷ Moreover, some pieces are based on *jangdan* (rhythmic pattern): “Puneori” uses *puneori jangdan* of the eastern coast *gut*, and “Daseureum” uses diverse *jangdan*, including *gyeonggi dodanggut jangdan*.

Yongha, the leader of Bulsechul, says in an interview with Dong-A Ilbo that “Numerous *gugak* ensembles claim to play ‘fusion *gugak*.’ But in reality, most of them are close to ‘popular music bands using traditional instruments.’ We started the ensemble because we wanted to present the true beauty of *gugak* that today’s fusion cannot express” (Yu Yunjong 2010). Like Chunhogarang’s members, the musicians in Bulsechul

⁶ Originally, *Daepungnyu* was music for the wind instruments used to accompany dance.

⁷ *Ogugut* of the eastern coast (*Donghae-an Ogugut*) is a type of *gut* (shamanic ritual) for sending the spirit of a deceased person to the world of the dead.

also express distaste for fusion *gugak*. Although Bulsechul does not use any electronic sounds, such as a synthesizer, strictly speaking, their music is also a fusion, as they incorporate the guitar. Indeed, it would be hard to find something in their music that is not a result of fusion.

Critic Yun Junggang says that “Bulsechul’s music has the beauty of ‘digest.’ They shed light on traditional sources which lost their tension [*ginjanggam*] during a long playing time. Bulsechul’s music is a result of *fusion* within traditional music that does not incorporate foreign musical languages” (Jo Iyoung 2013, emphasis added). Among younger *gugak* musicians, however, the term “fusion” (*pyujeon*) often carries a negative connotation as opposed to “serious music.” In 2014, Bulsechul went on a TV program whose goal was to create a huge concert with selected *gugak* musicians through an audition which was also a part of the program. Deokryeol recalls that they felt foolish and embarrassed because most participants played fusion *gugak*, and they were seen by the judges as being silly for taking a challenging path voluntarily (Choi Deokryeol 2017). For both Bulsechul and Chunhogarang, maintaining an appropriate distance from so-called “fusion *gugak*” groups seems to be one of the ways in which they uphold their values and identities.⁸

Although Bulsechul has a composer within the ensemble, they have moved toward collaborative creation. They gather their ideas and add their own color to make a complete piece. One of the pieces they created through this process is “Jiokga.” Jeongchan, a percussion player, first suggested “Jiokga” from *Ogugut* as a motif, and various new musical elements were added to the basic theme. Initially, it took more than

⁸ I more fully discuss this controversy over fusion *gugak* in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

a month to get a draft of the work, and it was completed only after five years of continual modification. Because this process takes so much time, critic Song Hyeonmin refers to their creation process as “positive procrastination” (*geungjeongjeok geeureum*) (Song Hyeonmin 2017: 15).



Figure 4.2. Bulsechul performing at the National Gugak Center on September 9, 2016. Photo by the author.

4.1.2. “Bulnabi”: Fan Club and Patrons of Bulsechul

Bulsechul’s concert on September 9, 2016 had a full house. Toward the end, the leader of the ensemble, Kim Yongha, introduced each member, and suddenly great applause and cheers exploded from the front center of the audience. A group of audience members were waving a large placard with each member’s face (Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4). Since Bulsechul had eight members, I thought they were parents of Bulsechul members and was surprised at their extreme support. On October 29, 2016, Bulsechul had another concert which also had a full house. I was again surprised because, only a week ago, another group’s concert at the exact same place and time was less than half full. It

was clear that those audience members were there to attend Bulsechul's performance, not because they were required to do so. There were not many teenagers who were likely to be students of the members. If so, they could be the families and friends of the performers. But I was not certain about who they were.



Figure 4.3. Bulsechul members with some of the Bulnabi members after the concert on September 9, 2016, at the National Gugak Center. Source: Bulnabi's Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/bulnabi10/> (accessed July 11, 2017).

Many *gugak* concerts are filled with performers' family, friends, and students, and many musicians I interviewed also criticize this tendency as a "family party" (*gajok janchi*). Keith Howard explains this consumption pattern of *gugak* as "circular networks of exchange": "students form the core of audiences for recitals by their teachers; graduates populate ensembles and orchestras; graduate soloists, ensembles, and orchestras commission composers; many composers are university professors" (Howard 2011: 198). Asking people they already know may be an easy and reliable way of filling the seats if the performers have a concert once or twice a year. But, with the limited

number of people who regularly attend *gugak* concerts, this gets complicated when the frequency of performances increases. Before their concert on October 29, Bulsechul had a very similar concert at a different venue on September 9. However, not only were both of the concerts fully booked, but both audiences were very enthusiastic and energetic. It was hard to believe that all these audience members were from the circular networks of exchange suggested by Howard. If not, then who were they?



Figure 4.4. The placards with each member's name and picture, made by Bulnabi.
Source: Bulnabi's Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/bulnabi10/> (accessed July 11, 2017).

Toward the end of the October concert, Yongha introduced each member as he did at the concert in September, and something that I had not seen before happened. As Yongha introduced each of the members, several groups of audience members started to cheer while waving four large placards with the members' name and pictures—the kind of scenes that can be found at K-pop concerts. I have been to countless *gugak*

performances for the last 17 years, but this was totally beyond my expectations. After the concert, I was invited to a reception near the venue. The entire restaurant was reserved only for the reception and was completely filled with 70 to 80 people in their forties and fifties. Until Gyejeon told me that they were the patrons of Bulsechul, called Bulnabi, I tried hard to make sense of this event for myself.

Bulnabi is the name of both a patron group and a Bulsechul fan club. On May 21, 2016, Bulsechul performed at a cultural event held at the Old House of Ildu in Hamyang (Hamyang Ildu gotaek). The audiences were deeply impressed by the sound of traditional instruments, which resonated beautifully through the traditional house, and by the passionate performance of Bulsechul. On the way back to Seoul, some of the audience members who had been profoundly affected by this performance decided to support Bulsechul and organized Bulnabi on the day after the event. Less than three months after its establishment, Bulnabi's members exceeded 100. Bulnabi members not only attend Bulsechul's concerts, but also coordinate events, learn *gugak* from the Bulsechul members, and provide a secure platform where Bulsechul members can concentrate solely on their music.

The reception after the October concert resembled a fan club meeting of K-pop idol groups in many ways. First of all, there were enthusiastic fans who would do their best to support their favorite musicians. To celebrate the tenth anniversary of Bulsechul, Bulnabi members published a book on Bulsechul and organized related events. Moreover, there was a time for getting to know more about Bulsechul members when all members had to answer various questions, from questions about instruments to very

personal questions. Bulsechul members appreciated Bulnabi's supports, but at the same time they seemed overwhelmed with the immense attention.

While watching everything happening at the reception, I was still confused: how could a *gugak* ensemble playing music that people often think is "hard to understand" have this enthusiastic group of patrons who simply like the ensemble and their music? A critic who attended the reception also seemed puzzled, as he said he had never seen a similar event before. Naturally, it aroused several questions in my mind: there are many *gugak* ensembles, but why specifically Bulsechul? Did the composition of Bulsechul—eight male musicians—play any role? If it was another ensemble who performed at the cultural event where they first met, would people have supported that group instead? Can this type of relationship be an alternate solution for the existing problems in *gugak*, such as sustainability without heavy government subsidies? Since the relationship between Bulsechul and Bulnabi is still developing and there has not been a similar support group for other small, independent *gugak* ensembles, these questions will need further study.

4.2. Acoustic Ensemble Jebi

As a *gayageum* player myself who grew up in the *gugak* field, I have enjoyed the luxury of already having connections before starting my fieldwork. Although I did not know the majority of musicians I interviewed in the field, I had a solid idea of whom I had to go to and ask for an introduction. This was possible because I followed a so-called "elite training course" for *gugak* majors: graduating from Gugak National Middle and High School and entering one of the prestigious universities that offer a Korean music major. I was able to reach out to most musicians through only one or two steps, but there

were some musicians for whom I could not easily find a point of contact: Acoustic Ensemble Jebi (어쿠스틱 앙상블 재비, hereafter Jebi) was one of them.

In the *gugak* field, there are two tracks of schools, represented by those who graduated from Gugak National Middle and High School (*gunnip gugak jung, godeunghakgyo*) and those from National Middle and High School of Traditional Korean Arts (*gunnip jeontong yesul jung, godeunghakgyo*, formerly *Seoul gugak yesul godeunghakgyo*). While both schools offer a similar curriculum for traditional music majors,⁹ among *gugak* musicians, Gugak National Middle and High School is known for its emphasis on classical music (court/literati music), and National Middle and High School of Traditional Korean Arts is known for its emphasis on folk music. Deciding which university high school graduates apply to is also determined largely by high school they graduated from. Because of the curriculum differences in universities, those who graduated from two different high schools tend to receive different learning experiences, which affect one's identity as a musician, the musical styles in which they specialize, their values, and their career.

Unlike the two ensembles discussed above—Chunhogarang and Bulsechul—musicians who graduated from National Middle and High School of Traditional Korean Arts played a key role in the creation of Jebi. Because I left the field shortly after graduating from college, I did not have enough opportunities to interact with musicians from the other school, and this was the main reason for me to get lost in the process of contacting potential interviewees. I asked a few musicians active in the field who also

⁹ Whereas Gugak National High School offers two majors (traditional music and traditional dance), National High School of Traditional Korean Arts offers three, adding a music theatre major.

graduated from the same school as me, and they seemed to have no clue as well. Some had heard of the group and musicians but did not know them in person. Although I was certain that someone would know them in person, it was exhausting and unfruitful to ask every single person I know if they have any connection with Jebi.

In the end, I went to their concert and ended up directly asking them for an interview. It was surprising and, at the same time, frustrating because this experience showed me how divided the field I had lived in was. As I interview more people from different schools and learn about their values, I realize that their high school years had a profound impact on shaping their values, especially on the music that they play. If the two schools have different educational and musical cultures, which influenced musicians' value system, did the male students in National High School of Traditional Korean Arts have different experiences from those who went to Gugak National High School? Or did they have similar experiences regardless of their school? The answer is the latter. As male *gugak* musicians, Jebi members have had very similar experiences to those of other male musicians. In comparison to the two ensembles previously discussed, however, Jebi aims at more popular *gugak*, which is worthy of investigation.

“Super Junior and EXO of *gugak*!”¹⁰ This is how Jebi is often introduced to the public. Considering the fact that, in comparison to other all-male ensembles, Jebi aims at playing more popular *gugak* that ordinary people can easily enjoy, the analogy does not seem to be completely absurd. Jebi was started by three friends who went to National School of Traditional Arts together. As more friends from college and the military service joined, Jebi was formed in 2009. The name of the ensemble came from the old Korean

¹⁰ Super Junior and EXO are popular K-pop male idol groups.

word “*jaebi*” (재비/잡이), which refers to an instrumentalist, usually one who plays folk music. After some changes in their membership, Jebi currently consists of nine male *gugak* musicians: Kim Beomsu (*daegeum*), Jo Seonin (*gayageum*), Oh Danhae (*sori*), Hong Minwoong (composition, keyboard), Sim Jaegeun (*piri*, *daepiri*, *taepyeongso*), Kim Donggeon (*haegeum*), Kim Seungcheol (*ajaeng*), Lee Jeongho (percussion), and Kim Taehyeong (percussion).



Figure 4.5. Acoustic Ensemble Jebi. Source: Acoustic Ensemble Jebi website. <https://www.jebimusic.com/> (accessed July 6, 2017).

At the beginning, Jebi was closer to a study group than an ensemble. Once a week, they taught each other what they specialized in, such as singing and harmony. But the real motivation behind their weekly gathering was somewhere else: to hang out—

drinking, going to a poolroom, and singing karaoke—every weekend. Seonin says that he was extremely delighted when he joined the group because he, as a male *gayageum* player, was always surrounded by female players. Like Sangyeon from Chunhogarang, Seonin also complains that he was treated as a “*meoseum*” (servant) who had to answer all the requests from his female colleagues:

I have been always surrounded by women because I’m a *gayageum* player. When there is a woman with a bunch of men, she becomes a *hongiljeom* (the only woman in a group), but when there is a man among many women, he becomes a *meoseum*. I used to be caught up here and there. If I carried someone’s *gayageum*, I had to carry someone else’s *gayageum* too. If I bought something for someone, I had to buy that for the others too. But, among men, I don’t need to say a lot. I can just say “Let’s drink! Let’s hang out!” It’s so convenient and feels so much freer. I just wanted to hang out with them instead of practicing. So, we hung out and skipped the rehearsal. (August 13, 2016)

Danhae, a *pansori* singer, echoes Seonin’s experience. *Pansori* and vocal genres in general have only a few male performers, leaving Danhae as the only male student among approximately thirty female voice majors in college. He notes that he struggled within the group of “bossy” female students and wanted to start an ensemble only with men because it felt free and relaxed.

Creating an all-male ensemble in Korea entails the risk that some members of the ensemble could leave the ensemble to serve in the military for approximately two years. As discussed in the case of Bulsechul, one member’s absence can risk the continuity of the entire ensemble. Jebi members were aware of this uncertainty, and thus decided to include only those performers who had finished their military service as members. As army reserves who had already finished their two-year-long term of duty, they could continue without losing a member. A group consisting of ten army reserves was certainly unprecedented in the *gugak* field, and Jebi cleverly used this fact to promote themselves.

For instance, Jebi introduced themselves as “ten army reserves idols, reborn as Super Junior of the *gugak* field” at the 21 Century Korean Music Project.¹¹

Along with the military service issues, members’ marriage is also one of the reasons for the disbandment of many *gugak* ensembles. Some of the Jebi members are already married or have plans for their weddings; however, they show a strong bond as a team, and they think that this is not irrelevant to being an all-male ensemble. Seonin says that when they first formed Jebi, they believed that the group would last longer because men would not leave the field easily, even after marriage. Beomsu thinks that when musicians get married, men focus more on music to support their family, while women give up their careers because of pregnancy and childrearing. But he is cautious about making a quick generalization that all men work harder than women because of a sense of responsibility and economic burden.

Seonin notes that on average women will face more difficulties, since men hold hegemony in society. He says that “[Although there are many women] it is men who hold actual power in the field, such as male masters. It’s also men who are in the middle [of a lineage of the masters]. Society is not favorable for women to do music” (August 13, 2016). In regard to advantages for being male *gugak* musicians, several members also mention *baji jeomsu*. One of them says that he has received it, and others complain about cynical views they have received from their female colleagues—the stories that I have already included in the previous discussion of *baji jeomsu* in Chapter 2.

As an all-male ensemble, Beomsu believes that the key to their solidarity is to remove a potential for serious discord among the members. As many of them are friends

¹¹ Initially, Jebi consisted of ten members, and later changed to nine.

without a rigid hierarchy, they experience various troubles. But “unlike women” they get over it by openly talking about the issues. One of the members told me that “women like to divide a group to take their side, and to talk behind others’ backs. But we don’t do that.” As another member confessed that he talked behind someone’s back as a way of relieving stress, he agreed and said that “I know, I do both; talking in front of someone and talking behind someone’s back [*apdamhwa*, *dwitdamhwa*].¹² But we don’t care about it much. Everything goes away once we start drinking” (August 13, 2016).

For the male ensembles I interviewed, drinking seems to be an essential part of keeping their solidarity. Chunhogarang members had solidified their relationship through drinking long before they formed an ensemble, and continuously maintain their gatherings today. Moreover, the place where Bulsechul members first talked about the “Class of 2004, Male Students Recital”—the cornerstone of Bulsechul—was a pub where they drank together after tiring stage construction. As discussed above, drinking together helps Jebi members promote solidarity when they have troubles among themselves. For Jebi, drinking is also a good source for their musical inspiration, which I discuss later in this chapter.

In Korea, drinking is a vital element for various social interactions. According to Oh Jaehwan’s study on the drinking culture of Korea (2002), most people—both men and women—drink alcohol when they build a relationship with others, such as at various gatherings of family, friends, and colleagues, on field trips, and at parties. Only 3.3 percent of people drink alone. Oh argues that these contemporary drinking habits

¹² He was playing on words. There is no word such as “*apdamhwa*” in Korean, but he used it to say he criticizes people in front of them as opposed to “*dwitdamhwa*” (talking behind someone’s back).

demonstrate that traditional drinking culture—drinking in a group (*daejak munhwa*)—still remains in Korean society today (Oh Jaehwan 2002: 82-83). This collectivity of drinking culture becomes more prominent in a drinking culture of peer groups and colleagues at work. This allows people to interact more freely in a relaxed mood and to promote solidarity as a group. Nonetheless, this collective drinking culture has many harmful consequences, especially during *hoesik* (get-togethers). Those who cannot drink have to join the *hoesik* and are forced to drink if their boss demands it as a form of symbolic violence (Byeon Hwasun 1997; Shin Gyeong-a 2014; Gong Byeongseol 2016).

According to Park Hee Rang and Lee Jangju (2011), men have a strong tendency to overcome social problems and psychological stress through a state of excessive drinking. On the contrary, the amount of women's alcohol consumption is about a half of that of men, and intimate social interactions with their family and friends are the primary motivation and function for women's drinking patterns.¹³ Although female musicians do drink, sometimes this difference in alcohol consumption patterns can be an issue in mixed-gender ensembles. A male musician, involved in both a male ensemble and a mixed ensemble, notes that he drinks lightly only a few times a year with the mixed ensemble members after concerts, but he can enjoy frequently hanging out and drinking with male ensemble members. In the interviews with male ensembles, I notice that "hanging out and drinking" seem to be a popular repertoire for every male ensemble. Despite some drawbacks, as their relationship is flat rather than hierarchical, the

¹³ In the past, drinking was considered an absolute realm of men, and women who drank alcohol were considered immoral. As women's participation in society increases, women's alcohol consumption rate skyrocketed from 59.3 percent in 1998 to 83.8 percent in 2010. During the same period, men's alcohol consumption rate increased from 83.4 percent to 93 percent (Lee Jihyeon 2010).

collective drinking culture of Korea seems to have more benefits than shortcomings for the three ensembles.

4.2.1. Jebi's Music

One of the major differences between Jebi and the previous two groups, Chunhogarang and Bulsechul, is that Jebi has a *pansori* singer and a composer who plays a keyboard. Moreover, Jebi's performance involves large movements. Jebi members play their instruments standing up most of the time, which allows them to move more freely. The inclusion of the vocal, keyboard, and big movements makes Jebi's music more approachable to the general public, which corresponds to Jebi's goal. Although Jebi has many pieces involving detailed expression, their performance is known as energetic and powerful, and they caught people's attention through their costumes, large movements, and stage props. As their name has gradually become known in the field, Jebi not only performs at various social and cultural events around Korea but also actively participates in educational programs for children, where they teach *gugak* and concert etiquette and perform their music. They note that general audiences simply enjoy their performances, whereas *gugak* professionals tend to analyze and evaluate them. Although they appreciate constructive criticism, they say that they like to enjoy their music themselves without too much reflection.

Popular pieces Jebi often performs at a large-scale concert are powerful, energetic, and fun, such as "Janghwasineun Jebi" (Jebi in Boots, after *Puss in Boots*), "Goseongbanga" (Boisterous Singing), and "Jebimori" (Jebi Beating, after a popular *pansori* song called "Jebimori," meaning swallow beating). "Janghwasineun Jebi" is a

perfect example that demonstrates how Jebi uses the stage differently from other ensembles. Based on a traditional mode of the eastern region (*menari tori*) and rhythmic patterns from *Byeolsingut* (shamanic ritual) of the eastern coast, this piece features the solo *daegeum* accompanied by the whole ensemble. On stage, the *daegeum* player transforms into the Puss in Boots, and *runs* around the stage as if exploring the world (Figure 4.6). He takes up a large space and fully uses his body parts when moving around the stage. He quickly moves from the stage left to stage right, and then from the right to the left. If allowed, he approaches the audiences and plays the *daegeum* at a close distance. At the end, he dramatically finishes the piece by fully outstretching his left arm, holding the instrument to the sky (Figure 4.7).



Figure 4.6. Jebi performed “Janghwasineun Jebi” on a television show called *Gugak Scandal Ggun* (aired on August 15, 2014). The *daegeum* player (center) is dressed up as Puss in Boots. All members play standing, which allows dynamic body movements. Source: Jebi’s YouTube channel. <https://youtu.be/HCxFxTfhoeo> (accessed July 24, 2017).



Figure 4.7. Kim Beomsu, the *daegeum* player in Jebi, dramatically ends the piece by fully stretching his arm to the sky. Source: Jebi's YouTube channel. <https://youtu.be/HcxFxTfhoeo> (accessed July 24, 2017).

In Chapter 3, I discussed Chunhogarang's members' efforts to distinguish themselves from female *gayageum* players by adhering to a more traditional performance practice which does not use exaggerated body movements. If restricting their movements was Chunhogarang's way of reinscribing their masculinity, it seems that making large, whole-body movements is Jebi's own, different way of displaying their masculinity. Moreover, the *daegeum* player's use of a large space reveals a stark difference from the movements of female fusion *gugak* musicians, whose movements are choreographed in a certain way to emphasize their bodies. These are not innocent movements. Movements are constructed based on certain types of ideologies and also a site for identity struggles, and thus inherently political (Albright 1997; Desmond 2001; Kolb 2010; Oh Chuyun 2014). Focusing on female fusion *gugak* musicians, I further examine this issue in Chapter 5.

In this respect, I argue that Jebi's "Goseongbanga" (Boisterous Singing) is not only more acceptable but also considered "funny" because of the gender of the musicians. This piece is based on their real life experiences after drinking. Danhae explains that "A concert was canceled, so we decided to hang out in our practice room. We ordered Chinese food and passed out after drinking alcohol. When I woke up, they [other members] were saying 'Go go go, go home' before my eyes" (August 13, 2016). Beomsu continues to explain that "Danhae has a high-pitched voice, and it gets even higher when he's drunk. It pierces. So when we told him to be quiet, he said 'I'm so quiet, what's wrong with you.' When we told him that we were going to leave if he didn't stop, he yelled" (August 13, 2016). The phrase "go go go, go home" and their conversations are inserted in the refrains as a form of a conversation between Danhae and other members (shown in parentheses):

(go go go go go, go home) I'm not going
(go home) I'm not going
(my eardrums are about to burst, please go home now) I'm not going
(go home) I'm really not going
I'm saying quietly and why are you saying it hurts your ears?
Let's drink one more glass, [if not] I'm going to yell!

Dressed up as a drunk person—tying a necktie around his head—Danhae acts drunk on stage while singing (Figure 4.8). He acts like he himself is drunk, but at the same time he impersonates the typical images of drunk male office workers in Korea. Although most Korean women drink alcohol and it is no longer considered shameful, it seems that Korean society is still more generous with men's alcohol consumption, which has been considered an important part of their social interactions. A few female musicians in fusion *gugak* groups told me that they enjoy drinking. However, how many

female *gugak* ensembles can openly talk about their drinking habits on stage, especially if they have to maintain certain kinds of images that society wants?¹⁴



Figure 4.8. Oh Danhae, a *pansori* singer, dresses up as a drunk person and pretends to drink a shot while performing “Goseongbangga” (Boisterous Singing). Source: Official Jebi’s YouTube channel. <https://youtu.be/hrn-5wOeDKk> (accessed July 24, 2017).

In order to maximize their strength as a male ensemble, Jebi intentionally promoted the kinds of pieces that could radiate their energy and power on stage, such as “Janghwasineun Jebi” (Jebi in Boots), “Goseongbangga” (Boisterous Singing), and “Jebimori” (Jebi Beating). At the same time, these energetic and fun elements of the performances are what event coordinators or directors look for from this group of nine male musicians. Danhae says that they were “the experts of setting the stage on fire and

¹⁴ I discuss this issue of female musicians and social expectations more in depth in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

discouraging the following group by intimidating them” (August 13, 2016). Their performance not only intimidated the following group, but also made the organizers regret not letting Jebi have the final performance of the events. Although they say that they currently pursue making a balance in music rather than playing louder and more powerfully by default, they seem to be excited and even proud of themselves while talking about their practices in the past.

In the past, Jebi members thought that playing louder and faster would attract larger audiences and win enthusiastic responses. Referring to Jebi, one *gugak* critic used the expression “*gwayubulgeup*” (過猶不及), meaning that to go too far is as bad as to fall short. Because this was what they aimed for, they initially had an uneasy feeling. As they realized that audiences would still enjoy their performance without excessive energy, they began to focus more on detailed musical expression, such as dynamics and rhythmic patterns. Beomsu argues that although people often think that they are not sensitive and request them to show “masculinity” in their performance, their music, in fact, involves musical details that the members have to work on together.

Along with the energetic, powerful pieces, Jebi also has pieces that give a contrasting feeling. For instance, “Sangsamong” (Lovesickness) expresses heartrending sorrow with a male voice, a sentiment that traditionally has been the realm of women. Based on the famous *gisaeng* Hwangjini’s poem “Sangsamong,” Danhae delivers the feeling of loss and longing, and expresses a change of emotion throughout the piece. Composer Minwoong notes that Danhae’s voice—less raspy than any female *pansori* singers—fits perfectly into the piece. While focusing more on detailed expressions of grief, Danhae still keeps his singing style as a male *pansori* singer, which does not use

many *sigimsae* (ornaments) in comparison to female *pansori* singers. Minwoong says that if a female singer sang this piece, she could have sung well with a more appealing voice and subtle expression. Although Jebi members acknowledge their sensitivity, there seems to be a gap between the level of sensitivity that male and female musicians can achieve, implying an underlying gender difference.

Chapter 5. Examining “Fusion *Gugak*”

Today, the term “fusion *gugak*” (*pyujeon gugak*) is a buzzword in Korea. Although this term is broadly used, there is no consensus among *gugak* musicians and scholars about what fusion *gugak* is or is not, not to mention the arbitrary usage in the media. There is no doubt, however, that fusion *gugak* has been one of the most popular keywords regarding *gugak* in the last few years. In particular, in 2016, popular music channel Mnet broadcast a new TV program called “Pan Stealer: Korean Traditional Music Strikes Back” (*pan seutilleo: gugagui yeokseup*).¹ Starring Lee Hanui, an actress and a *gayageum* player, and Yoon Sang, a renowned composer and singer, this program brought audiences’ attention to *gugak* by presenting a new style of *gugak* in collaboration with various genres of music. Some musicians call this style of music fusion *gugak*, while others do not. According to the online dictionary *Merriam-Webster.com*, fusion refers to “a merging of diverse, distinct, or separate elements into a unified whole.” If so, by definition, what was presented in the program is fusion. But why are some musicians not willing to use this term? What does the term fusion *gugak* mean to them or to *gugak* musicians in general?

In this chapter, I investigate the current status and practices of fusion *gugak*. I first discuss the use of the term “fusion *gugak*” by academics and the media and introduce my own use of the term, adapted from the conventional usage among *gugak* musicians. In the following sections, I explore how fusion *gugak* has been “otherized” within the *gugak* community by analyzing current discourses circulated among *gugak*

¹ “*Pan*” means stage in Korean and is part of the term *pansori*.

professionals. In the last two sections, I provide profiles of four fusion *gugak* groups, focusing on their characteristics as a group, and examine how their performance practices reflect the notion of “ideal” feminine bodies in Korea.

5.1. Definition

The majority of scholars have suggested a broad definition of fusion *gugak*.² R. Anderson Sutton provides a general definition: “In Korea, music identified as ‘fusion,’ with very rare exception, combines elements conceived to be ‘Korean’ with others that are (or may be) conceived to be ‘not Korean’” (Sutton 2011: 4). His examples of fusion *gugak*—“fusion music” is his term—range from American jazz or Western classical music played on Korean instruments to traditional Korean folk songs that incorporate Western harmony, instruments, or other stylistic features (ibid.: 6-7). Chan E. Park also suggests a similar definition of fusion as “mixing, blending, or ‘fusing’ elements of Korean music with Western or other foreign instrumental or compositional characteristics,” and argues that it is “the work of contemporizing Korean music tradition” (2011: 31).

Lee So-young uses the term fusion to refer “collectively [to] all ways of producing new sounds from two or more different musical genre, grammar, or arrangement of musical instruments [*sic*]” (2003: 192). She prefers the term “*gugakfusion*” over other terms such as fusion *gugak* and *changjak gugak* (literally, creative *gugak*), because it implies “creation within Korean music” and “fusion of

² Although some scholars have suggested alternative terms, I decide to use “fusion *gugak*” since this is the most commonly used term today.

Korean music with other kinds of music,” emphasizing the process of making music, or “musicking,” giving equal emphasis to both “becoming” and “activity” (ibid.). Thus, *gugakfusion* is distinguished from other styles of hybrid *gugak* since it produces “music by performer,” or “music uniting performance and composition” without the aid of composers (ibid.: 194).

Keith Howard adds a few details in addition to a general definition of “*kugak* [another romanization of *gugak*] fusion”:

Music performed by a young generation of musicians that has porous boundaries and, insofar as it features musicians trained in *kugak*, might be considered as traditional music made modern. Unlike in world music elsewhere, the fusion in *kugak* fusion is not a mix of indigenous and foreign but a mix of Korean and Korean. It appropriates, for Korean musical consumption, elements of Western music styles present in Korea, be they jazz, classical, or pop, coupling these to elements of *kugak*. (Howard 2011: 195)

Although both Sutton and Howard agree that Western music styles are appropriated in fusion *gugak*, Sutton views them as foreign, while Howard thinks that they have been indigenized.

Although these four scholars have slightly different definitions, they all refer to fusion *gugak* as a new style of music that combines elements of *gugak* and other genres/styles of music, such as jazz and Western classical music. Many scholars have adopted this definition of fusion *gugak*, although some have used different terms (Yun Junggang 2004; Finchum-Sung 2012a; Jungwon Kim 2012; Mueller 2013; Willoughby 2015). Although it is similar, I suggested a slightly different definition in my master’s thesis (2013): a new genre of music that combines elements of what people would conceive as *gugak* and non-*gugak*. I believe that this definition seems to work better to capture the phenomenon in a broad sense than seeing it as a mix of Korean and non-

Korean or Korean and Korean, which seems too general. After all, this is a combination of *gugak* and other musics, which can be completely foreign genres or genres that were initially foreign but have already become Koreanized in Korea.

It is worth noting that many musicians who perform fusion *gugak* in the broad sense are mainstream *gugak* musicians known as talented solo players. Lee So-young argues that the expansion of fusion *gugak* has been driven by the mainstream musicians within the academic realm of *gugak*, such as Jeong Sunyeon, who is an accomplished *haegeum* player as well as a professor (Lee So-young 2008: 167-68). The number of musicians or ensembles who fall into this category of fusion *gugak* is fairly large, ranging from academic, avant-garde groups, such as Sang Sang and JGAH, to groups playing more familiar, easy-listening music, such as Sagye and Sorea. Despite the vastly different styles of music, the aim of all of these musicians is to be able to appeal to Korean and international audiences and to communicate with them (Lee So-young 2008; Sutton 2011; Howard 2011).

Critic Yun Junggang is perhaps one of a few people in the *gugak* community who has been supportive of fusion *gugak* from early on. He argues that fusion *gugak* is not a fad, but a genre which already has become a norm. He emphasizes fusion *gugak*'s contribution to the popularization of *gugak*, and names The Lim, Vinalog, and Gongmyeong as the three representative music groups creating Korean fusion music (Yun Junggang 2015: 187-95). In 2016, however, he introduced a new term, "post-*gugak*," and argued for separating some of the groups, such as Jambinai, Su:m, and Gongmyeong, from fusion *gugak*. According to him, "popularization of *gugak*" is what separates post-*gugak* groups from fusion *gugak* groups. Post-*gugak* groups do not try "to

worship Western genres or to imitate Western instruments like fusion *gugak* groups do” (Yun Junggang 2016). Following his new definition, Gongmyeong, previously described as one of the three representative fusion *gugak* groups, is now under the category of “post-*gugak*.”

Although Yun Junggang’s definition of fusion *gugak* is slightly narrower than that of other scholars, my use of the term in this dissertation is even narrower. Ironically, despite the broad usage of the term among scholars, many musicians have a strong distaste for being labeled as fusion *gugak* musicians (Sutton 2011: 14; Hyunjin Yeo 2013; Willoughby 2015: 126). In my master’s thesis (2013), I discussed three *gugak* groups who expressed their strong aversion to fusion *gugak*. Although these groups do incorporate *gugak* and non-*gugak* elements and aim to appeal to a larger group of contemporary audiences, they reject being associated with the term since, for many *gugak* musicians in the academic realm, “fusion *gugak*” refers to all-female *gugak* groups, playing commercialized easy listening music, mostly covers of various types of popular music.

The conventional use of fusion *gugak* among the musicians is much narrower than that of the scholars. Moreover, it indicates a very specific type of *gugak* groups—the groups that I focus on this chapter as well as Chapters 6 and 7. Since my use of the term is different from what other scholars have used, even though this is what is conventionally used among musicians, I need to delineate the differences first. Under the wide umbrella of fusion *gugak*, as defined by many scholars, I argue that there are two largely distinguished categories of musicians: simply put, those who reject the label of fusion *gugak* and those who accept the label. I should acknowledge that the boundaries

are slippery rather than rigid, and some musicians may fall in between these two groups, but despite this fact, I believe that it is worth addressing the two streams of fusion *gugak*. I discuss the former first for a more effective comparison between the two.

The first group of musicians are those who create their own music by reinterpreting traditional elements, such as motifs, rhythms, and techniques, and combining them with other musical materials. Although they acknowledge that their music is not tradition but fusion by definition, they reject being labeled as fusion *gugak* musicians. They hope to appeal to a larger audience, but some of their music may sound difficult to contemporary audiences. They can play solo or as a group. Within a group, the number of group members and their gender can vary: a group can consist of two or nine musicians, or more, and they can be all-male, all-female, or mixed. It will be useful to have impressive visual effects on stage, but presenting high-quality music is expected to be the foremost priority for these musicians. They are often affiliated with institutions, receiving institutional support for continuation of their creative work through holding annual concerts and releasing albums. To gain support, they often participate in competitions sponsored by major institutions. These types of activities are usually encouraged institutionally in the *gugak* field as “the ways in which *gugak* must proceed.” Groups such as Jambinai, Su:m, Jebi, and Bulsechul would be included in this category.

Most scholarly writings on fusion *gugak* have been focused on the academic, institutional side of musicians and groups. However, there is another group of musicians who not only accept the term fusion *gugak*, but also use it to strategically promote themselves in the market. Different from the previous group, the musicians in the latter category almost always perform as a group, consisting of three to five young female

musicians in their twenties and early thirties. Their main repertoire includes covers of K-pop, Western pop, Western classical music, film music, and Korean TV drama music, which will appeal to the broader audience's ear. Moreover, these familiar sounds are accompanied by alluring visual elements on stage, such as fancy costumes and choreography, immediately seizing audiences' attention. Although these groups, too, release their own albums, they are often not for public sale, but for distribution to agencies as their promotional materials. Instead of holding annual concerts or participating in competitions to receive institutional support and recognition, they perform at various places and on various occasions, including conferences, local festivals, banquets, and international events, by invitation.

Exhibiting some stark differences from the previous group, I have briefly described some of the characteristics of “fusion *gugak*” groups as conventionally addressed by most *gugak* musicians in practice, and this is exactly how I use the term in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Fabian Holt notes that when a musical genre is named, it becomes “a point of reference and enables certain forms of communication, control, and specialization into markets, canons, and discourses” (2007: 3). Thus, instead of accepting the broadly defined term used by the scholars, or applying the label to musicians who reject it, I focus on the groups who are both labeled and self-identified as fusion *gugak* groups.

5.2. Fusion Gugak as “Other”

Despite the general interests of scholars in fusion, I have not been able to locate any studies on self-defined fusion *gugak* groups, other than a few articles on Sorea and

Miji.³ Moreover, even though several scholarly works on musical analysis of *gugak* have been produced by *gugak* scholars and graduate students every year, I have not found any analyses of fusion *gugak*. Is this because there is nothing sparking the interests of scholars, or because they do not find it to be a worthy subject of study? Or is this not the right kind of music to study musical fusion? It is not only scholars, but also many musicians studying and playing traditional *gugak*, who have expressed very little interest in fusion *gugak*. By examining discourses on what is broadly defined as fusion *gugak*, I explain the lack of discussion on a particular group of fusion *gugak* musicians.

According to Fabian Holt, genre is:

a type of category that refers to a particular kind of music within a distinctive cultural web of production, circulation, and signification. That is to say, genre is not only “in the music,” but also in the minds and bodies of particular groups of people who share certain conventions. (2007: 2)

Although some people may be skeptical of referring to fusion *gugak* as a genre, I contend that it has been established through repetitive practices performed by a group of people, and that there are shared conventions among performers, audiences, and professionals working in the music industry. However, these conventions are different from those preferred by mainstream *gugak* musicians and scholars, leading to the creation of negative discourses and criticism of the genre.

One of the most prominent discourses on fusion *gugak* is the commercialization of *gugak*. Lee So-young (2005) argues that the popularization of *gugak* through fusion *gugak* is closely related to “internalized commercial orientalism” (*naemyeonhwadoen*

³ These two groups, however, have been heavily sponsored by the Korean government since their inception; thus, their institutional affiliations could have made them “appropriate” research subjects for scholars.

sangeopjeok orientallijeum): Asians using exotic elements of Asian culture that are already otherized by the “Western eyes” (ibid.: 56).⁴ She argues that once orientalism is incorporated into the commercialized circuit, it can be a detriment to traditional culture because inherent characteristics of local culture are selectively chosen, and they abandon their own musical idiom in order to suit the tastes of the commercial market (ibid.: 57). Kim Junghee echoes Lee So-young’s argument and contends that in a worst-case scenario, fusion *gugak* exists as a “Korean” product to meet the need of rich foreign tourists (2001: 138).

Moreover, Hilary V. Finchum-Sung argues that the soundscape of contemporary Korea is undoubtedly consumption driven, and the marketing underscoring the marginality of young musicians in what she calls “*gugak* teams” and the consumption of their music is a “mixed curse and blessing,” because:

On one hand, such a reality affords a great amount of flexibility and autonomy of the individual to create new music drawing on the aesthetics and principles of *kugak*. On the other, the new “freedom” of young *kugak* creation belies a darker reality in which pressure to create what sells can often shape the type of music a young team will create. (Finchum-Sung 2012a: 138)

Although she is not completely pessimistic about the current fusion *gugak* phenomenon, she expresses her concern about the consumption-driven creation and packaging of young *gugak* groups whose music is “dubiously labeled *gugak*” (ibid.: 137).

The discourses on hybridization/impurity are also a large part of fusion *gugak* controversies, and this is often connected to a question of what *gugak* is. Critic Jeon Jiyong (2010, 2011) has expressed his strong condemnation for fusion *gugak*. He argues

⁴ Lee So-young notes that Korean musicians can have “Western eyes” if they have internalized Western musical tastes and perceptions (2015: 56).

that calling a mixture of *gugak* and popular music fusion *gugak* is “funny,” and it must not be categorized as *gugak*. He further contends that the younger generation of *gugak* musicians is invited to mix *gugak* and non-*gugak* genres under the rubrics of “experiment,” “modern,” and “young,” and as a result no one has seriously considered creating and challenging new “*gugak*.” According to him, most recent experiments are “a mere physical mixture,” or an appropriation of *gugak* to complete other genres of music.

Despite various concerns and condemnation, as fusion *gugak* has been established as a new, important trend in *gugak*, many scholars have acknowledged that they can no longer ignore it. Instead, they began to suggest “ideal” ways of developing fusion *gugak*: incorporating traditional aesthetics and elements from other genres while pursuing symbiosis between tradition and creation (Kwon Ohseong 2000; Kim Junghee 2001; Lee So-young 2003, 2005; Chan Park 2011). Lee So-young’s statement nicely encapsulates a consensus among the scholars and musicians: “the creative attitude should go beyond eclecticism and mere arrangements and discover rich musical resources of Korean traditional music for the development of *gugak*” (Lee So-young 2003: 212).

Son Min-jung points out that many critical reviews on fusion *gugak*’s future direction contain phrases like “not flattering to the public” (*daejunge yeonghaphaji anneun*), “succeeding the pure spirit of *gugak*” (*sunsuhan gugagui jeongsineul ieobadeun*), “overcoming the limitations of the capitalized music industry” (*jabonjuui eumak saneobui hangyereul geukbokhan*), and “not easily compromising with contemporary music” (*hyeondae eumakgwa sonswiun tahyeobeul haji anneun*) (Son Min-jung 2009: 84). She argues that these phrases indicate that the aesthetic identity of Koreans has to be found in *gugak*, while popular music is a mere “condiment” for

musical diversity (ibid.: 85). From the standpoint of the recipients of fusion *gugak*, however, it is popular music that is central to their aesthetics. Son Min-jung contends that this is an essentialist, elitist, and ethnocentric view which hopes to analyze music within a closed structure, separated from active musical experiences of the recipients.

I have discussed the two central discourses portraying the current understanding of fusion *gugak* in the *gugak* field: it is commercialized, hybrid music that has to evolve in specific ways, retaining traditional aesthetics, because otherwise it can degenerate into a product of commercial orientalism after blindly following the market needs. Based on this idea of fusion *gugak*, musicians who deviate from the boundaries of “appropriate music” have been subject to criticism. When applying this idea to self-identified fusion *gugak* groups, it is not difficult to imagine that their undeniably market- and profit-oriented characteristics will make them the least ideal, if not the most deviant, groups of musicians—musically, aesthetically, and ideologically less valued, and thus not the right subject for scholarly research.

Keith Negus rightly points out that genre translates dynamic genre practices into “codified rules, conventions and expectations, not only as melodies, timbres and rhythms but also in terms of audience expectations, market categories and habits of consumption” (1999: 28). As fusion *gugak* continuously retains its connection to a larger category of *gugak*, it has been subject to judgement by the codified rules, conventions, and expectations of *gugak*, reflecting mainstream, elitist, and essentialist views.

I argue that fusion *gugak* is “otherized” in the study of *gugak*, or of music in general, similar to the way that popular music was once otherized in the study of ethnomusicology. Jaap Kunst, one of the pioneers of ethnomusicology as a discipline,

wrote that the study-object of ethnomusicology is “all tribal and folk music and every kind of non-Western art music. Besides, it studies the sociological aspects of music, as the phenomena of musical acculturation. . . . Western art- and popular (entertainment-) music do not belong to its field” (1959: 1). It was not until the 1980s that popular music started to be studied by ethnomusicologists. Bruno Nettl states that:

Popular music was long treated as an exception, neglected by most scholars because—in my opinion—its cultural and ethnic identity was always difficult to determine, and it was thus thought to *lack authenticity*. It was neglected also because of its supposed *aesthetic inferiority* and its essentially *commercial quality*. (Nettl 2005: 187, emphasis added)

He also describes the concept of popular music as “distinctly ‘other,’ the ultimate cultural ‘inside’ being Western classical music and its study,” and adds that “a very special otherness was conferred on popular music by the teachers of the first half of the twentieth century, who admonished us to stay away from this *mixed, inferior, and commercial* phenomenon” (ibid.: 188-89, emphasis added).

Many of these descriptions of popular music are applicable to understanding the current status of fusion *gugak* in academia. It lacks authenticity as a mixed genre for which it is hard to determine its cultural and ethnic identity. Also, teachers confer an otherness on fusion *gugak*, emphasizing its aesthetically inferior, commercial quality, which has naturally guided other scholars and musicians to shun this style of music. By reiterating particular ways of creating fusion that are presumed to be an ideal—creating music by making clever use of traditional elements while keeping a distance from the commercial market—scholars have also contributed to solidifying the otherness of fusion *gugak*.

It is questionable whether the otherness of fusion *gugak* will recede as it has for the study of popular music. However, I agree with Kevin Fellezs that fusion points out “the instability of all genre designations and highlights the fluidity of musical practices that genre names attempt to freeze” (2011: 17). It also highlights individual musicians’ agency in facing various social norms that confine them. In this dissertation, instead of making value judgments on their music, performance, and intention, I focus on fusion *gugak* musicians as individuals exercising their agency within the complicated social structures surrounding them.

5.3. Fusion Gugak Groups: Profile

During my fieldwork in Korea, I interviewed fifteen musicians and one director from four self-identified fusion *gugak* groups who were those most actively performing at the time of my fieldwork: Lin (July 8, July 26, and October 19, 2016), Meein (August 23, 2016), Hanayeon (August 25 and October 21, 2016), and Queen (September 24, 2016).⁵ I have also been in contact with many musicians after my fieldwork, receiving updates from the field via personal communication. Before examining individual musicians’ experiences, I want to discuss brief profiles of each group, since examining them as a whole allows me to highlight some of the important features that are not easily discernable by looking at individual musicians. In fact, as individual musicians detached from their respective groups, the majority of musicians I interviewed have experiences akin to one another.

⁵ The list only includes formal interviews with fusion *gugak* musicians and does not include personal communications before and after the interviews. Also, after the interviews in 2016, there have been major changes in these groups, which I discuss later in this chapter in more detail.

5.3.1. Queen

It seems difficult to trace back the exact origin of the current form of fusion *gugak* groups. Recently, fusion *gugak* groups have mushroomed. The fact that many of them disband quickly makes it almost impossible to track all the fusion *gugak* groups performing in Korea. Among a sea of fusion *gugak* groups, Queen (officially, Fusion *Gugak* Group Queen) has retained a leading position in this field. Many fusion *gugak* musicians acknowledge Queen's position in the commercial market, whether they agree with Queen's marketing strategy or not.



Figure 5.1a and 5.1b. The first two pictures of Queen on their blog (<http://blog.naver.com/PostList.nhn?blogId=fusionqueen&categoryNo=4>) and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/fusionqueen/>) (accessed September 1, 2017). From these pictures, it is impossible to know that this is a group playing traditional instruments.

Queen, established in 2008, is one of the oldest fusion *gugak* groups in Korea. Currently, Queen consists of eleven female musicians mostly in their early to mid-thirties: two *gayageum* players (Lee Areum, Park Hyeryeong), one *geomungo* player (Park Jinyoung), two *daegeum* players (Kwon Hyegyeong, Sin Soeul), two *haegeum* players (Lee Dongeun, Lee Yuri), one percussionist (Jeon Goeun), two vocalists (Ha

Yoonju, Kim Jihyun), and one electric violin player (Noh Ella).⁶ Although Queen has eleven members, it is very rare to see more than five of the musicians together on stage, except in a few special cases. The reason for having two musicians playing the same instrument is to have more performance flexibly by covering for each other.

Initially, Queen belonged to an entertainment agency, but as the director who had worked with Queen left the agency, they left the agency as well and have remained an independent performance group. This tendency—working independently after leaving a company—is quite common among fusion *gugak* groups since, as many musicians note, fusion *gugak* musicians do not make a lot of money from each performance, and they receive an even smaller amount of money if it comes through their agencies.⁷

When Queen belonged to their agency, they were not responsible for managing their schedules or marketing. Currently, however, as an independent group, they employ various strategies to promote themselves in the market.⁸ It is very common for *gugak* musicians/groups, regardless of their genres, to promote their performances through social media such as Facebook and blogs. But one major difference from “non-fusion” *gugak* groups lies in the existence of a contact number on their social media, located where anyone who wants to request a performance can easily find it. In addition to social media promotion, independent fusion *gugak* groups send their promotional materials to

⁶ Although the leader has not changed, there have been several member changes since their debut. These are the current members of the group, but it is possible that there will be more member changes in the future.

⁷ Entertainment agencies take commissions for performances, but some agencies do not pay musicians on time, or even cheat them by taking a larger commission.

⁸ After leaving their agency, the *geomungo* player, Park Jinyoung, has taken on the roles of manager and leader, taking responsibility for marketing, scheduling, and directing.

booking agencies, or *gongyeon baegeupsa* (literally, performance distributors), which serve as intermediaries between clients and performers. This kind of active self-promotion in the market may have contributed to their reputation among *gugak* musicians as being “too commercial.”

Queen is one of a few fusion *gugak* groups aggressively promoting themselves on YouTube. As of January 25, 2018, their YouTube channel has 9,426 subscribers.⁹ The most viewed video is Japanese animation Inuyasha’s theme song, “Affections Touching Across Time” (a total of 212,088 views as of September 1, 2017), followed by their performance on a special TV show (110,052 views) and a cover of “Let It Go” from the movie *Frozen* (104,502 views). Beginning in 2013, they started to post a handful of their live performance videos on YouTube.¹⁰ Since the beginning of 2016, they have vigorously posted not only their live performance videos but also videos of them hanging out backstage and playing various types of cover songs on a regular basis. As a result, the number of subscribers has rapidly increased from 3,074 on June 29, 2016, to 5,000 on August 4, 2016, reaching approximately 10,000 subscribers on January 25, 2018. As they gain a reputation in the market through their appearances on a few influential TV shows and vigorous offline and online promotion, more people have directly contacted them for performance invitations.

Queen is based in Seoul, but they perform all over Korea, including Jeju island, and internationally. In Korea, they perform at various occasions, including local festivals,

⁹ Considering that most independent fusion *gugak* groups have approximately 100-300 subscribers, the number of subscribers to Queen’s YouTube channel is significant.

¹⁰ As will be explained below, some or all portions of the audio for these “live” performances are often pre-recorded.

corporate events, and conferences. Moreover, they have performed in more than twenty-one countries, including the USA, Italy, Vietnam, Russia, Honduras, and South Africa, just to name a few. Many international performances are by invitation from overseas Korean embassies for celebrating an anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and the respective countries, or for performing at *hallyu* (Korean Wave) festivals.



Figure 5.2a and 5.2b. Queen members wearing two different *hanbok*-style dresses. Source: Queen’s Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/fusionqueen/> (accessed September 1, 2017).

One of the main reasons for Queen’s success in the market is their efforts to satisfy the needs of their clients by offering various repertoires,¹¹ ranging from folk songs to K-pop dance covers. Although Queen has one song that they wrote, called “Queen’s Melody,” the majority of their repertoire—over 50 pieces posted on their blog—consists of covers of various well-known musics in Korea, which include Korean TV drama soundtracks (*Jewel in the Palace*, *Moon Embracing the Sun*), movie soundtracks

¹¹ It is my intention to use the term “clients” rather than “audiences.” In many cases, fusion *gugak* musicians perform what their clients want, and not what audiences may want to see. But it seems hard to blame fusion *gugak* musicians for considering their relationship with their clients. I will discuss this more in detail in Chapter 6.

(*Mamma Mia*, *Mission Impossible*), Korean folk songs (“Arirang,” “Doraji,” “Ongheya”), Western popular music (“Let It Be,” “Hey Jude,” “You Raise Me Up”), K-pop music (“Gangnam Style,” “Gee,” “Shake It”), and popular music and folk songs from other countries (Japanese boy band SMAP’s “Sekaini Hitotsu Dakeno Hana,” the Irish waltz “Marino Waltz”). After reviewing the audiences’ responses, they adjust their repertoire. Sometimes, they stop playing (or pretending to play) their instruments and perform dance covers of K-pop girl groups such as Girls’ Generation and Sistar. Their clients select a list of music from their repertoire, or they select music that suits the theme and atmosphere of each event.

As some people call Queen a “performance group,” Queen’s stage performance is more than just playing music standing in one place. While playing, they move around on stage, take certain poses, and present “proper” playing postures, including facial expressions, according to their repertoire. Their every movement on stage is carefully choreographed and requires some rehearsals. A few musicians who played with Queen to cover a missing member told me that remembering their choreography was much harder than playing their instrumental parts.

To move in a carefully choreographed way while correctly playing the instruments is a challenging task. What enables their dramatic performance is the use of MR and AR, abbreviations for “Music Recorded” and “All Recorded,” respectively. Their meanings can slightly vary in different genres of music, but in fusion *gugak* performance, MR refers to recorded instrumental accompaniment—usually a synthesizer, strings, drums, or electric sounds effects without *gugak* instruments—that fusion *gugak* musicians can play along to. If everything is recorded, it is called AR. Performers do not

need to play their instruments if they use AR. All they need to do is to pretend to play or sing, and to focus on beautifully presenting their choreographed movements. According to a member of Queen, only singers sing live while others use AR. Although some musicians argue that using AR ensures performance quality, especially at outdoor events with poor sound systems, the use of AR is often controversial among fusion *gugak* musicians, as many of them disapprove of this practice.

Many fusion *gugak* musicians acknowledge that Queen's strategy is to strive for success in the market. For instance, Queen can play multiple roles in Korean cultural festivals as traditional musicians singing folk songs, young pretty female dancers performing neatly choreographed K-pop dance, and fusion musicians showcasing popular songs on traditional instruments. For clients, having Queen on stage is similar to killing multiple birds with one stone. At the same time, however, this very strategy makes other fusion *gugak* musicians concerned about Queen's identity as a fusion *gugak* group.

5.3.2. Hanayeon

Hanayeon is a fusion *gugak* group that seriously contemplates their future as an ensemble and prepares their transition from a fusion *gugak* group to an acoustic *gugak* ensemble, which makes them a distinctive case among fusion *gugak* groups. Hanayeon was created in 2012 by two friends graduating from the same school: Kim Yeonju (*haegeum*) and Jeong Bora (*pansori*). For the first year, they belonged to an agency that provided initial investment costs. But unlike Queen, whose members were recruited by an agency through auditions, the two friends took a leading role in recruiting two other members whom they already knew, because they believed that it would be beneficial not

only to maintaining a relationship between the members but also to their music. After the first year, they found another agency to release more albums. However, as the agency did not provide enough performance opportunities and banned the members from performing individually and as a group elsewhere, they decided to leave the agency and became a standalone music group in 2014.



Figure 5.3. Hanayeon members' picture on the front page of their promotional material.

Hanayeon consists of four female *gugak* musicians, mostly in their early thirties: Kim Yeonju (leader, *haegeum*), Kim Minjeong (*gayageum*), Jeong Bora (*pansori*, vocal), and Kim Hayeon (*daegeum*). The name of the group, Hanayeon, refers to “*eumageuro* ‘hana’doeneun in ‘yeon’ ” which can be roughly translated as “connection through music.”

Initially, the members considered Hanayeon as a temporary project for making extra money. But as Hanayeon gained relative success in the market unexpectedly, the group activity became their main source of income. Primarily, they promote themselves through social media, such as Facebook and a blog, and receive performance invitations from booking agencies. When Hanayeon members asked booking agents why they preferred Hanayeon over other seemingly similar fusion *gugak* groups, the agents said that it was not because their music was better but because the members were fixed and did not change.

The leader of Hanayeon, Kim Yeonju, also says that they could have “great chemistry” from the beginning because all members knew each other before they joined the group. She further notes that in case of other fusion *gugak* groups that are run by agencies, it is very common that members do not know each other before joining a group. In these groups, it is likely that there will be more troubles between members, and consequently, members are frequently changed, in which case presenting a high quality performances is halted until a new member is recruited and adjusts to the group.¹²

As briefly discussed above, despite some critical disadvantages, the main reason why Hanayeon decided to sign a contract with their former agency was because of their desire to release their albums. This is what separates Hanayeon from other fusion *gugak* groups. Although it is common for fusion *gugak* groups today to make a recording of their music by themselves for promotional use, Yeonju notes that this was very rare when they first started in 2012. Starting from their first album *Barami Bunda* (Wind is

¹² Although it has to be very careful about generalizing the situation for all fusion *gugak* groups run by agencies based on one person's opinion, I have also witnessed several other cases that eventually led existing members to leave their groups.

Blowing) in 2012, Hanayeon has released four albums: *Happy Hanayeon* (2014), *Romantic Hanayeon* (2015), and *Feel [sic] So Good* (2015). In these albums, Hanayeon showcases their ability to arrange folk songs, Christmas carols, and Western popular music, and to compose new pieces incorporating traditional elements or motifs from traditional pieces such as “Sarangga.”

Although Hanayeon has some songs that they composed or arranged, such as “Wind is Blowing” and “I’ll Forget,” the majority of the songs in their repertoire are covers of K-pop music (“Gee,” “Gangnam Style,” “What a Beautiful Land”), foreign music (“Take Five,” “Feels So Good,” “Secret Garden”), and TV drama and film soundtracks (“Nella Fantasia,” “Under the Sea,” “Onara”). Similar to Queen, they are based in Seoul, but perform at various public and private events, and local festivals across Korea. Also, they have been invited to international events and have appeared on TV shows including *Gugak Hanmadang*, the only TV program solely devoted to *gugak* on a public broadcasting service.

Hanayeon members note that it was a complete surprise when they received a call from *Gugak Hanmadang* regarding their appearance in the program, because this program is known for catering to the “academic-side” of *gugak* performance, and fusion *gugak* groups, such as Hanayeon, have not been part of that. Yeonju believes that this was because of their concept as an acoustic fusion *gugak* group who tries to avoid using MR as much as possible. She says that if clients need a group that emphasizes choreographed movements, they would call groups such as Queen. But if what they need is a group focusing more on music than dramatic performance, they would call Hanayeon instead. It does not mean that Hanayeon’s performance completely lacks choreographed

movements. They may not “dance” while playing, but they do have simple choreographed movements, such as waving the arms.



Figure 5.4a and 5.4b. Hanayeon has eight different styles of costumes. Although they have Western style dresses too, most clients expect them to wear *hanbok* style dresses. Source: Hanayeon’s promotional material.

Currently, Hanayeon’s goal is to find a way to survive as a group in the long term. Although Hanayeon was created solely for financial purposes, as the relationship between the members has become stronger, they have turned their eyes to more sustainable and secure job opportunities, such as educational programs sponsored by Arts Council Korea (ARKO).¹³ Hanayeon has created a series of music education programs for K-5, and in 2016 they held several lecture demonstrations at schools, sponsored by ARKO.

Yeonju says that developing educational programs and applying for funds are time consuming and stressful. It is much easier to perform at a designated time and place,

¹³ Arts Council Korea (ARKO) is a government funded, nonprofit organization. The Council’s main goal is to bring arts closer to Korean citizens by supporting arts organizations and artists by providing grant-giving services.

and this is why other fusion *gugak* groups are not interested in these projects. But she notes that this is “the only way” they can survive as a group without having a contract with an agency unless they gain great fame and are firmly established in the field. Although experience matters, it is hard to ignore the importance of performers’ appearance in fusion *gugak*. Hanayeon’s members are aware that one day they can be pushed out of the market by the emergence of new, younger fusion *gugak* groups. But educational programs are different. These are less about performers’ appearance, and more about the qualities of music, content, and experience. They believe that if they continuously develop their career in educational programs funded by the government, they will be able to continue their work as a group in the long term.

Today, Hanayeon maintains an ambiguous status in between a fusion *gugak* group and an acoustic *gugak* group. Although it may not always result in a positive outcome, Hanayeon’s members believe that their in-between status works well for them as they enter a different stage of life, facing marriage and child rearing. The members agree that they would not want to and probably could not do the same kind of performance, wearing short dresses and performing choreographed movements to MR, five to ten years from now when they enter their forties. In the same vein, they think that the fact that *Gugak Hanmadang* contacted them is a positive sign, which demonstrates that their transition from a fusion *gugak* group to an acoustic group is smoothly underway.

5.3.3. Meein

Meein, meaning beautiful women in Korea, is the youngest group among the four fusion *gugak* groups discussed in this chapter. Meein entered the market quite smoothly

and has developed their career relatively quickly as a new group formed in March 2016. Since clients tend to prefer experienced groups, it is likely that a new fusion *gugak* group without an agency faces difficulty in finding performance opportunities, especially in their first year. Leader Lee Dayeong also notes that it is hard for a new group to have even one performance; thus, when they had nine performances for the first two months after their debut, it was a surprise for everyone. Two of the initial members of the group, Lee Dayeong and Sin Soeul, had performed together in Queen, and it seems that their previous experiences have put the group in a more advantageous position for starting a new group.

Initially, Meein consisted of four members, Lee Dayeong (*haegeum*), Sin Soeul (*daegeum*), Park Hyejeong (*pansori, gayageum*), and Jung Isoo (percussion), who already knew each other before creating the group. After less than a year, however, three members left the group, and Dayeong realigned the group by recruiting new members and adding new instruments and a vocalist. Currently, there are six members: Dayeong (leader, *haegeum*), Aram (*gayageum byeongchang, sogum*), Eunji (Western vocal), Pyeolyi (violin), Suhyeon (*gayageum*), and Minkyung (*haegeum*).¹⁴ Contrary to the initial members, the new members, except Eunji, went to the same school. I should note that this chapter is based on the interview with the initial four members.

¹⁴ The group's website only includes musicians' given names and not their surnames. This practice is more common in K-pop idol groups than in *gugak*.

Gayageum byeongchang is a genre in which a performer sings while simultaneously playing a *gayageum* accompaniment.



Figure 5.5a and 5.5b. Fusion *gugak* girl group Meein. Initial members (top) and current members. Source: Meein’s Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/fusion.meein/> (accessed September 9, 2017).

Unlike the previous two fusion *gugak* groups, Queen and Hanayeon, Meein did not sign any contract with agencies from the beginning, to avoid any restrictions being imposed on them. As two of the members already had experience as members of Queen, they could strategically plan what was critical for them to advance in the field. For instance, leader Dayeong founded her own company, “Meein Entertainment,” and

proceeded with business registration. Moreover, they made their debut on the same day that they released their first single, *Meeinirang* (With Meein). Four months later, they released their second single, *Gidarida* (Waiting). Having their own albums brings multiple benefits: 1) it is more effective than written promotional materials; 2) it tells clients that this group is a serious, professional group; and thus 3) it enables the group to charge more for their performance. Hanayeon's efforts to release their albums despite restrictions and disadvantages from the agencies also serve the same purpose.

Moreover, they have put considerable effort into promoting their blog. Soeul, who was in charge of marketing and promotion, said that:

When you start a blog, it is important to post something every day. So we have posted our selfies, performance pictures, and 10 questions and 10 answers [*10mun 10dap*] for promotional purposes. It was especially hard in the beginning because although we released our album, we did not have any performance videos. . . . Eventually, we had some videos uploaded with the help of an acquaintance. (August 23, 2016)

Along with their social media, they did not forget to distribute their promotional materials to booking agencies. In these materials, they introduce themselves as “*gugak* girl group” Meein. Most of the time, however, they use “*fusion gugak* girl group” instead, because audiences are more familiar with the term “*fusion gugak*.” Sometimes, emcees introduce them as a *gugak* idol group, like “Girls’ Generation of the *gugak* field,” which makes the members embarrassed, but in a positive way.

As an independent group from the beginning, determining how much they charge for their performance has been up to the Meein members. They note that this was particularly tricky to deal with because they had received a lot of advice that they should be careful about deciding how much they would charge for their first performance. If they charge less, clients will demand more performances at the same price, asking why

they charge more than for the previous performance. Soeul notes that some clients suggested even lower prices in exchange for making video recordings of their performance. While hoping some clients would pay a reasonable amount of money for the service they received, they had to reject several requests. They say that this kind of negotiation is particularly prevalent among fusion *gugak* groups and can be detrimental in the long run, because some agencies put together fusion *gugak* groups—often performing to AR instead of giving a live performance—and send them to perform, catering to those who look for hiring performers at a lower cost.

5.3.4. Lin

Among the four fusion *gugak* groups discussed in this chapter, Lin is the only group belonged to an agency, Soop Music Art. Naturally, the director has the strongest influence on determining Lin's musical characteristics and overall directions. The director believes that *gugak* has a lot of potential for becoming a “world music” that anyone across the world can enjoy, which he hopes to accomplish through Lin. He also aims at overcoming a prejudice that fusion *gugak* groups perform to AR because of their “incompetent performance skills.” For this reason, Lin has frequently presented acoustic performances, playing both traditional *gugak* and covers of popular music, and has collaborated with various orchestras domestically and internationally. As a conductor/composer himself, Director Yeo Inho has composed and rearranged seventeen pieces for Lin, making Lin very different from other fusion *gugak* groups, who only play covers, without their own music. Moreover, since 2013 Lin has released nine recordings,

most of them singles, which would have been impossible if Lin did not belong to the agency.



Figure 5.6. Current members of K-Pera Lin. Different from other fusion *gugak* groups, they do not wear Western dresses even in their promotional materials. Source: K-Pera Lin website. <http://www.lin.or.kr/> (accessed September 9, 2017).

Since their debut in 2011 as “fusion *gugak* group Lin,” there have been several member changes, including a complete change of members as well as the name of the group in January 2017. When I interviewed the director and the members in 2016, the members were Lee Sinjeong (*daegeum*), Oh Sinae (*gayageum*), Kim Yeirin (*haegeum*), Kim Dohee (percussion), and Lee Mungyeong (Western vocal). But a few months later, the group underwent realignment, as the existing members left, and changed the group name to “K-Pera Lin.”¹⁵ “K-Pera” is a compound word of Korea and opera, referring to

¹⁵ Currently, Lin consists of Kim Heejin (*daegeum*), Kim Goeun (*gayageum*), Lee Miji (percussion), Sim Jasil (*haegeum*), Yoon Seron (Western vocal), and Kim Jisu (Western vocal).

“singing Korea.”¹⁶ “Lin” (隣) refers to “clear,” using a Chinese character which reflects the hope that Lin can present clear and beautiful music to everyone.

Although it is not uncommon to find member changes in other fusion *gugak* groups, it seems that Lin has undergone particularly frequent member changes. I believe that this shows the downside of fusion *gugak* groups working under agencies, which has made many musicians leave their groups. A former member of Lin says that she did not have a strong attachment to the group:

I like performing with the members. We speak the same language. But because we are not the kind of group who creates something together, but who copies what has already existed, I don't think I have a strong attachment to Lin. If someone tried to form at least a little bit of attachment when I first started, it would've been really different. But there was nothing. It's been like “Watch the clip and copy that!” It always came to my mind that someone can replace my position. It doesn't have to be me. So I don't have any attachments to Lin. I did it just because I like performing with the members. (July 26, 2016)

As she mentions, one of the best ways to develop a sense of group belonging is to create their music together and to take over the ownership of the group. This is one of the crucial reasons why Hanayeon's members could stay together for a long time period. They could not simply leave the group under control of the agency because they did not want to see other musicians taking their music and the costumes that they had developed together. In fact, one of the former members who left Lin three years ago notes that she had a plenty of opportunities to collaborate with composers and artists in different genres, and this was what made her want to remain in the group despite her long-overdue paychecks from the agency. A strong bond was formed between the then-members who

¹⁶ The director had prepared to use the name “K-Pera” from a few years ago, and obtained the Certificate of Service Mark Registration.

also had attachments to the group. According to her, that was when Lin was thriving, without continuous member changes that were major distractions for members.

In the end, frequent troubles with the director seem to be the major reason for the instability of Lin. As the group belongs to the agency, this automatically puts the agency (director) in a position of power, “*gap*,” and the members in a subordinate position, “*eul*.” As *eul*, members are expected to follow *gap*, the director, and often experience “*gapjil*,” a behavior in which *gap* treats *eul* unfairly by exercising his/her power.¹⁷ Former members complain that the director did not listen to their opinions, forced them to follow certain directions that he had decided for them, and did not pay an appropriate amount of money to the members on time. When they complained to the director about an unbearable amount of pay for three-to-seven-day-long international performances, what they heard from him was extremely frustrating: “There are so many people who would be grateful for this money. I can just take them instead.” Although I should acknowledge that technological developments have reduced fusion *gugak* musicians’ dependency on agencies, interpersonal interactions between musicians and agencies should not be ignored as an important factor that has detached many members and groups from agencies.

¹⁷ Today, *gapjil* is a serious social problem in Korea. According to a survey, 89.1 percent of workers have experienced *gapjil* at least once. Nine out of ten workers state that they have suffered from diseases caused by *gapjil*, such as stomach troubles, headaches, insomnia, anorexia, and hair loss (Choi Sung-jin 2016).

5.4. Gendered Performance

When *gugak* groups who were more oriented toward popular music, such as SOREA, began to appear in the early 2000s, a few male musicians were visible. However, as a demand for the kinds of groups who perform covers of various popular music at local festivals and private events outside designated cultural venues has increased, the groups have evolved to meet the demand by optimizing their groups' features. Currently, as discussed earlier, these groups are called fusion *gugak* groups and are completely dominated by female musicians. Although her definition of fusion *gugak* is much broader than that of mine in this chapter, Ruth Mueller points out that the lack of comparable all-male groups in fusion music is significant. She argues that it is “more related to the issue of public perception and the association of *kugak* fusion with young female musicians” (Mueller 2013: 264), but does not provide any further analysis.



Figure 5.7a and 5.7b. Comparison between SOREA in 2005 (left) and 2016. The presence or absence of a man and their change in costumes reveal a stark difference between the two.¹⁸

The small number of male musicians in *gugak* can be a primary reason for the lack of all-male fusion *gugak* groups. But there is a more fundamental reason, reflecting

¹⁸ Although it is unclear whether SOREA has disbanded at some point in 2017, I cannot locate any information on the group after March 2017.

the basic principle of capitalism: supply and demand. The market wants female fusion *gugak* groups because the consumers are mostly male. Many musicians note that, except for local festivals open to the public, the majority of events at which they perform have all-male audiences. Bora indicates that:

When I go to events, audiences are either half men and half women or almost all men without women. Lots of events are comprised of male audiences only. Structurally, it's all men because of the glass ceiling for women. Of course they prefer all-female groups and ask them to wear short dresses. It is about consumption. They don't appreciate music but consume the images. That's why some people swing the *daegeum* like 007 [James Bond]. It's about performance to impress people. (August 25, 2016)

Another musician also says that male audiences prefer to “watch” performances of young and pretty female musicians, wearing fancy costumes. She further states that male musicians’ costumes are “not as fancy as those of females,” and it is hard to imagine male musicians, wearing suits or *hanbok*, playing while standing and moving their bodies.

These opinions are not limited to female musicians. In Chapter 3, I examined the current performance practice for the 25-string *gayageum* and its reception by male *gayageum* players. While being critical of sexualized performance, male musicians also acknowledge that audiences prefer female musicians wearing sleeveless dresses over male musicians wearing suits. Even public institutions reinforce the polarization of gender in fusion *gugak* by only recruiting all-female groups. According to a member of a fusion *gugak* group directly affiliated with the Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation, “there is nothing that men can do.”¹⁹ The fusion *gugak* field is already occupied by all-

¹⁹ The Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation is a public institution under the Cultural Heritage Administration. It deals with the preservation and transmission of traditional culture.

female groups who can easily mimic the images of female idol groups. When a man joins a group, it only complicates the group's marketing strategies without adding meaningful benefits. For a similar reason, K-pop is full of all-female and all-male idol groups, but co-ed groups are extremely rare (Lee Suan 2011: 212).

As discussed previously, fusion *gugak* is more than playing covers of familiar music on traditional instruments. The visuality of performance (Finchum-Sung 2012), including the appearance of individual members, is extremely crucial. In fact, for some groups, visuality, not the quality of the music, is the most central aspect of their performance, because they can simply use AR. As some musicians argue, using AR can deliver a better performance to audiences, because the groups often have sound problems at outdoor spaces if they try to play live. Many musicians point out, however, that AR is often used to disguise the poor musical skills of some musicians. Many fusion *gugak* musicians have seriously studied their majors for many years, but as one's appearance becomes the most important criterion for fusion *gugak* musicians, some groups began to accept people based on their appearance, not their musical skills.

Moreover, it does not seem to be rare that musicians are asked to play a completely different role to cover for missing positions. For instance, a *pansori* singer is asked to play a *daegeum* player's role in a show, or a *geomungo* player plays—or, more accurately, “pretends” to play—the *haegeum* after practicing fingerings and motions to present it more realistically. According to several musicians, some agencies based outside of the Seoul metropolitan area create a group with good-looking young females who can enticingly “perform” choreographed movements on stage. Because their musical skills were not a subject of consideration, these groups “hand-sync” to AR which is recorded

by professional musicians.²⁰ Although these are extreme cases, it seems hard to deny that the importance of musicians' appearance is paramount in fusion *gugak*.

A friend of mine, who is a *gugak* musician on the academic side, jokingly told me a rumor about fusion *gugak* musicians' investment in their appearance:

They make money and invest in their appearance. Then clients call them again because they are pretty. Then they make more money, invest in their appearance, become prettier, are called by the clients, make more money, invest in their appearance, become prettier, are called by the clients. . . . So I heard that they become prettier every day. Because they use AR, their motion is everything. If they play live, they can't make large motions like that. Large motions are important. That's how the clients think. (August 12, 2016)

I first assumed that it was a rumor exaggerating the reality out of disdain these musicians. But soon, I realized that it was not a completely false rumor. A former member of a fusion *gugak* group told me that everyone's favorite topic was plastic surgery: sharing information about well-known surgeons, types of surgery, and their ongoing experiences. Other fusion *gugak* musicians, too, acknowledged their investment in their appearance.

Certainly, not every musician has had plastic surgery, but most of musicians I have met agree that "staying in good shape" is essential because their job is "to show on stage." What do they show on stage? Why do they think that they have to "stay in good shape"? For them, "staying in good shape" does not simply mean being physically fit or healthy. It refers to very specific ideas of female bodies, reflecting localized notions of femininity in Korea. What fusion *gugak* musicians do on stage is more than playing music and making motions that are empty of meaning. From their physical appearance to

²⁰ If lip-sync is a term for singers, "hand-sync" (*haendeu singkeu*) is a parallel term for instrumentalists pretending to play their instruments to pre-recorded music, often called AR in Korea.

dance movements, I argue that their performances epitomize the notion of “appropriate” or “ideal” feminine bodies in Korea.

According to anthropologist Jane C. Desmond, choreographed behaviors in dance enact notions of sexuality and gender, embodying dominant codes within society:

These motions [choreographed behaviors] gain their meanings in relation to dominant discourses about “male” and “female,” about “masculine” and “feminine,” about “heterosexual” and “homosexual.” They also do so in relation to movement conventions that have their own resonant histories on the stage and in daily life. . . . How one moves, and how one moves in relation to others, constitutes a public enactment of sexuality and gender. . . . Perceptions of such enactments are always calculated in relation to the perceived biological “sex” of the mover and in relation to the dominant codes for such signs. (Desmond 2001: 4-6)

Similarly, notable dance scholar Sally Banes argues that the choreographed image of women has “reflected and reinforced, but has also formed and in some cases criticized cultural conceptions of corporeality,” specifically those of women’s bodies and identities (Banes 1998: 1).

Although fusion *gugak* musicians’ movements are fundamentally restricted because of their instruments,²¹ their performance is the site where the notions of “appropriate” femininity is publicly enacted through their movements on stage. While they play instruments, they focus on movements emphasizing their long, slender legs. Except for a few occasions, fusion *gugak* groups play standing up. Most of the time, they close their legs while playing. Depending on the music, they repeat movements that slightly spread and close their legs. Or they slightly move their body left and right on the

²¹ While other musicians can move around the stage, *gayageum* players are fixed in the same spot, because the *gayageum* has to be laid on a stand. Although a movable stand with wheels is available today, musicians say that it lacks practicality. For this reason, some fusion *gugak* groups do not have *gayageum* players.

spot while keeping their legs closed and posing in a half squat (Figure 5.8). For instruments such as the *daegeum* and *jangu*, musicians walk toward the front of the stage like a catwalk model, making an “X” by crossing one leg ahead of their opposite leg, while playing the instruments.



Figure 5.8. Hanayeon’s vocalist and *haegeum* player (the two people in the front) are posing in a half squat while making big smiley faces. Source: Hanayeon’s YouTube channel. <https://youtu.be/doUJkwhrKEs> (accessed September 15, 2017).

When they do not play their instruments, their motions become larger and more diverse, using their arms (Figure 5.9). They fully stretch their right arms diagonally upward while slightly spreading their legs, or walk on the spot, making an “X,” with arms akimbo. If the original music had simple choreography, such as in trot singer Hong Jinyoung’s “Sarangui Baeteori” (Love Battery), fusion *gugak* musicians cover the dance movements as well as the music.²² In the case of vocal music, instrument players are relatively free, as the vocal becomes the center of attention, and this allows them to

²² Trot (*teuroteu*) is a Korean popular music genre known for its vocal embellishments and repetitive, two-beat rhythms.

perform more diverse choreographed movements. Moreover, since it is common for musicians to play solos one after another, especially if using MR, there is enough time for them to make slightly more active motions.



Figure 5.9a, 5.9b, and 5.9c. Queen members stretch their arms diagonally upward (top), and walk while crossing their legs with arms akimbo (middle). Meein members cover the original choreography of “Sarangui Baeteori” (bottom). Source: Queen’s YouTube channel. <https://youtu.be/JVXZYzc0LfA> (accessed September 15, 2017); Meein’s YouTube channel. https://youtu.be/xgD_4jRDnTM (accessed September 15, 2017).

Although fusion *gugak* musicians' movements are not as overtly sexual or suggestive as those of many female musicians in the popular music industry, it can still be suggestive, with sleeveless off-shoulder mini dresses and 5-inch high heels which bluntly reveals the performers' body shapes, especially their long, slender legs. Chuyun Oh argues that Girls' Generation's legs have been considered as "ideal" bodies, similar to a female ballerina's legs, which symbolize female beauty with particular emphasis on "slim and elongated legs." As their legs evoke admiration, a type of cosmetic surgery called Girls' Generation Injection (*sonyeosidae jusa*) has become popular among Korean women (Chuyun Oh 2014: 59-60). Moreover, she further points out that Girls' Generation's choreography, using small portions of their bodies and limited space, represents traditional gender ideology through the gendered space and movement. Surprisingly identical movements are also observed in fusion *gugak* performances. Except for singers, who walk around the stage to induce more enthusiastic responses from audiences, fusion *gugak* musicians do not move beyond a limited space around them, even when there is enough space on the stage.



Figure 5.10a and 5.10b. Girls' Generation wearing naval-like uniforms, emphasizing their almost identical long, slender legs (left). Fusion *gugak* group Queen's picture (right) is almost identical to that of Girls' Generation.

Several scholars have contended that mass media have played a critical role in spreading and consolidating the image of “ideal” female bodies in Korea (Lim In-Sook 2004a, 2004b; Chung Jae-Chorl 2007; Lee Suan 2008, 2011; Hong Ji-A 2010). In particular, female idol musicians’ “sexy” bodies, having an “S-line” (*eseu rain*, having ample breasts and hips) and slender legs, quickly came to symbolize “appropriate” female bodies, desired by both men and women. These sexualized female bodies are one of the most powerful tools for obtaining the public’s gaze, something that is very important in the capitalist consumerist society (Lee Suan 2011).

But the male and female audiences have distinct attitudes towards these sexualized female bodies. While women identify themselves with idol musicians, men objectify the musicians and enjoy watching them (Lee Suan 2011: 210). According to sociologist Lim In-Sook (2004a, 2004b), women use these images, which have spread through the media, as a criterion for judging their own bodies, leading them to go on a diet or to have plastic surgery. If they have experienced discrimination based on their appearance, they tend to have low self-esteem and are more likely to go on a diet or have plastic surgery.

One fusion *gugak* musician says that she has experienced such discrimination from clients and especially from agencies. According to her, the importance of group members’ appearance is paramount for fusion *gugak* performances:

Because they are all-female groups, clients do not like them if they are fat or ugly. They directly tell female musicians that they are ugly. Same in the agencies, too. If someone is a little bit overweight, agents say to her that she has to lose weight, or demand to replace her with a new member.
(August 25, 2016)

She also points out that this does not apply to male musicians with whom she has performed together. It seems that clients and performance directors are not concerned about overweight male musicians, but only about female musicians, which she thinks is “ridiculously unfair.”

Female musicians are conscious of the fact that their market value is closely related to their pretty (sexy), young female bodies. They strive to stay in good shape, but at the same time clearly understand their limits as they age. Despite some criticism for sexualizing their bodies, many musicians note that “not everyone can do this,” rhetoric that I further investigate in Chapter 7. They believe that only young, good-looking women have the potential to succeed in the fusion *gugak* market, and that they are fortunate to have the “appropriate” appearance. To maximize their potential, individual members control their bodies themselves, such as losing weight if one looks heavier than the others, and monitor each other because, according to a fusion *gugak* musician, “clients select a group by looking at their pictures first and then videos, and if their music is ‘not that bad,’ they are hired” (October 19, 2016).

It is clear that female musicians are aware that their youthfulness and sexy female bodies are “cultural capital” which dictates their positions within society, and by utilizing it they can seize a vantage point in the market (Bourdieu 1986). Some scholars, however, urge caution in reading this tendency as actual empowerment of women in Korean society. The belief that having the “ideal” female body will facilitate women’s desire for social power is, in reality, a process of self-objectification and internalization of certain values prescribed by a patriarchal social order (HanSeo Seola 2000; Park Jung Hee 2015). Nonetheless, considering the current circumstances in which many *gugak*

musicians suffer from unemployment after college graduation, female fusion *gugak* musicians' efforts to advance in the market by utilizing their cultural capital deserve proper recognition.

Chapter 6. The “Disciplinary Society” and its Discourses on Fusion *Gugak* Musicians

It took a long time until I realized that I was thoroughly disciplined to think and behave in a certain way through my ten-year long specialized education in *gugak* which started from middle school. My acceptance to Gugak National Middle School was the pride of my parents because it is a “national” school, directly funded by the government. Soon, I began to take great pride in my school—it had school buses (only a few wealthy private schools had school buses) and great facilities, provided unique experiences, and all students had Korean government scholarships. I studied court music traditions for the first year, and *sanjo* (instrumental solo music) was added to the curriculum from the second year. Since then, classical Korean music (*jeong-ak*) and *sanjo* have occupied a central place in almost all parts of my life, including school curricula, competitions, college entrance exams, and even my recitals. They were engraved on my mind as the roots of *gugak*, which had to be protected and promoted.

In Gugak National Middle and High School, female students had to wear long skirts and grow our hair long, so we could perform in a “proper” manner—legs are covered and hair is braided. Moreover, a teacher told us to show both our pride and elegance while playing the *gayageum*. When I played at family events, I could not stand it if people talked over my music because I was upset with them for not treating the music properly—I was not a *gisaeng* but a well-trained musician playing music that deserved people’s attention. Popularization and globalization of traditional *gugak* were the foremost goals for *gugak* musicians, and they were my goals too.

It was not until a few years after I left the *gugak* field and Korea that I was finally able to see the power relations and circulation of dominant discourses within the *gugak* field. As Foucault (1990, 1995) indicates, some discourses gain the currency of “truth” and govern how people think and behave. In Chapter 5, I have discussed scholarly discourses on fusion *gugak* as a new genre. In this chapter, I want to focus more on discourses related to fusion *gugak* musicians as individuals. As discussed in Chapter 5, fusion *gugak* has been otherized in the *gugak* field because of its association with low quality, commercialized music. Similarly, fusion *gugak* musicians have been marginalized in the field, and discourses surrounding them are almost entirely negative. Throughout this chapter, I examine the dominant discourses on fusion *gugak* musicians and analyze them using Foucauldian notions of power, knowledge, discipline, and surveillance.

6.1. Discourses on Fusion Gugak Musicians

In the 2000s, when I was in the *gugak* field as a *gayageum* player, those who played commercially oriented music were not considered to be serious, respectful musicians. If I had had to perform it, I would have done it secretly because of the negative perception of commercial music. A decade later, I still hear the same kind of criticism with regard to fusion *gugak* groups. I notice a small difference in comparison to the past that more people acknowledge the need for fusion *gugak* for the general public. However, they always end their conversations with “but I do not want to play it.”

One of the most common discourses on fusion *gugak* musicians is that “fusion *gugak* musicians are failures in their musical career.” Many non-fusion *gugak* musicians,

or what might be called “normative” musicians, think that fusion *gugak* musicians are incompetent. They supposedly lack sufficient musical skills, and thus have given up their careers in playing traditional or “serious” music and only play easy listening, low-quality music. A member of a *gugak* group who is also an eminent orchestral player believes that all music groups have to have their own abilities to create their own music using sources inherent in themselves, and those who do not have such abilities will end up playing music in which they slightly rearrange existing pieces.

Moreover, one fusion *gugak* musician notes that many people have asked her why she plays fusion *gugak* after graduating from “prestigious schools,” implying that fusion *gugak* is not for well-trained, competent musicians. Many people also believe that the reason for the groups’ use of AR is the musicians’ incompetency. *Gugak* critic Lee So-young claims that fusion *gugak* musicians’ flashy stage presentation is “an excuse for performers’ inability to take full responsibility for competent music-making” (quoted in Finchum-Sung 2012b: 405).

Another common discourse is that “fusion *gugak* musicians are only concerned about their appearance.” With regard to fusion *gugak* musicians, I have seen many musicians who associate them with plastic surgery. They satirically told me that “fusion *gugak* musicians spend all their money on plastic surgery.” People believe that when wearing revealing clothes and making sexualized movements, the quality of the music is not of interest to the fusion *gugak* musicians. Their stage presentation may appeal to broader audiences, but non-fusion *gugak* musicians think that musicians should concentrate on delivering their feelings through music. A member of a renowned *gugak* group notes that:

Fusion *gugak* musicians don't think about what their honest feelings are, but only think about how they're seen by others—how they can be seen as prettier and kind by others. But I prefer “real music.” Our real selves. I really don't like to wear pretty clothes and hot pants on purpose. That's not us. (November 14, 2016)

Another musician says that it is difficult to keep a smiley, pretty face when she is immersed in her music. She thinks that expressing her feelings through music should be the top priority, and she should not ruin the music by being concerned about how she would be seen by others or how her photos will look.

There is a similar discourse that often comes with the previous discourse that “fusion *gugak* changes musicians' behavior.” Most of the time, this statement is made in relation to musicians' obsession with their appearance. I have heard many non-fusion *gugak* musicians making statements such as “She wasn't like that before, but she's getting weird after she started the group,” referring to a performer wearing sexy clothes and being concerned about her appearance. These kinds of claims are mostly made by fusion *gugak* musicians' friends and fellow non-fusion *gugak* musicians who blame fusion *gugak* practices for the inappropriate changes in their friends and colleagues. Clearly, for some people, fusion *gugak* has a negative impact on musicians.

In his article on fusion *gugak*, Keith Howard also introduces similar sentiments he has heard from composers and performers of *gugak*:

I have no interest in *kugak* fusion. It is not Korean, and it has no real connection to our music. Those who create music *need to have a greater understanding of tradition*.

It's not that *kugak* fusion is bad, but the performers often *sacrifice quality of playing* for approachability. They want audience appeal rather than quality.

It is true that composers make things too complicated, so there is a role for music that is simple. But too much of *kugak* fusion is about being *pretty*

and sexy. It is about trying to get quick fame. It is closer to pop than to *kugak*. (Howard 2011: 210-11, emphasis added)

Although Howard's use of the term fusion *gugak* ("*kugak* fusion" in his terminology) is much broader than mine, these statements clearly demonstrate the same kind of stereotyping of fusion *gugak* musicians as lacking an understanding of tradition and prioritizing their appearance and audience appeal over the quality of the music.¹

As discussed above, these discourses often focus on female musicians' appearance, condemning their performance as well as everyday behavior as overly sexualized and feminized. The commercial, easy-listening quality of fusion *gugak* performance further excludes its musicians as incompetent and less dedicated to "serious" music, or the "norms." I postulate that this "feminized" *gugak* destabilizes prescribed norms and the authority of "canons" in the *gugak* community, which have been created and dominated by a patriarchal social order that I further discuss in the next section. Thus, I argue that the discourses on fusion *gugak* musicians ultimately reflect fear of the emasculation of authoritative *gugak*.

Fusion *gugak* musicians are fully conscious of these negative discourses surrounding them. In fact, before actively participating in fusion *gugak*, many of them were college students dedicated to traditional music, sharing the same negative images of fusion *gugak*. As traditional musicians, their first impression of fusion *gugak* was that it was unbearable. One of the fusion *gugak* musicians says that she had "culture shock" when she was asked to move around the stage while playing her instrument. She performed to cover a member of a group at the request of her close friend, but she could

¹ Considering the multiple definitions of fusion *gugak* used by *gugak* musicians and scholars, each informant could have had different ideas of fusion *gugak* at the time of speaking.

not bear wearing off-shoulder dresses and making movements while playing. Soon, she resolved “not to do this ever” because it was “extremely bizarre” (*doege isanghaeseo*).

Other musicians, too, note that they “absolutely hated” fusion *gugak* before they knew what fusion *gugak* really was. Before she joined a fusion *gugak* group, she even harshly criticized her friends who played fusion, saying “What the f*** are you doing?” Another musician states that she has constantly heard negative stories. For her, fusion *gugak* was “what non-*gugak* musicians lip sync.” In addition to these stereotypes, her friends kept criticizing her and trying to convince her to stop playing fusion *gugak*, and it has had a profound influence on her. She says “It was traumatic.”

Hilary Finchum-Sung argues that *gugak* musicians’ choices to incorporate visual elements are “deliberate individual choices reflecting the goals of the performance and personality of the performer” (2012b: 420). Moreover, “visuality not only aids performance goals but also *enhances the reputations* of performers as *kugak* artists (ibid.: 397, emphasis added). It seems clear, however, that not all types of visuality “enhance” the reputations of performers. As discussed above, the visuality of fusion *gugak* groups functions in the exact opposite way—it tarnishes musicians’ reputations.

Although the *gugak* community has become less conservative and authoritative today, many *gugak* musicians—especially those from older generations—still believe that contemporary endeavors of musicians should be allowed only to the extent that they do not damage traditional music. Considering the criticism and negative discourses on fusion *gugak*, it seems clear that fusion *gugak* musicians exceed that standard. Traditional art director Han Deoktaek problematizes fusion *gugak* groups’ “excessive packaging,” in lieu of “artistic experiments,” for the purpose of gaining audience appeal. He also states

that some fusion groups ruin traditional *gugak* by “being too showy [and] wearing too sexual clothes” (Han Deoktaek 2013). Moreover, an established *gugak* musician says that despite the general popularity of fusion *gugak* groups, “no one in the *gugak* field believes that fusion *gugak* represents authentic *gugak* and will play a leading role in developing the field” (July 31, 2016). For many musicians, fusion *gugak* is a cause for concern, as it can provide a “wrong” image of *gugak* to general audiences and eventually can “damage the integrity of traditional *gugak*.”

Gugak musicians’ preoccupation with “traditional” *gugak* has continued for a long time. Shin Younghee, who has been certified as a holder of the Important Intangible Cultural Property No. 5, *pansori*,² recalls that she was reproached by *gugak* musicians for appearing on a popular TV comedy show, “Sseurirang Bubu,” from 1988 to 1990.

Although her appearance on the show was well-received by most audiences, the fact that a traditional *pansori* singer played the *buk* (drum) and made *chuimsae* (exclamations) on a comedy show was “unacceptable” for most *gugak* musicians, to the extent that some called for expelling her from the *gugak* field. She notes that her teacher had been enraged for one year and had tried to persuade her to stop appearing on the show, since comedy shows and comedians were considered “lowbrow” at that time (*Sudokwon Today*, YTN, February 17, 2012; *Yang Changwook’s Achim Journal*, BBS, May 15, 2015).

It might have been weakened today, but the same kind of perceptions still haunt *gugak* musicians today. Senior cultural reporter Jeong Sangyoung has written a critical article, pointing out the “narrow-mindedness” of *gugak* musicians, in *Gugaknuri*, one of

² This is a literal translation of the Korean term “*jungyo muhyeong munhwajae boyuja*.” Certified holders are also called “Living National Treasures,” or *ingan munhwajae* in Korean.

the few *gugak* magazines. He describes his conversation with a senior *gugak* musician about Song Sohee, a female folk singer in her teens who enjoys unprecedented popularity as a *gugak* musician and appears on various popular TV shows and in commercials. As he praised Song Sohee's presence in the media, the senior *gugak* musician also negatively responded by stating:

Years of experience is the most critical element in performing *gugak*. If *gugak* prodigies [like Song Sohee] perform publicly while still lacking their maturity and artistry, they can give a wrong impression to audiences. . . . I am concerned that TV shows and commercials distract her from studying *gugak*. She should concentrate on studying *gugak* at her age. (Jeong Sangyoung 2014: 36)

Moreover, he criticizes the *gugak* community's negative views of *gugak* festivals presenting fusion *gugak* and popular music. By quoting *gugak* critic Yoon Junggang, who was "scolded" by elderly *gugak* musicians for presenting non-traditional, more popular styles of *gugak* at festivals in 2004 and 2005, Jeong urges *gugak* musicians to change their attitudes that "blindly adhere to tradition" (ibid.: 37).

The same kind of attitude that prioritizes tradition over other music seems inherent in many people in the field, even including those who are regarded as making "shocking" movements in "modernizing" *gugak*. While stressing the "brave" attempts of the National Theater of Korea to engage with "fusion *gugak*," the CEO of the National Theater of Korea proudly states that "Korea is known as the country that has protected traditional music the most among other Asian countries, different from Japan and China whose traditional music has been Westernized too much" (Ko Jaeyeol 2015). Apart from the question of whether he speaks about facts, his statement implies that even when modernizing *gugak* is performed, it must be based on tradition and must not be "too Westernized."

6.2. Formation of Discourses

How are these discourses on fusion *gugak* musicians produced and circulated? Who produces them? Why are certain discourses dominant over others? Where did the idea of prioritizing “tradition” originate? Why do *gugak* musicians strive to protect certain musics as “tradition?” In the end, what are the “traditions” that many people are eager to promote? Has this situation always been the same? In the following sections, I investigate how the *gugak* community as a whole operates according to the Foucauldian notion of “disciplinary society” by producing certain discourses, training musicians, keeping them under surveillance, controlling their behavior and conduct, and producing “docile bodies” (Foucault 1990, 1995).

Currently, many people uphold an idea that traditional music is the foundation of and the most valuable asset in Korean music history. I argue, however, that this is also an outcome of discursive processes, produced by the “polymorphous techniques” of power. Borrowing Foucault’s approach to investigating discourses, in this section I trace the changes in discourses on *gugak* and investigate how power has operated in creating particular discourses in the modern history of *gugak*. Since today’s negative discourses on fusion *gugak* are due in large part to dominant discourses on traditional *gugak* and those who have firmly internalized them, I focus on the development of discourses on *gugak*, traditional *gugak* in particular.

6.2.1. In the Early Twentieth Century: Backward, Pre-modern, and Old

In order to compare how discourses on *gugak* changed in the early twentieth century, first I briefly discuss music on the Korean peninsula in the eighteenth and the

nineteenth centuries, when different styles of music were enjoyed along class lines and regional divisions. In the mid-eighteenth century, as it became common for people to pay for music performances, music held two major functions: 1) to reach a certain stage of mind through devotion to music, following the Confucian ideal of music; and 2) to entertain people or to make profit by performing music. In the nineteenth century, a demand for entertainment music increased even more. According to Kwon Dohee (2004), people paid a substantial amount of money to performers to enjoy more dynamic and impressive performances. Although musicians were the lowest class within the rigid caste system in Korea (then known as “Joseon”), they often performed for the upper class, and people were not hesitant to pay them for their performances.

Since Korea had a rigid caste system, the financial ability to afford expensive performances generally corresponded to individuals’ social status. Accordingly, social status and financial means were determining factors of music consumption. It is important to note, however, that people who did not have any means to hire musicians also enjoyed music in different ways. They played music by themselves or enjoyed informal performances taking place in the local markets and public places in a village (Kwon Dohee 2004). In other words, until the mid-nineteenth century people’s musical experiences were restricted by their social statuses and regions, and there was no one particular genre of music that was widely circulated across class lines and regions in Korea.

From the late nineteenth century, previously existing social orders started to be reshaped as Korea underwent “modernization” after opening its door to Japan and the Western countries. Western music (*yang-ak*) was introduced during this time period, and

the term *gugak* was used for the first time in 1907 (Howard 2006: xvii). Since its introduction, Western music has been widely appreciated—a condition that produced the current dichotomization of *gugak* and *yang-ak*—and the geography of music in Korea began to change rapidly. However, Western music did not encroach on most Koreans' lives from the beginning; rather, it took considerable effort to make this happen.

Among the new Western technologies introduced to Korea in the early twentieth century, the effects of phonographs and radios on Korean music culture were significant. Through phonographs and radios, music, detached from the performers who played it, could be enjoyed anywhere and at any time without temporal and spatial constraints. Having a strong association with “modernity,” these two new technologies allowed music to travel freely across the country and, more importantly, contributed to the homogenization of individual musical tastes. Due to their high price, phonographs in particular were often used to attract people to various public events and to entertain a group of people in public spaces. As people were repeatedly exposed to music played on phonographs on the street, they started to develop common sentiments and tastes (Zhang Eu-jeong 2007; Woo Sujin 2014).

As people began to build their own habits of listening and formed an “imagined community” sharing the same musical tastes (Anderson 1991), conflicts between groups enjoying different styles of music were revealed, such as the younger generation preferring popular music (*yuhaengga*) versus the older generation preferring traditional music, and the stark contrasts in musical tastes between those who lived in the southern regions and western regions of Korea (Seo Jae-kil 2006: 196). Moreover, as Western music became a symbol of “modern” and “elites” toward the 1930s, musical tastes were

no longer a naïve choice of individuals; rather, they exercised symbolic power denoting the class hierarchy (Bourdieu 1984).

The following excerpt from a newspaper article clearly demonstrates the hierarchy between Korean music and Western classical music:

According to an owner of an instrument store in the city, Korean people show strong favoritism toward foreign music when buying instruments. Even when they buy one phonograph record, they prefer to buy something like Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, which is the type of music that not only Korean people but also Western people themselves find it difficult to understand. They feel *proud* of themselves for buying such records. When the owner of the store recommends Korean music, people flatly refuse by saying "Ah, that stuff, I don't like Korean music!" There are many people who consider talking and knowing about Korean music as some sorts of *humiliation* [*chiyok*]. (*Maeilsinbo* 1930, emphasis added)

The subtitle of this article, "Would It be Possible for Our Proud Korean Music to Gain Its Popularity Again?," also implies the dwindling status of Korean music in the 1930s.

Certainly, these habits of listening and favoritism toward Western classical music did not take place overnight. When new technologies were first introduced, Korean music outsold other musical genres, including Western and Japanese music. In particular, phonograph record sales reveal dramatic changes in music consumption. Unlike radio broadcasting, which was controlled by the government from its introduction in 1927, the spread of phonographs and recordings was directly related to the commercial interests of Japan and the United States beginning in the early 1900s. It was inevitable for phonograph companies to investigate consumers' musical preferences to make more profits from the Korean market by producing records that would appeal to local consumers.

At first, Korean music such as *pansori* and folk songs, or what is called "*gugak*" today, dominated the record industry. By the 1930s, six major record companies started

their businesses in Korea and invested in “discovering” new *pansori* singers such as Im Bangwul and Kim Sohee, who gained popularity through phonograph records as well as radio (Bae Youn Hyung 1991, 2006).³ However, the prosperity of Korean music was short-lived, as Korea was culturally and politically under the strong influence of Japan after its annexation of Korea in 1910. The proportion of Korean music recordings plummeted from 90 percent to 50 percent in the 1930s and was eventually taken over by Western music and Japanese popular music (*ryukoka*) records after 1935 (Bae Youn Hyung 1991: 1073).

The driving force behind these notable changes in music consumption was a major shift in ideology, which produced dominant discourses on the superiority of Western music over traditional Korean music. As Western technologies had a strong association with modernity, to the extent that anything from the West was considered “modern,” Western music indexed as “modern” and “advanced” to Koreans, especially the elite class who experienced Western technologies and admired Western countries.

According to a report on the music tastes of Keijō Imperial University (*Gyeongseong jeguk daehakgyo*) students,⁴ 87 percent preferred Western music (Jung Seoni 2002: 133). These so-called “intellectuals” and “elites” of colonial Korea gathered in a café and enjoyed Western classical music played on phonographs (Jang Yujeong 2008). Western classical music was a virtue that modern intellectuals with “refined”

³ Today, *gugak* musicians consider Im Bangul (1904-1961) and Kim Sohee (1917-1995) as the “great masters” of *pansori*.

⁴ Keijo Imperial University was the sixth Imperial University of Japan, founded in Keijo (present-day Seoul) in 1924, on the Korea peninsula under the Japanese colonial regime. It was founded to supply skilled manpower, and many graduates became government officials.

tastes “must possess,” whether they truly enjoyed it or not, in order not to be alienated from the mainstream (Lee Kyung-boon 2010: 168).

From the 1920s on, Western music was constantly played on the radio, and many Japanese and foreign classical musicians performed in glamorous concert venues.

Maeilsinbo (Maeil Newspaper) described the status of Korean musicians as “those living in a rented room [*setbangsari*] after giving the main building [*anchae*] to guests [foreign musicians playing Western classical music]” (*Maeilsinbo* 1940). Since Western classical music concerts were often held in clean and “modern” venues in Japanese residential areas as opposed to “dirty and inferior” venues in Korean residential areas, this also instigated many Korean intellectuals’ admiration for Western and Japanese culture as being “modern” (Jun Wooyoung 2001: 191-92).

Meanwhile, traditional music was “otherized” and rejected as “static, backward looking, and passive” as opposed to “dynamic, forward looking, and active” Western music (Hong Nanpa 1934). Korean musicians who studied Western classical music played a pivotal role in spreading these discourses across class and regional divisions through newspapers and popular magazines. For instance, in an interview for *Maeilsinbo*, Ahn Giyoung, a renowned tenor and composer who studied at the Ellison-White Conservatory of Music in Portland, referred to Korean traditional music as “antiques” and insisted on creating music based on Western music tradition:

Reporter: What do you think about old music [*guak*]?

Ahn Giyoung: I have not studied in depth, so I cannot say in detail. But Joseon’s music is not the music for new Joseon.⁵ Rather, it is *music from the past like antiques*. We cannot listen to the same music that has been

⁵ Joseon was a Korean kingdom that lasted from 1392 to 1897. Although Joseon was officially elevated to the “Great Korean Empire” (*Daehanjeguk*) in 1897, “Joseon” was still widely used during the first half of the twentieth century.

played from several thousand years ago. (*Maeilsinbo* 1932, emphasis added)

Maeilsinbo was a pro-Japanese newspaper owned by the Japanese Government General of Korea, publishing articles in favor of Japanese colonial policies. Considering the *Maeilsinbo*'s political stance and the placement of Ahn Giyoung's interview at the top of the second page, taking up a large space, it is plausible to say that these are the kind of views that were either already accepted by many Koreans, actively promoted by the elites and the Japanese Government General of Korea, or both.

Ahn Giyoung's idea of a hierarchy between Korean traditional music and Western music is clearly delineated in his article:

In regard to your argument that Korean folk music should be accompanied by Korean instruments, such as the *janggu* [drum] and *gayageum* [zither], not the Western piano, I will ask you, "Isn't it better to use the *gayageum* than the *janggu*?" Then your answer must be yes. If so, I can say that the piano is better than the *gayageum*. Why? There are two important elements in music: pitch and rhythm. Among the two, the *janggu* can only play a rhythm, and not a note. In other words, this is a *primitive instrument* that is still used often by primitive people. In comparison to that, the *gayageum* is better because it can play both notes and rhythms.

But the *gayageum* can play one note at a time, whereas the piano can play multiple notes at once. In short, the *gayageum* can play a single melody, while the piano can play a melody with chords. (Of course, not to mention rhythms.) *The piano is the best instrument because it can do a greater variety of things than any other instruments in the world today.* . .

If you say it is impossible to use Western seven-note scales to accompany Korean folk songs in five-note scales, I will refute your argument by asking where the seven-note scale originated. . . . So-called Western seven-note scales are . . . what happened when oriental scales were transformed and *developed* as Western.

. . . . If a five-year-old boy wears a seven-year-old boy's clothes, it would be a little bit big for him. But it is not bad for *the younger brother*. It would be better to dress him in his two-year older brother's clothes than to leave him naked. . . . Using the piano as an accompaniment is to create harmony. *Thus you would get a perfect result if a Western orchestra accompanies Korean folk songs.* (Ahn Giyoung 1931: 66-68, emphasis added)

Although it is hard to dismiss Ahn Giyoung's contribution to the development of Korean folk songs in the 1930s and 1940s,⁶ his statements clearly demonstrate his attitude toward Korean traditional music and Western music: traditional music is “primitive” and in need of the help of its “older brother”—Western music.

From the Korean elites who were assimilated into the Japanese colonial regime, the discourses on the superiority of Western music spread out. Through new technologies, which enabled people to build a shared sentiment and taste across class and regional divisions, these discourses could reach ordinary Koreans, eventually changing their musical tastes and attitudes. In this rapid transition period, we should not overlook how power was exercised. Foucault notes that:

Power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the “privilege,” acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions. . . . [T]his power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who “do not have it”; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them . . . This means that these relations go right down into the depths of society. (1995: 26-27)

Although Koreans were forced to learn and use the Japanese language, given the circumstances in which traditional music was still performed in colonial Korea, it would have been unlikely that people were physically punished for listening to traditional music. Rather it was the position of Western classical music and the complex networks of power in colonial Korea that exerted pressure on Koreans by making them feel “less modern” or even “inferior” for not listening to Western classical music. As a result, intellectuals or so-called “modern” Koreans created and circulated discourses on Western

⁶ Ahn Giyoung (1900-1980) actively composed folk songs using Western musical idioms. Also, he recorded several folk songs, popular music, and hymns with major record companies such as Columbia Records and RCA Victor. In 1950, he defected to North Korea and continued his active career as a voice professor and composer (Song Bangsong 2012: 498-500).

music and Korean traditional music. They could claim that Western music was superior to *gugak* and could claim its truth because a system of power relations existed.

6.2.2. From the 1950s to the 1970s: “Nationalization” of *Gugak*

After the liberation from Japan and the end of the Korean War (1950-53), a newly discovered national identity resulted in widespread nationalistic pride and solidarity among Koreans. Western music was more widely appreciated than *gugak*, and even Japanese popular music still remained, despite censorship. Against the fear of the loss of Korea’s traditional cultural identity, the Korean government promoted “national music” with a very specific intention to assert the “distinctiveness and superiority” of Korea (Killick 1991). The dominant discourse of this period can be epitomized by music critic Park Yong-gu’s words: “*gugak* must be protected, Western music must be developed, and Japanese music (*ryukoka*) must be eliminated” (Park Yong-gu 1946). But why did *gugak* have to be “protected”? Since the discourses created during this period have had a lasting impact on contemporary discourses on *gugak*, including those on fusion *gugak*, it is worth investigating the discursive formation of these discourses.

Although the Korean government promoted *gugak* as national music by emphasizing it as, for instance, “four thousand years of ancient tradition that several foreign delegates enjoyed” (*Kyunghyang Sinmun* 1948), people had different opinions on dealing with *gugak*. *Gugak* musician and scholar Seong Gyeonglin (1955) wrote that there were four different views: 1) a negativist view which claimed that “*gugak* was useless,” 2) a passive view in which “*gugak* is not something that should be thrown out, but simultaneously, does not deserve to be highly valued,” 3) a sympathetic view which

revealed discontentment with the current low status of *gugak* because people believed in the importance of *gugak*, and 4) an activist view which prioritized *gugak* over anything else.

It seems that these views were not merely the subjects of scholarly debates on *gugak*, but shared sentiments among ordinary Koreans. A correspondence between two radio listeners published in “A Letter to the Editor” (*dokjatugoran*) in *Dong-A Ilbo* (Dong-A newspaper) is an apt example. One listener wrote a letter titled “I Don’t Like Listening to Foreign Music”:

Whenever I listen to the radio these days, foreign music takes up the most part. I understand that it has good intent . . . but these titles of music give listeners headaches because it is a waste of our precious time by listening to “this is so-and-so’s masterpiece” or “so-and-so’s composition from the foreign countries,” which makes us annoyed as we listen. Our country has a lot of great musical resources. . . . I am wondering if radio directors know that we say it [Western music] sounds like a “narrow-mouthed toad’s call” [*maenggongi uneun sori*]. (Byeon Jongwook 1949)

Eight days later, another listener wrote a letter titled “I Like Western Music, Too,” in response to the previous letter:

I cannot believe that you, someone who is interested in music, compared foreign music with a narrow-mouthed toad’s call. . . . I cannot stop laughing. . . . Time has passed. . . . We should accept and digest things if they are what we need and should know. . . . Have you listened to Caruso . . . ? If that sounds like a narrow-mouthed toad’s call to you, I can introduce an ear doctor to you. (*Dong-A Ilbo* 1949)

The author of the responding letter introduced himself as a “citizen enjoying listening to radio,” and did not reveal his name but only his hometown (Hanu). Except for this very limited information, it is hard to know who these listeners were and what kinds of background they had. But, considering that a very similar opinion piece was published in

the same newspaper two month earlier,⁷ it seems plausible to assume that this was one of the controversial issues that people discussed during this time period.⁸

Meanwhile, the legacy of the Japanese colonial regime continued to haunt many Koreans, who perceived *gugak* as “old, pre-modern, and passive.” Although, in his article “New Year’s Plan and Resolution,” composer Na Unyoung advocated the need for studying *gugak*, his language describing *gugak*, using words such as “primitive” and “antique,” reveals how Koreans, especially so-called elites, perceived *gugak*:

We should study *gugak* thoroughly. Although *gugak* is an *antique*, there cannot be any new improvements without learning our heritage and our tradition that have been handed down from our ancestors. . . . We, Western music players [Koreans who play Western music], should start over with a clean slate and thoroughly study it. Also, we should systematize *the primitive* by using scientific methods. Like other foreign powers have established their national music with their musical nationalism, our renaissance will emerge as we study *gugak*. (Na Unyoung 1950, emphasis added)

Despite some residual problems, it is noticeable how people changed their attitudes toward *gugak* after the liberation.

Korea’s efforts to establish *gugak*’s status as national music got into full swing, led by the Korean government, after the Korean War. One of their central strategies to protect and promote *gugak* under the domination of foreign music was to establish educational institutions specifically devoted to *gugak*. In 1954, Gugaksa Yangseongso (school for *gugak* musicians) was founded to train the next generation of *gugak* musicians, and the first Korean music department was established at Seoul National

⁷ On April 28, 1949, listener Song Hansik also sent a letter to the editor to complain about the dominance of Western music that “the majority of Koreans could not understand” on the radio.

⁸ Considering the limited availability of the newspapers published around the 1950s, it is possible that there were more letters similar to what I discuss here.

University in 1959. In addition, *gugak* scholars urged people to recognize the need for the systemization of *gugak* education and for the designation of *gugak* as a mandatory subject starting in elementary school.

However, what had to precede this process was the elimination of the negative associations of *gugak* with being backward and pre-modern, and, consequently, discourses on the “modernization” of *gugak* began to take its shape. Most efforts to promote modern *gugak* were focused on adopting Western musical elements which indexed “modern” to most Koreans. For instance, *gugak* critic Yu Giyong (1960) suggested that writing new *gugak* textbooks was indispensable to the “scientific study” of *gugak*, and the first step was to transcribe *gugak* using Western staff notation, because *gugak*, except for *jeong-ak*, was largely based on oral tradition. In this process, various styles of vibrato and ornaments could not be precisely transcribed in Western staff notation. However, despite these shortcomings of Western staff notation, many musicians chose to use it in order to “modernize” *gugak* (Lee Bo Hyung 2008).

The modernization process of *gugak* was even more accelerated when Park Chung Hee came into power through a military coup in 1961.⁹ Although he criticized the modern history of Korea as “backward and stagnant,” he strategically utilized traditional culture as a tool to legitimize his regime by inspiring nationalistic sentiments (Jeon Jaeho 1998). In this period, “the revival of *gugak*” became a catchphrase, and *gugak* which had little or no place in most Koreans’ lives suddenly began to appear on various media outlets (Jeon Jiyoung 2005b: 119).

⁹ Two years after the Park military coup, he was sworn in as President in 1963.

However, the Park regime's interests in *gugak* lay specifically in promoting "*sin gugak*" (literally, new *gugak*).¹⁰ Instead of traditional *gugak*, which was considered "pre-modern," *sin gugak* was a perfect tool for the government, which was aggressively promoting "modern" Korea, as this music incorporated Western, or "modern," musical elements into *gugak*. Under the supervision of and with support from the government, composers actively created several new compositions that were either glamorizing the government or seeking the "pure" beauty of music, while ignoring massive social turmoil in the 1960s and '70s (Jeon Jiyoung 2005a).

For instance, the government established new awards for *gugak* musicians, such as the Korean Gugak Award (*daehanminguk gugaksang*) and May Cultural Award (*5wol munyesang*) in 1962, to encourage *gugak* musicians to compose new pieces. Although, on the surface, these awards were established for "encouraging *gugak* musicians and for the development of *gugak*," the real intention behind them was to make more musicians comply with the government and to enhance "the pride of the May 16 revolution" (Jeon Jiyoung 2005a).¹¹ Heavily sponsored by the government, these awards were not able to remain autonomous from the government's influence and were appropriated as a tool for propagating the government's policy. Referring to this government-led award system, which has remained the highest honor for *gugak* musicians until today, *gugak* critic Jeon Jiyoung argues that "it damages the inherent value of arts which is to provide

¹⁰ As new compositions incorporating Western musical elements were created, several terms were invented to refer to these new styles of compositions, such as *sin gugak*, *hyeondae gugak* (modern *gugak*), *gaejak gugak* (revised *gugak*), and *changjak gugak* (creative *gugak*). Currently, *changjak gugak* is the most commonly used term.

¹¹ The "May 16 revolution" was a military coup d'état carried out by Park Chung Hee. Although it is called the "May 16 coup d'état" today, it used to be called a "revolution" by Park and his allies.

constructive criticism to society, and this practice is abnormal in society because these awards should be given by the people and not by the president” (2005b: 207).

As the number of new compositions incorporating Western musical elements increased, although their themes were limited, *gugak* musicians were able to hold a solo recital similar to that of Western musicians. Lee Jaesook, then a graduate student and currently emeritus professor in the Korean Traditional Music Department at Seoul National University, was the first *gugak* musician who held a solo recital with her name in the title, “Lee Jaesook *Gayageum* Recital,” in 1964. Her repertoire contained *jeong-ak* (court/literati music), *sanjo*, and three new compositions. Today, the same combination of *jeong-ak*, *sanjo*, and new compositions is widely practiced as the standard for solo recitals, especially for senior recitals at universities, which demonstrates the importance of new compositions in *gugak* along with traditional music pieces.

As the process of modernization of *gugak* became intensified, traditional *gugak* was in danger of extinction. In addition, the government could not completely disregard tradition while actively advocating ethnic nationalism. For these reasons, in 1962 the Park regime promulgated the Cultural Property Preservation Law (*munhwajae bohobeop*) to protect both tangible (*yuhyeong*) and intangible (*muhyeong*) cultural properties. Later, in 1970, the law was revised to designate accomplished performers as holders (*boyuja*) of a specific cultural property, and they are now more commonly known as human cultural properties (*ingan munhwajae*).

Once performers were designated as holders, they were expected to contribute to the preservation and promotion of the “archetype” (*jeonhyeong*) of their cultural

properties, which signaled the dawn of the current obsession with tradition in the *gugak* field. Nathan Hesselink states that:

[M]ore importantly and profoundly, they [holders] must not alter or develop their art from beyond what was documented in the written investigation, under penalty of loss of status (and, for many, their primary means of livelihood). “Tradition” within such a framework is understood as *stable and static, impervious to changing cultural trends or fads, and frozen in time and space like a museum display*. Authority is located in governmental bureaucratic circles, not among the practitioners themselves. (2004: 407, emphasis added)

Being aware that the principle of preservation of the archetype was what had hindered the proper development of intangible cultural properties, on March 28, 2016, the government enacted a revised law to include “creative succession of traditional culture” (*jeontong munhwaui changjojeok gyeseung*). The law may be able to change overnight, but it may take a longer time for *gugak* musicians, especially older generations, to become more flexible in their approach to what they have protected and promoted as the “tradition.”

Moreover, it is worth noting that the majority of cultural properties which were designated in the initial stage in the 1960s and the 1970s were concentrated on art music practiced by professional musicians, and not local music which was in immediate danger of extinction. Since the purpose of this law was to secure the legitimacy of the government, art music was better suited to serving this particular purpose—it could easily be mobilized and presented in as large a scale as needed. As a result, even though court music traditions such as *Jongmyojeryeak* (the royal ancestral ritual and music) had been already systematically transmitted through specialized institutions, they were also designated as cultural properties (Jeon Jiyoung 2005a: 232-44). In this process, certain musical styles were accepted as “tradition” and regarded as being more worthy of

preservation than other musical styles, and this has influenced the current idea of what “proper” traditions are.

In the whole process of modernizing and preserving *gugak*, the National Gugak Center and its affiliated musicians played a pivotal role. After its establishment in 1951, the National Gugak Center was dominated by former musicians of Iwangjikaakbu, the royal court music office during the Japanese colonial period. Despite folk musicians’ demands for establishing one unified institution for *gugak*, court musicians who had already seized power at the National Gugak Center refused the demands and dismissed them as “a sly move aiming for government subsidies” (Seong Gyeonglin 1961).

Moreover, former Iwangjikaakbu musicians began to compare *jeong-ak* with Western classical music, or music of the elite, while comparing folk music with popular music, or music of the commoners. Although later scholars argue that such a categorization is misleading, it has consequences, some of which have still lingered in the *gugak* field. For instance, *gugak* professionals tend to perceive *jeong-ak* as “superior” to folk music and more worthy of study; thus, they tacitly create a hierarchy between *jeong-ak* musicians and folk musicians (Paek Dae-Ung 2003, 2004; Jeon Jiyoung 2005a). Although the overt conflicts between the two groups of musicians seem to be resolved today, the emphasis on *jeong-ak* in the current school curricula and the higher reputation of *jeong-ak* musicians in the National Gugak Center demonstrate the lingering influences of the past on the present, something which I discuss more in detail in the following section.

6.2.3. From the 1980s on: *Gugak* as “Inherently Korean”

Although it had obvious problems in terms of corruption, human right abuses, and censorship, it seems hard to deny that the Park regime successfully instilled the idea of *gugak* as national music into Koreans. *Gugak* was still distant from most Koreans’ lives, but people no longer considered *gugak* as something that must be thrown away as being “pre-modern, backward, and primitive.” The necessity for promoting *gugak* was repeatedly announced through various media outlets, and discourses on *gugak* as national music, which started to take shape from the 1950s on, continuously influenced the perception of *gugak*. Moreover, as the Kim Youngsam administration (1993-1998) designated the year 1994 as “the year of *gugak*” (*gugagui hae*), derived from the government’s *segyehwa* (globalization) policy and Korea’s cultural nationalism, the movements toward promoting *gugak* became more intensified.¹²

For instance, Han Myeonghee, then director-general of the National Gugak Center, emphasized that *gugak* must become the “national music of all Koreans” and argued that *gugak* is “the most effective art genre which can eliminate all the maladies of industrial society, because it has everything that is needed for recovering humanity.” He also advocated the legitimacy of promoting *gugak* because “more people around the world began to pay attention to Asian culture” (Park Sinyeon 1997).

On the other hand, what appeared to be different in the 1980s was a reaction against the government-led programs and policies. As Korea underwent a major transition to democratization in the mid-1980s, new compositions aiming to appeal to a

¹² People believed that globalization without proper basis in traditional culture could not be competitive and could not earn respect from other countries.

general audience emerged. Spearheaded by the younger generation of musicians, these compositions were distinguished from Western music-oriented or *jeong-ak*-styled compositions created by so-called the “elites” or mainstream musicians affiliated with the National Gugak Center (Jeon Jiyoung 2005a: 261-62).

Many *gugak* musicians and scholars, mostly those outside the National Gugak Center, argued that *minjung* (the people) should be the root of *gugak*, and they spoke out against *changjak gugak* that incorporated Western music elements. They criticized the “popularization of *gugak*,” because such attempts often ended up simply juxtaposing two very different musical styles: in this case, *gugak* and Western music. After a concert where a *samulnori* (Korean percussion music) group and pop singers collaborated, music critic Jin Hoesuk harshly criticized this commercialism by stating that “the concert showed how the sounds of *minjung* [*gugak*] can be violated under the logic of commercialism” (Lim Youngsun 2009: 30).

Even though there were two opposing sets of opinions regarding the specific ways to develop *gugak*, there was no dispute over *gugak*’s essential value in Korean culture. This discourse on *gugak* as undisputable Korean national music permeated the discussions of not only *gugak* professionals but also lay people such as taxi drivers and cashiers at local markets. Hilary Finchum-Sung states that during her fieldwork in Seoul in 2000 strangers tended to say “of course” when asked if they liked *gugak*, even though they could not name any genres of *gugak*. Moreover, most members of the general population she interviewed answered that although they did not like *gugak*, they felt that they should like it because it was “our culture.” She notes that the fact that she was a

foreigner made them more likely to answer in the affirmative, because otherwise they would be regarded as “anti-Korean” (Finchum-Sung 2002: 171).

Through discursive practices of government authorities, elites, musicians, scholars, and ordinary Koreans, the idea of *gugak* as national music that was essential to Korean culture became widespread, and finally permeated the everyday life of Koreans and their behavior (Foucault 1990, 1). *Gugak* obtained a status of “essentially Korean,” and this has had a great influence on constructing the idea among *gugak* professionals about what proper *gugak* is and how it is supposed to sound.

Hilary Finchum-Sung (2002) demonstrates how the belief in the innate “Koreanness” of *gugak* dominated composers.¹³ Drawing from Robert Morgan’s idea of canon, she argues that *gugak* scholars “create and recreate the *kugak* canon, a standard of sound and performance judged to be truly traditional, and they use *kugak*’s ‘canonic authority’ in deciding the kinds of music that are legitimately *kugak*” (2002: 58-59). According to her, composers highlight particular elements in their work that are identified as crucial components of “Koreanness,” such as rough timbre, certain rhythmic patterns, wide vibrato, and pentatonic scales.¹⁴ They also try to demonstrate the connection between their work and “canonical ideals” instead of discussing their innovations and contributions to the field, because the strong connection to “Koreanness”

¹³ Although her dissertation is based on her fieldwork in 2000 and 2001, the composers she interviewed had been active throughout the 1990s.

¹⁴ It is interesting to note that a rough tone quality, which is one of the important components of “Koreanness,” is seen as what must be removed to achieve a “clean” voice, which is the idealized voice quality to sing in a Western classical style (*seong-ak*) in Korea. In his book on the voice of South Korean Christianity, Nicholas Harkness (2011) examines the significance of “cleanliness” of the voice of Korean *seong-ak* singers in relation to an aesthetic of progress in Korean Christian culture and history.

is what determines the value of a composition within the *gugak* field. Moreover, she points out that descriptions of compositions tend to focus more on explaining musical structures and aesthetics identified as “Korean,” telling the listeners what is important and why.

Although Finchum-Sung’s work was published fifteen years ago, I believe that most of her arguments are still valid for describing the current scenes revolving around *gugak*. Specific musical details that the younger generation of musicians carry out seem different from what the previous generation of musicians did, since the younger musicians are more likely to draw on diverse sources of music from around the world. However, the kind of language that describes a piece has not been changed. Today, the majority of descriptions of pieces are still directed towards explaining the materials drawn from “tradition” or what might be considered “essentially Korean.”

In 2016, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the 21st Century Korean Music Project (*isibilsegi hanguk eumak peurojekteu*), one of the major *changjak gugak* competitions sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the winners of the first ten years held a homecoming concert together. Descriptions of each team and their award-winning pieces were printed in concert programs. As expected, all of the descriptions of pieces aimed at explaining the materials they drew from traditional *gugak*, such as *pansori*, rhythmic patterns, and folk songs, and how they incorporated these materials into their music.

These efforts to demonstrate that they are firmly grounded in tradition can be easily found in narratives of contemporary *gugak* groups as well as individual musicians. The belief that the connection to “proper” components of *gugak* makes one’s work

“legitimate” still dominates the *gugak* field, as if this is what determines success in one’s career. Or, indeed, this might be a determining factor in musicians’ career success, because otherwise they are likely to be alienated from the mainstream of the *gugak* field. As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, most *gugak* musicians have a certain idea about the extent to which *gugak* can be altered and still be legitimately *gugak*. By their standards, fusion *gugak* groups’ music does not demonstrate its connection to crucial elements of *gugak*, “canonical ideals” of *gugak*, or “Koreanness,” and thus naturally becomes a subject of criticism.

6.3. The *Gugak* Field as a “Disciplinary Society”

I have discussed discourses on fusion *gugak* musicians and the discursive processes behind their creation. For the last several decades, spearheaded by the younger musicians, various new attempts have been made in *gugak* to broaden its boundaries. But the discourses on what makes “legitimate” *gugak* still seem to hold an important place in the *gugak* field, consequently marginalizing “inappropriate” music such as fusion *gugak*. Currently, these discourses are prevalent among *gugak* musicians, including fusion *gugak* musicians themselves, and are used as important criteria for deciding their careers or judging one another.

Considering how these discourses operate in multiple levels of the *gugak* field and control individual bodies, I argue that the *gugak* community can be described as what Foucault calls a “disciplinary society:” “a certain way of acting upon and training the body and behavior so that the individuals who make up populations could be easily controlled” (O’Farrell 2005: 43). According to Foucault, this is guaranteed by an

indefinitely generalizable mechanism of the Panopticon, in which a permanent state of surveillance creates and sustains a power relationship independently, without the actual exercise of power (Foucault 1995). In this section, I focus on schools and the examinations, the instruments through which disciplinary power is exercised as examined by Foucault.

Gugak musicians constitute a relatively small, closed community. *Gugak*'s relatively low popularity in Korea seems to be the underlying reason, but more importantly I believe that this is a consequence of the specialized education system geared towards only a select group of students from an early age. There are a few high schools offering a curriculum specializing in *gugak*. However, the majority of active *gugak* musicians, including those who hold important positions in the field, graduated from Gugak National High School.¹⁵ Moreover, a major portion of these musicians also went to Gugak National Middle School. It would not be an exaggeration to say that all of these *gugak* musicians know each other with only one or two degrees of separation.

When I was an active *gayageum* player in Korea, one of the most frequent questions I received was whether I graduated from Gugak National High School (*gukgo nawateoyo*). Sometimes, I felt that graduating from this particular high school was more important than which university I went to. Once I found out that someone graduated from the same high school, I could feel an instant bond established between us. From strict school culture to teachers, friends, and various experiences, I could easily find many

¹⁵ National High School of Traditional Korean Arts is often mentioned as another major institution specializing in *gugak*. Although the number of its graduates standing out in the field has increased recently, the majority of important positions are still held by those who graduated from Gugak National High School.

elements in common with other graduates. Each year, 150 students are selected to enter, and for the next three years, or six years from middle school, they gain unique experiences distinguished from those of ordinary high school students who spend most of their time at their desks preparing for college entrance exams.

This network of musicians plays a crucial role in advancing in the field. Especially in a small field like *gugak*, this school tie is a strong way to connect with people. Because of the unique position of Gugak National High School in the field, most musicians can be connected through this particular school. For instance, someone knows who I am even though we have not met before, because s/he has heard about me from his/her friend who knows me in person. Having this network has been one of my strongest advantages during my fieldwork as an ethnomusicologist, because even though I did not know the majority of musicians I planned to interview, I was confident that I could easily reach out to them by using this network. However, this clique-like relationship makes some musicians outside the group feel intimidated and alienated, whether this is intentional or not. Moreover, it sometimes makes me feel tangled in a spider web—wherever I go and whatever I do, the school label always follows me and has an impact on interactions with other *gugak* professionals, in both positive and negative ways.

As discussed above, the *gugak* community has a certain idea of what “ideal” or “legitimate” *gugak* is and circulates negative discourses about those who deviate from their standard. I argue that the *gugak* community’s closeness and high level of conservatism are a perfect place for surveillance. As one of the main instruments for surveillance, I focus on Gugak National Middle and High School, where *gugak* students

embody certain values that put a particular emphasis on preserving and promoting what is thought to be “tradition.”

In 1972, Gugaksa Yangseongso was upgraded to Gugak National High School, and from the outset, its purpose was clear: “to train competent musicians to protect and develop *gugak*” (Song Bangsong 2012). In 1991, Gugak National Middle School was founded and systematically established special *gugak* curricula for selected students from an early age, continuing from middle school to high school and eventually to university.¹⁶ Gugak National Middle School was considered as “the cradle of professional *gugak* musicians who will succeed and develop our precious cultural heritages, *gugak*” and had an ambitious goal “to open a new era of development of *gugak* by providing systematic early *gugak* education within the current climate of music dominated by Western music” (Lee Yeonjae 1988). Since their establishment, these two institutions have been renowned for their specialization in *gugak* education.

Both Gugak National Middle and High School focus more on “traditional” *gugak* than on *changjak gugak*. In Gugak National Middle School, students focus on *jeong-ak* in their first year (equivalent to the seventh grade in the US) and learn folk music traditions in their second and third years, along with ongoing study of *jeong-ak*. *Changjak gugak* is added to their curriculum later, in high school.¹⁷ But prior to playing it, students are required to be firmly grounded in traditional *gugak*.

¹⁶ To advocate for the importance of early *gugak* education, Yoon Miyong, then president of Gugak National High School, pointed out the imbalance of *gugak* education, as there were thirteen undergraduate programs in *gugak* while no institution offered early education in *gugak*. Yoon also said that the establishment of Gugak National Middle School would play a crucial role in promoting *gugak* (Lee Yeonjae 1988).

¹⁷ As *changjak gugak* became an important part of modern-day *gugak*, Gugak National Middle School started to teach it to their students.

Shin Hyunnam (2014), then president of Gugak National Middle and High School, says that these schools have focused on the “fundamentals” of *gugak*. She also notes that the school’s role is to establish and maintain “authenticity” (*jeongtongseong*) in the sea of commercially oriented music such as fusion *gugak*, since “the roots of our music” will disappear if it is not properly embodied in students (Jeong Hyunjin 2015). Often introduced as a successor of the royal court music offices/educational institutions from Silla’s Eumseongseo in the seventh century to Iwangjikaakbuwon Yangseongso in the early twentieth century, the “fundamentals” often refer to the “*gugak* canon,” including *jeong-ak* and *sanjo*, and “authenticity” can be acquired by thoroughly studying these genres and their characteristics.

This tendency to prioritize *jeong-ak* over other styles of *gugak* continues in university curricula. For instance, since the first undergraduate program in *gugak* was established at Seoul National University (SNU) in 1959, its overall curriculum with emphasis on “traditional music” has remained similar until today. Although the curriculum slightly varies from one instrument major to another, in general students are required to take lessons on *jeong-ak* for the first four semesters, folk music for the next two semesters, and *changjak* music for the last two semesters. Although courses focusing on *changjak gugak*, such as *gugak* orchestra and *gugak* chamber music, have been gradually added in accord with the changes in the field, the overall course structure is still geared toward mastering traditional music (Lee So-young 2014).

Through seven to ten years of this so-called “elite training course” for *gugak* majors,¹⁸ students are trained and honed to perform *gugak* “correctly” in a particular way, and their performance is judged and classified through the examinations. Foucault notes that, among other disciplinary techniques, the examination is where the exercise of disciplinary power is particularly effective. It is “at the centre of the procedures that constitute the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge” (1995: 192). Individuals are obliged to reproduce particular types of behaviors, and their performance is measured and judged based on the “norm.”

In the *gugak* field, the majority of examinations are designed to discern the best traditional music players, according to what is considered the “norm.” Most *gugak* programs at universities designate particular pieces from a traditional repertoire, or the “*gugak* canon,” for their admissions audition. For the audition, students devote all their efforts and time to practicing those designated pieces, and those who are “better” than others enjoy the honor of entering prestigious schools and are regarded as “smarter, more talented, and better” than others. In fact, the same kind of hierarchy also exists in Gugak National Middle and High School, as most assessments of instrumental performance are based on students’ ability to play traditional music.

Moreover, students are encouraged to actively participate in *gugak* competitions outside school. Currently, there are over 100 *gugak* competitions, mostly aiming for the “preservation and transmission of traditional music” and “discovering talented musicians” (Jeon Jiyoung 2014). Among them, only a handful of competitions—such as

¹⁸ This refers to graduating from Gugak National Middle School (three years), Gugak National High School (three years), and four-year universities.

the Onnara Gugak Competition (Onnara *gugak gyeongyeondaehoe*), Dong-A Gugak Competition (Dong-A *gugak kongkureu*), and Jeonju Daesaseupnori Competition (Jeonju *daesaseupnori jeongukdaehoe*)—are acknowledged as particularly prestigious. In these competitions, participants are judged based on their performance of particular traditional pieces. Although a competition repertoire is designated by respective organizers each year, it does not significantly differ from the conventional repertoire which usually includes one or more *jeong-ak* pieces and a ten- to twenty-minute *sanjo*.

Among the more than 100 competitions, only a few of them are devoted to *changjak gugak*. The 21st Century Korean Music Project and the Myriad-Wave Concert (*cheonchamanbyeol konseoteu*) are the two renowned competitions which became a major platform for young *gugak* musicians to make their debut with their own compositions. At these competitions, individuals are not judged or ranked based on their abilities to perform traditional music. Disciplinary power is, however, certainly exercised here, invisibly but effectively: all participating musicians are encouraged and expected to incorporate “traditional elements” into their music and to demonstrate their thorough understanding of traditional music.

For instance, while the 21st Century Korean Music Project seeks to find ways in which *gugak* can be “modernized” and “popularized,” it also aims at creating new works by adopting the “traditional musical grammar” (*jeontongeumagui eobeop*), which is included in the judging criteria.¹⁹ Hence, as discussed in the previous section, it seems

¹⁹ The 21st Century Korean Music Project website, “Introduction.” http://www.kmp21.kr/kmp21/?sub_num=1146 (accessed November 18, 2017).

natural that most participants try to establish their connection to traditional *gugak* by describing traditional materials they have incorporated into their music.

The same kind of narratives could also be found at the Myriad-Wave Concert in 2016: “music that cleverly incorporates authenticity of Korean folk songs” (Jeon Byunghun Band), “newly arranged highlights of *pansori*” (Musicpixie Hollim), and “attempts to look at musical elements, styles, and instruments of traditional music from a different perspective” (Coterie Cain). This tendency was continued in a Q&A session at the end of each concert. At one of the concerts I attended, Ha Juyong, a *gugak* scholar serving as an emcee of the concert, made a remark on the performance. Pointing out the group’s use of other musical elements such as the guitar and blues, he clearly stated the significance of musicians’ efforts to make “high-class music” (*gogeupjin eumak*), because otherwise their music could be seen as “fusion,” or “cheap music” (*ssagurye eumak*). Musicians also explained the kinds of traditional sources they incorporated into their music, such as *sanjo* techniques adapted to play the 25-string *gayageum*. During the conversation, some audience members nodded. Although it was unclear whether they were in complete agreement, audience members, mostly *gugak* professionals and musicians’ families, seemed to have an implicit consensus on what is considered important in creating new styles of *gugak* and what would make their music “legitimate” *gugak*.

As performing particular types of *gugak* became normalized, so did the classification and hierarchization of individuals and, simultaneously, stigmatization of those who deviate from the norm. Through these instruments of disciplinary power, such as the schools and examination, performing traditional *gugak* and its “proper” succession

has been praised, while performing commercially oriented music, such as today's fusion *gugak*, has been discouraged and downplayed. Having deviated from the norm, according to many musicians, fusion *gugak* is not what dedicated musicians should pursue. People share negative views on fusion *gugak*, and criticize those who choose to perform it. They constantly observe others. At the same time, they are aware that they are also being constantly observed and are concerned with how others will perceive them if they choose a certain path.

During my interviews with fusion *gugak* musicians, many of them told me that they did not feel confident of themselves when playing fusion *gugak*, especially at the beginning, because they also thought that this was “cheap music” and knew how others would see them. One of the musicians says that she was ashamed of playing fusion *gugak* and could not tell anyone what she did. Moreover, negative reactions from her close friends and her feeling of shame hindered her from posting any pictures or thoughts about her music on her social media. She recalls that she considered everything else but traditional *gugak* performance on a proper stage as “*oburi*” where she would play easy-listening music for extra money.²⁰ Like many other *gugak* musicians, she also believed that *oburi* was not the kind of performance that “properly trained” traditional musicians, including herself, should pursue in their careers.

Following what was accepted as the norm, not only did her friends supervise her behavior, but she also censored herself. I argue that this is an apt example of how surveillance works in a disciplinary society such as the *gugak* community. Foucault

²⁰ *Oburi* is a term that is broadly used among general musicians to refer to performance at various settings such as wedding ceremonies, festivals, and clubs. *Gugak* musicians tend to consider *oburi* as a light, one-time performance for making extra money and tend not to take it seriously.

argues that surveillance functions like a piece of machinery. Its apparatus as a whole produces power and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field. It is “everywhere and always alert . . . and leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising” that functions permanently and largely in silence (Foucault 1995: 177).

Among fusion *gugak* musicians, there are only a few who graduated from Gugak National Middle and High School, and I was able to interview most of them. Considering the influence of the school and its graduates on the *gugak* field, I contend that the lack of their presence in fusion *gugak* has an important implication. The fusion *gugak* musicians graduating from Gugak National Middle and High School think that most graduates are too conservative and obsessed with performing traditional music. One of them even notes that students are “brainwashed” by teachers from a young age to believe in the high value of traditional music over other styles of *gugak*. She says that many people have a set idea about what *gugak* is in terms of tradition and tend to be judgmental when someone deviates from their standard. Another musician says, by comparing herself to other members of her group who did not go to specialized high schools, that people growing up in Gugak National Middle and High School have a completely different mindset.

For the six years I was in Gugak National Middle and High School, I was exposed to particular aspects of *gugak* and instilled with a particular set of values that were deemed “proper” and “legitimate.” My teachers emphasized playing traditional *gugak* instead of more popular styles of *gugak*, and when I saw someone who was less skilled at playing *jeong-ak*, I naturally thought less of them. I learned a few *changjak gugak* pieces, but the real focus was always on traditional music. Students, including myself, tended to

trust and follow what teachers said, because the relationship with them was believed to be crucial for our future as long as we stayed in the same field.

My foremost goal was to improve my traditional music playing skills and to enter a prestigious university, because I believed that my career was already decided when I entered this school, and everyone around me was rushing toward the same goal. We spent most of our time practicing traditional music to win competitions, to receive good grades at school, to enter prestigious universities, and ultimately to succeed as respected *gugak* musicians. There were a few dropouts, and those who were considered delinquents who could not adjust to this unique environment with strict rules and particular goals. In this school, we were the norm and they were the deviants.²¹

The following narrative of Hayeon, a fusion *gugak* musician who graduated from Gugak National Middle and High School, demonstrates how certain ideas can permeate individual modes of behavior and how disciplinary power is exercised through surveillance:

A friend of mine created a 50-minute long play with a group of comedians and other musicians. Her friend who graduated from Gugak National High School told her that playing traditional music was *gugak* and what she did wasn't *gugak*. She told me how it bothered her so much. She said that she wanted to play traditional music, but couldn't because there wasn't any opportunity to perform it.

The person who told her this is also a friend of mine. We are following each other on Instagram. When he saw my pictures [of playing fusion *gugak*] posted on my Instagram, he must've thought exactly the same way. It bothers me that he said such things directly in person. I try not to think about it, but it still annoys me. He's the same age as me, but

²¹ Students considered delinquents or deviants would not have been classified as such if they went to regular high schools. Students at Gugak National Middle and High School were under strict rules, controlling everything from the color of their hair ties to the kind of socks, backpacks, and shoes they wore and the ways to bow and hold/carry instruments.

he thinks like that! He's a man.²² There isn't such a rule that everyone MUST perform tradition. (October 21, 2016)

The male musician in this narrative had a strong idea that many *gugak* musicians uphold, and he tried to correct other musicians' behavior. Although Hayeon's female friend performed non-traditional music, she seemed to share a similar idea with the male musician: prioritizing traditional music over other genres. It seems that his comment bothered her because she felt that she was unfairly criticized for something of which she was well aware. Considering her response and the general tendency within the *gugak* circle, it is not hard to assume that if there were enough opportunities, she would have chosen to perform traditional music and, consequently, would not have received such criticism.

Hayeon says that his comment also annoyed her, but because of a different reason than her female friend mentioned in her narrative. What irritated her the most was his arrogant and disrespectful attitude towards other fellow musicians. Instead of complaining about the lack of opportunities in the field, she openly refutes the idea that prioritizes the value of traditional music and the belief that playing certain types of *gugak* is more worthy. Moreover, she is critical of a tendency in the *gugak* field which stifles students' individuality to produce uniformity in performance. She notes that, during her school years, she was told to match the angle of holding the *daegeum* with other players and was given a specific instruction to play vibrato with particular speed and pitch variation. She went to the specialized school because she wanted to play the instrument,

²² Korean does not use gender-specific personal pronouns; thus I did not know her friend's gender until she told me that the person was a man. I believe that she intentionally told me the person's gender, because we were talking about why there are no male fusion *gugak* groups and about male *gugak* musicians' perceptions of fusion *gugak*.

but the school's culture, putting a major emphasis on traditional music, was uninteresting, dull, and stressful for her.

Under the influence of disciplinary power, *gugak* musicians constantly supervise one another and discipline their bodies based on what is accepted as the norm in the field. As a result, fusion *gugak* musicians, perceived as deviants, became a subject of negative discourses. Although many fusion *gugak* musicians state that they were once swayed by these discourses, today they are not merely passively affected by them. I found that, like Hayeon, many fusion *gugak* musicians aspire to resist various constraints derived from the negative discourses and the discourses themselves. In the next chapter, I examine fusion *gugak* musicians' efforts to resist these discourses that confine their identity and behavior, and to take control of their own lives.

Chapter 7. Narrative Resistance of Fusion *Gugak* Musicians

“Why are you doing that [fusion *gugak*]?” “What you’re doing isn’t even *gugak*. You should do tradition.” “You must have had no choice [but fusion *gugak*].” These are some examples of comments that fusion *gugak* musicians have heard from their friends and teachers. A fusion *gugak* musician told me of her frustration when she first joined a group:

When I first joined the group, friends and teachers asked me why I was doing that. It must have been a surprise for them. They thought that I’d get into an orchestra [an ideal job for musicians]. People asked me a lot of times how come I ended up playing fusion *gugak*. Seriously A LOT. They told me to stop because “it was really cheap [*doege byeollolago*].” Really . . . There have been a lot! (October 19, 2016)

She indicates that even her close friends frowned at her and told her to stop playing fusion *gugak*. For her friends, it was genuine advice from people who cared about her life. For her, however, it meant a lack of respect for her personal values and beliefs. It is hard to imagine what it is like when everyone around you is critical of what you are passionate about, and to be stigmatized as a deviant or a failure. Through in-depth interviews with fusion *gugak* musicians, I have found that they are not merely passively affected by the negative discourses and do not shun the conservative *gugak* community; rather, they actively resist them and transform them into positive sites of empowerment.

I argue that “narrative resistance” is a useful framework for understanding fusion *gugak* musicians. According to sociologists Carol Ronai and Rebecca Cross, narrative resistance is “an active speech behavior which serves to decenter the authority of specific individuals or society to dictate identity” (1998: 105). As an identity management technique, narrative resistance enables a fusion *gugak* musician to assert an identity for

herself and to resist existing negative discourses made by others to constrain her identity and to control her body.

It is worth noting that the discourses on “legitimate” *gugak* function as a guide to what might be called “normative” *gugak* musicians, whereas they function as “discursive constraint” for fusion *gugak* musicians. Sociologist Carol Ronai defines discursive constraint as “the tendency of individuals, acting as agents for society, to offer subjects negative self-messages for failing to conform to its dictates” (Ronai 1994: 197).¹ As the majority of fusion *gugak* musicians have been subject to these discourses from a young age, it seems that the impact of discursive constraint on fusion *gugak* musicians has been significant. Several of them indicate that they felt ashamed and even had traumatic experiences in regard to playing fusion *gugak*. Today, however, fusion *gugak* musicians hope to defy discursive constraint through narrative resistance, which, according to Rambo, Presley, and Mynatt (2006), should not be confused with neutralizing or justifying their actions. In so doing, an alternative stock of knowledge emerges within a stigmatized group—fusion *gugak* musicians—and ultimately serves to alter the mainstream stocks of knowledge—that is, to change the negative discourses on fusion *gugak* musicians (Ronai and Cross 1998: 106).

During interviews with fusion *gugak* musicians, I noticed that certain narratives came up repeatedly. Broadly, fusion *gugak* musicians’ narrative resistance takes two forms: comparing themselves to “normative” musicians and differentiating themselves from other fusion *gugak* musicians. When comparing themselves to normative musicians, they make three assertions: 1) “They’re not any different from us,” 2) “We’re not any

¹ Carol Ronai later changed her last name to Rambo, cited in the same paragraph.

different from them,” and 3) “We’re doing what they can’t do.” These are actual phrases used by fusion *gugak* musicians during interviews. Through this differentiating, they distance themselves from other fusion *gugak* musicians to assert their higher level of competence. In each section of this chapter, I examine one case of narrative resistance in detail and show how it allows fusion *gugak* musicians to construct their own identities.

7.1. “They’re Not Any Different from Us”

Fusion *gugak* musicians emphasize that musicians who are thought to be normative also enjoy practices similar to those of fusion *gugak* musicians, such as making money by performing covers of popular music at various types of gigs and wearing fancy, off-shoulder dresses. Many fusion *gugak* musicians criticize this self-contradicting attitude of normative musicians. One of them says that:

Gugak majors, too, perform gigs a lot. They are happy to do this when they’re invited for weddings and corporate events. I have a group, and we perform at various government events, domestically and internationally. But all they [*gugak* majors criticizing fusion *gugak*] think about us is something like corporate events. It’s not true. What’s more important is that they also form groups to perform at corporate events! (July 8, 2016)

Another fusion *gugak* musician bluntly criticizes those who ignore fusion *gugak* musicians for performing at commercial events, by arguing that traditional *gugak* musicians perform at gigs as many times as she does, if not more. She thinks that their attitude is absurd, because she and her group have made an effort to improve their performance by continuously updating their repertoire, “unlike those who perform 10 to 20 year-old pieces using low-quality MR.”

Moreover, a fusion *gugak* musician who has worked with several entertainment agencies notes that “*gugak* orchestras performing film music are not any different from

what fusion *gugak* groups do.” Although orchestra musicians may not wear what fusion *gugak* musicians would wear, she argues that not only does she not wear excessively revealing dresses, but she also believes that revealing dresses are only one of the types of her stage costumes and are not necessarily “cheap” or “lowbrow,” as many *gugak* musicians think. She argues that traditional *gugak* musicians, especially the older generations, tend to disregard fusion *gugak* not because of the music per se, but because of disrespectful attitudes of certain people, such as directors of entertainment agencies, who treat fusion *gugak* musicians as no more than commodities that they can appropriate to make a profit.

With regard to costumes, many fusion *gugak* musicians also point out the same kind of self-contradicting attitude of normative musicians who don revealing dresses for their recitals but denounce fusion *gugak* musicians for doing the very same thing. One fusion *gugak* musician states that:

So, this is it. They [normative musicians] think that it’s more than okay for them to wear revealing dresses on stage like when they perform in their solo recitals. But when they see us wearing strapless dresses and moving while performing at gigs in front of strangers, they go like “What???”
(July 8, 2016)

Her example demonstrates a double standard that normative musicians apply when judging fusion *gugak* musicians. She thinks that she has been unfairly treated because of a stigma attached to fusion *gugak*. In fact, Bora, *pansori* singer of Hanayeon, says that it is more convenient to wear short dresses when performing because she frequently moves around on stage and long dresses are burdensome. Moreover, it allows her to choreograph movements using not only her hands but also her legs, adding more variation to her performance.

Fundamentally, the majority of fusion *gugak* musicians question the definition of “fusion” *gugak* broadly used among *gugak* musicians: all-female *gugak* groups, playing commercialized easy listening music, mostly covers of various types of popular music. They argue that those who are highly regarded for developing new styles of *gugak* without being labeled as “fusion *gugak*” are also fusion *gugak* musicians by definition. Yeonju, leader of Hanayeon, defines fusion *gugak* as “among musics played by Korean instruments, all genres of music but traditional music” (October 21, 2016). She argues that although people tend to categorize groups playing live without MR and choreography as “*gugak* chamber” (*gugak sillaeak*) and groups using MR and choreography as fusion *gugak*, the term fusion *gugak* should be more inclusive.

One fusion *gugak* musician critically responds to this kind of division, and her criticism is particularly directed towards a tendency for people to respect acoustic bands for being “artistic” while disregarding groups using MR:

Directors and producers say that “fusion *gugak* is pretty bad” while praising groups like Jambinai and Goreya.² But they’re the same. They play acoustically and that’s all. If we [her group] call a band [with the bass, piano and drums] and play together, we become an acoustic group too. Why do people ignore me just because I’m using MR? Groups like Jambinai and Goreya don’t like to be called fusion *gugak*. But what they do is fusion *gugak* when we look at in a broad sense. They don’t play traditional *gugak*, but why are they so upset? Why? They might think that they’re very “artistic” because they don’t wear short dresses. That’s what they think is artistic, but we can also dress “artistically.” That doesn’t make them seem more talented. (August 25, 2016)

She argues that people should see the quality of music, and not how it is packaged with “artistic” labels and costumes. To challenge these biases, she notes that fusion *gugak*

² Jambinai and Goreya are music groups often recognized as the exemplar of successful development of *gugak*.

musicians must invest more on releasing albums and demonstrate that they are “artists” as well.

As many fusion *gugak* musicians adopt the broader and more inclusive definition of fusion *gugak*, they try to avoid using the term when introducing themselves. One musician says that she wants to be introduced as a “*gugak* group” without “fusion” attached, because people already have a strong, usually negative, idea of fusion *gugak*, and other groups who should also be labeled as fusion *gugak* do not use this label. Another musician also notes that initially she did not want to label her group as a fusion *gugak* group, but as simply a *gugak* group. She says that if people want to call her group “fusion,” other new styles of *gugak* must be called “fusion” as well. Despite her desire, however, she decided to take the label for the sake of easy promotion in the market.

It should be noted that the fusion *gugak* musicians’ avoidance of the label should be distinguished from the normative musicians’ rejection or denial of it. Even though fusion *gugak* musicians try to avoid the term intentionally, it is important to remember that they still identify themselves as fusion *gugak* musicians despite the name’s baggage, whereas the normative musicians would not. It seems that their avoidance is part of their attempt to change the negative connotations of the term by challenging the existing categorization and by expanding its meaning which, in fact, seems similar to its usage in academia.

7.2. “We’re Not Any Different from Them”

“We do perform traditional pieces.” This is what most fusion *gugak* musicians stressed during our interviews. This type of narratives puts emphasis on their continuous

efforts to perform tradition and promote it to wider audiences. Although fusion *gugak* groups are known for playing covers of popular music, all of the groups I interviewed do perform traditional pieces, albeit in different degrees, during their performance. Their repertoire includes folk songs such as “Arirang” and traditional pieces such as *sanjo* and “Cheongseonggok,” which are chosen to suit the theme and atmosphere of each event.

Fusion *gugak* musicians state that to appeal to wider audiences, it is not enough to only perform traditional pieces. One musician says that her group has to “insert” [*ggiwoneota*] five non-traditional pieces to play one traditional piece, because audiences tend to make false assumptions that listening to only traditional *gugak* is boring. She thinks that even if people actually enjoy traditional music, they presume that it is dull because of their strong bias against it. Another musician also notes that Korean audiences tend to enjoy covers of foreign music in fast tempo, such as “La Bamba,” more than slow and traditional pieces—which reveals a stark difference from foreign audiences, who seem to more enjoy traditional pieces.

It seems that, however, their clients (event directors/coordinators) are the ones who actually prevent the musicians from performing traditional music. Many musicians say that they had to replace traditional pieces that were initially included in their repertoire with more “lively, upbeat music” because the clients did not want them. The musicians accuse those who are in charge of organizing events of being ignorant about traditional music. They believe that the organizers think that performance should not be boring, and thus traditional music is what should be avoided because it stands for boredom to most organizers.

Although Korean music scholars have acknowledged and often stated that “Koreans think that (traditional) *gugak* is slow and boring,” I assumed that such an attitude has changed after continuous efforts to broaden its boundaries and audiences. But these narratives confirm that the bias still exists, at least among those in their 40s and up, and explain why fusion *gugak* had become popular among the general population.³ The following conversation with a director of a fusion *gugak* group delineates the current perception of traditional music among the organizers:

Director [D]: There are Mongolian communities and Vietnamese communities in Korea. Korea is multicultural. Think about teaching *sanjo* there.

Hyunjin [H]: What about it?

D: Think about what you’re teaching them. You could teach them, but it’ll be boring.

H: Um, boring?

D: Oh, no, no. I, I like it but . . . [clearly embarrassed] I heard that this year, the Korean Tourism Organization brought a traditional *gugak* group to perform at an international event where we performed last year. The organizer told me that he almost died of boredom. Because this person saw our performance last year, he compared it with ours. When we performed “La Bamba,” people were so much more excited and even took a microphone to sing. But when traditional *gugak* was performed, all the foreigners and Koreans were dying of boredom. So he said that he had to cut out the later part of the performance. (July 8, 2016)

There are a few implications in this conversation. Although the director immediately denied it, following the conversation with him suggests that his view on traditional *gugak*

³ The negative perception of traditional music may not last much longer, as children these days start to learn *gugak* early on, along with Western music. According to those who teach *gugak* in elementary schools, students enjoy singing and learning *gugak* and accept it as it is, free from biases. One musician who teaches in elementary schools and middle schools says that it is usually teachers who impose their prejudice on students.

does not much differ from that of the organizer. Also, it is uncertain whether the traditional *gugak* performance was truly boring to every audience member or whether the organizer's own feelings dominated his overall observation of the event. Since I have witnessed traditional *gugak* performances with audiences' active involvement, I am skeptical about what happened at the event. Regardless of the facts, however, it is certain that this incident has further reinforced his stereotype about traditional *gugak*.

One fusion *gugak* musician bitterly complains about the organizers' lopsided view of "slow" music. She notes that many organizers have asked her group to play "lively music in fast tempo" because otherwise it could be "boring and too melancholic." It is common for her to receive a request to change her repertoire the day before a performance, and sometimes she was even asked after a rehearsal on the day of a performance, because the organizer thought that "it was too slow." She thinks that these rude behaviors have roots in the organizers' attitude of looking down on *gugak* musicians, in contrast to their attitude toward operatic pop singers:

I think they [organizers] belittle *gugak* groups too much. To be honest, popera is also fusion stemmed from classical voice performance. But popera singers get to choose all their repertoire. They sing something like "Think of Me" [from the Phantom of the Opera]. Then organizers say that it's so good. They love it. But it's slow. Singers also sing like "If I Leave" (*na gageodeun*). This is really slow, you know. But they say that they like it. But whenever they see *gugak* groups, they demand something lively and fun. . . . They say that "Ssukdaemeori" [famous *pansori* song] is too sad, but they enjoy listening to Handel's "Lascia Ch'io Pianga" and say "this is so great!" (August 25, 2016)

Several musicians express the same kind of frustration, especially when organizers ignore suggestions from musicians and decide themselves based on their own, often limited, knowledge. I also had a similar experience with an organizer. I was invited to perform the *gayageum* at an event celebrating foreign scholars' contribution to Korean

studies. I gave the organizer a title of a piece that I chose to play, “Hanobaeknyeon.” Later, he asked me to shorten the piece and to add something lively and easy such as folk songs, expressing that both he and his colleagues were concerned about “Hanobaeknyeon” being too slow and melancholic. I explained to him that this was variations on a theme of the folk song “Hanobaeknyeon” and was not the same as what he had in mind. He asked me to choose variations that were not too slow, and I assured him that I would.

He called me a few days later and expressed his concern about the piece again. I tried to convince him by telling him that not only had I chosen variations in faster tempo, but also foreign audiences enjoyed it when I performed for them. I did not understand why he kept calling me to confirm that I would not play a slow piece until he told me that a few high-ranking Korean government officials would attend the event, so music should not be boring. I was shocked when I heard that. Why did he assume that a slow piece would be boring? Why did he assume that other people, especially the high-ranking officials, would be bored with slow music? The majority of audience members for the event were professionals who had devoted themselves to Korean studies. Did he not think that they would appreciate Korean music, regardless of its tempo or tone? Or was he only concerned about the officials’ tastes and responses?

Differing experiences and opinions between musicians and organizers often lead them into conflicts, and these seem especially conspicuous when dealing with performances taking place in royal palaces. From April to October, the Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation (CHF) presents an evening *gugak* concert series at two main royal palaces in Seoul (*gogung eumakhoe*). Each concert is 30 to 50 minutes long, containing

various types of pieces selected by performers. As the initial selection of the repertoire is given to musicians, conflicts break out when organizers are not satisfied with the musicians' selection.

Several musicians who performed at this concert series told me that “the organizer hated traditional *gugak*.” One musician says that although her group prepared repertoire that they did not think was “traditional and difficult,” they were asked to change the repertoire because it was “too difficult” and the organizer disliked it. In the end, they replaced pieces that were relatively calm and slow in tempo with faster and more cheerful pieces such as the *Mamma Mia!* soundtrack. Moreover, as a *gayageum* player, she was constantly asked to “play like a harp” by adding multiple glissandos, which she thought “ridiculous” because it did not fit into the musical flow.

Another musician says that she had trouble with the organizer because she wanted to play an arrangement of a *jeong-ak* piece, “Sujecheon.” She believed that the *jeong-ak*-styled music would perfectly fit with the atmosphere of the palace where *jeong-ak* was enjoyed by the royal family and the elites in the past. Although she had to replace the piece because of the objection from the organizer, who contended that it would be “too slow,” she did not completely yield. Instead, she added another piece which was slightly faster in tempo but borrowed melodies from *jeong-ak* pieces. Ironically, the organizer liked the piece. She notes that it is frustrating when organizers reject certain performances for being “too slow and boring” or “graceless” when, in reality, audiences are ready to enjoy them. Frustrated and upset, she states that even though she tried to have a conversation with them, they did not listen and nothing has changed. She says,

“People say that ‘*gugak* is not fun’ all the time. But it is not about *gugak* being no fun. It is because some people do not let us make it fun!” (August 25, 2016).

In fact, while performing fusion *gugak*, many musicians have continued their study and performance of traditional music. One has committed herself to study *pansori* with a living national treasure (*ingan munhwajae*) for three years. Others have held solo recitals consisting of traditional repertoires. They emphasize that although they may not frequently perform tradition, they are always ready to perform it. It is important to note that it is their active decision to perform fusion *gugak* because it fits them and provides them with satisfaction.

One musician states that:

If it were because I didn’t know how to play tradition, I would’ve regretted it. But I can still play everything from folk music to *gut* accompaniments (shamanic rituals). I had played them a lot until college. Those who care about tradition can play them. I can play them as well, but chose something else that I like more. . . . I’ve often told others to do as many things as they can. For example, if there’s an opportunity to collaborate with jazz musicians or to play *sanjo*, I’d say do it without any question. It doesn’t change the fact that I’m a *gugak* musician. It doesn’t mean that it’s okay to abandon *sanjo*, but if there are opportunities, we should get out of our comfort zone. We should carry tradition, but I don’t necessarily want to cling to it. (October 21, 2016)

Similarly, while acknowledging the importance of tradition, other musicians also believe that after acquiring certain degrees of knowledge of *gugak*, people should be free to play any styles of music based on what they have obtained.

Several musicians point out that they do not want to be “one of them” in *gugak* orchestras. Orchestra members are expected to play in unison with other musicians, and expressing individuality is strongly discouraged. From the timbre of each instrument to the posture for holding instruments, everything has to be in perfect unison. Although

being a member of an orchestra is considered one of the ideal jobs for *gugak* musicians, fusion *gugak* musicians say that they would rather play in their group, so they can play their own styles of music and deliver them to audiences. One musician says that she entered a *gugak* orchestra but quit only two days later because it was not what she imagined. She had to play the exact same music with other orchestra members and accept a rigid hierarchy within the orchestra. Moreover, as a new member, she had to go to work three hours earlier than others to prepare a rehearsal, mostly arranging chairs and putting together sheet music, which bothered her the most because she could have spent the time playing music she liked. In short, as demonstrated in these narratives, fusion *gugak* musicians resist the idea that they play fusion *gugak* because they are incompetent by emphasizing that it is their active decision.

7.3. “We’re Doing What They Can’t Do”

While stressing fundamental similarities to “normative” musicians, fusion *gugak* musicians express their pride in their achievements. Many musicians also note that they have had a variety of experiences that they could not have imagined when they lived in a bubble. This is particularly meaningful since the majority of fusion *gugak* musicians say that they were ashamed of playing fusion *gugak* in the course of their career. One musician says that for the first few years traditional performance always took priority over fusion *gugak* performance. Whenever she had a schedule conflict between the two performances, she chose the traditional performance. But now, she says that she has to cut down traditional performances because she is too busy performing fusion *gugak*. She states that:

If I hadn't done fusion *gugak*, I would've been in a doctoral program already. My goal was to study hard, so I could quickly finish a master's degree and doctoral degree, and become a professor and a human cultural property. But I don't want to be fettered by this tradition while giving up my youth and love. For whose sake? There are a variety of musics around the world and a lot of opportunities to do music that I like. I wouldn't dare to be stuck in a box while giving up all of these. (September 24, 2016)

Although she believes that she will return to tradition one day, she wants to focus on fusion *gugak* for now, because it provides her with invaluable experiences that many normative musicians may not have in their careers.

Several musicians indicate that they have had a completely different experience with audiences whose reactions are more active, direct, and participatory than they are for traditional music performances. Soeul says that it was a "totally new world" (*sinsegye*) when she first had that experience. Although audiences gave her a round of applause when she performed traditional music, by reading their faces she could tell that those who were not familiar with it had lost interest. But she believes that fusion *gugak* can overcome the limitations of traditional *gugak* as it allows her to easily approach more diverse groups of people and to foster their active participation. Yeonju argues that because of a strong preconception about *gugak*, albeit less pronounced than before, it is hard to convince people to listen to *gugak* by simply telling them "*gugak* is really good." In a society where "even *gugak* musicians listen to more popular music than traditional *gugak*," she believes that fusion *gugak* provides a nice segue into general interest in *gugak*.

Being versatile is one of the strengths of fusion *gugak* musicians. As they can present not only traditional performances but also a variety of genres of music, fusion *gugak* musicians are invited to places where popular appeal is crucial. Heejin believes

that although fusion *gugak* may seem lighter musically, this easy-listening quality of music enables her to appear on various TV shows and in domestic and international performances, which has broadened her perspective. One member of Queen notes that they are “really busy like celebrities and receive warm hospitality like celebrities,” especially when invited to perform overseas. Most of their international performances are arranged at the invitation of overseas Korean embassies. She says that:

From the waiting room to cars. When we went abroad, we had escort vehicles in the front and the back of our car like bodyguards. We also had dinner at the embassies. From A to Z, everything was taken care of, so we could focus on our performance. . . . Of course, we had some bad experiences, but we have received generous hospitality as well. It’s really common to be asked for an autograph or photo. (September 24, 2016)

These positive experiences helped her overcome the self-doubt that she initially had with regard to being a fusion *gugak* musician herself.

Performing fusion *gugak* may seem easy, but musicians say that there are rules pertaining to its performance, such as how to move, stand, sing, and communicate with audiences from the stage. Jihyeon, a *pansori* singer in Queen, notes that she had to relearn how to sing high notes and stand on stage while singing. Singing while wearing high heels and a short dress posed a particular challenge for her, because she used to sing with legs wide apart so she could get a powerful voice. It does not matter in a traditional setting, since a long skirt covers singers’ legs, but high heels and short dresses forced her to adjust her singing posture.

Several musicians state that “not everyone can be fusion *gugak* musicians.” They think that they are lucky because they are young, pretty, and slim enough to be fusion *gugak* musicians. Musicians understand the importance of visual elements and think that if they were “fat and ugly,” they would have not been qualified. Although it may seem

that female fusion *gugak* musicians are subjugated to the logic of a patriarchal society, not only are they aware of the standard of beauty unfairly imposed only on women, but they also attempt to overturn this as a chance to empower female musicians. One musician says that their appearance is one of their “weapons” and they are the “chosen ones.” She believes that she is in a better position than other normative musicians, because “they cannot do what she does, but she can do what they do.”

Given the importance of appearance, all of the fusion *gugak* musicians acknowledge that they can play fusion *gugak* only for a certain number of years. They also note that they do not intend to continue performing it in their forties. In fact, this is one of the main reasons why they ardently play fusion *gugak* today. They are aware that eventually they will have to find more stable careers such as those related to *gugak* education. Hence, they believe that it is their privilege to perform fusion *gugak*, something that they can only enjoy for a limited time. For instance, as more members get married and plan for their pregnancy, Hanayeon has already started a transition to an acoustic band offering educational programs for K-6 students. But the members say that they will keep performing fusion *gugak* to take advantage of their youth and beauty, until they lose their competitive edge.

Moreover, many musicians emphasize that they support themselves by earning money as a musician, whereas, in contrast, many musicians who pursued the “normative” path have given up their careers or ended up working in a non-music related field. One musician says that:

To be honest, a lot of my friends are idle because they could not find a job. I studied *gugak* too, but I’m making money with it. . . . I cannot imagine what I could’ve done with traditional music if I hadn’t chosen to do this.
(August 23, 2016)

Similarly, several fusion *gugak* musicians also say that if they had not played fusion *gugak*, they would have already given up their musical careers. One musician argues that although most *gugak* musicians hope to be traditional music players, except for a few talented ones many have either quit their careers because of financial issues or continued their study of traditional music with financial support from their parents. Thus, she thinks that it is absurd to criticize her for playing fusion *gugak*, because she makes a living independently as a musician.

To those who criticize them for “playing music for money,” fusion *gugak* musicians’ responses are calm but clear: “I do not care anymore.” They believe that today’s job market is completely different from the time when the older generation of musicians sought their jobs. People can no longer survive by only performing tradition. Fusion *gugak* musicians have worked hard to make the best out of what they have studied for almost half of their entire life. One musician notes that although she used to try to convince people because she did not want to be seen as a stranger, she realized that she could not satisfy everyone’s expectations and had to let go of other people’s words, because they do not see what she can see now.

7.4. “We’re Different from Those Guys”

In addition to expressing their pride in comparison to normative musicians, fusion *gugak* musicians resist discursive constraints by keeping a distance from other fusion *gugak* musicians by using, ironically, the same language as the dominant group. They blame other fusion *gugak* groups whose main focus is on visual performances and not on

music for reinforcing the negative stereotypes about fusion *gugak*. One musician argues that:

[Fusion *gugak* is] what young and pretty female *gugak* musicians do. I think that this perception was initiated by the older generation of musicians. They didn't like their children to play *gugak* because they thought that it was a menial job associated with *gisaeng* culture. Although such a perception has changed a lot and the [*gisaeng*] culture no longer exists, when young, pretty girls dance on stage, they can't help but see them as *gisaeng*. So teachers dig up dirt on them a lot, and following the teachers, their students also think that fusion *gugak* is cheap music. (July 8, 2016)

She continues to blame the mass media and entertainment agencies as the main sources that spread and reinforce the negative perceptions:

The problem is that many entertainment agencies demand musicians to have sex appeal, treating them like a commodity. To my knowledge, there are a lot of fusion *gugak* groups who aren't like that. But because the media want something provocative, those groups dancing while abandoning their instruments are frequently exposed in the media, reinforcing the negative perceptions. (July 8, 2016)

Other musicians also made a similar comment on fusion *gugak* groups focusing more on dramatic performance. They argue that the majority of these groups are under contract with entertainment agencies and are "controlled by the agencies like commodities." A musician who had worked with one of these groups notes that they always play the same repertoire repeatedly and follow the instructions from a director, like puppets. Among these groups, it is often the case that members of a group are not professional *gugak* musicians, but someone who learned it from an amateur *gugak* club or an online lecture. Agencies prefer good-looking young female musicians as long as they know how to "play" the instruments, because visual aspects of performance get priority, and AR, recorded by professional musicians, will solve the problems related to the quality of music.

One musician shares her story when she performed with a fusion *gugak* group as a substitute musician:

There were six pieces to play and I memorized them all because I didn't want to cause any trouble. But the original member of the group could not play it at all and only pretended to play it. Only pretended. We were supposed to leave at 9 am. We gotta do some rehearsal because I didn't know their choreography, but they didn't say anything. In the end, I asked them to rehearse at 7 in the morning. Then I found out that they didn't know either. I was genuinely shocked. What happened next was that they wanted to recruit me because I memorized everything. But I told the director that I was sorry but I couldn't do this. (August 23, 2016)

She adds that the reason why she started her own group was because she did not want to deal with this type of musician anymore. By emphasizing her competency and professionalism, she distances herself from the musicians whose female bodies are consumed as commodities controlled by agencies, and not treated as autonomous musicians.

It seems that playing live music is, in particular, what musicians use to distinguish “competent fusion *gugak* groups” from others using AR. Several musicians say that they feel proud of themselves for playing music live, “unlike those musicians who pretend to play.” For example, a musician explains why she feels proud of her group:

Our group is certainly different because other fusion *gugak* groups use AR and hand-synching [*haendeu singkeu*, pretending to play their instruments]. One day, I got a sudden call, asking me to perform on the same day. I didn't know any music, but I did. I learned choreography in the green room as if I became a girl group member. Because I wasn't familiar with the choreography, I put my fingers on the wrong holes of the *daegeum* (bamboo flute). But it didn't even matter [because of AR]. It's a shame to perform like this. But, although our group uses MR, not only do we not have AR but also we try to deliver the real sounds of instruments. It's not solely about appearance. So I don't feel shame, because I play my instrument, and I am passionate about our performance. (October 21, 2016)

Even though she says that she was ashamed for performing such a role, she does not seem to be embarrassed or hesitant to share this story with me. Rather, she seems even confident, because she thinks that she is different from those musicians.

In the course of my fieldwork, it turns out that her case was not extraordinary. She played the *daegeum* which was her major, but sometimes people are asked to play a completely different role. A *pansori* singer says that she was asked to fill in for a *daegeum* player in a *gugak* musical. Although, at first, she declined the request, she was convinced to do so because all she had to do was to make faces when the prerecorded *daegeum* sounds were played. Audiences would not have known who she was and what was going on backstage, but she says that she was “seriously really ashamed.” Although these kinds of performances make them embarrassed, it does not hurt their pride as a musician because this is a “one-time thing” that they do not give meaning to. They are the musicians who always try to play live music, and thus different from those who always play to AR.

Before conducting interviews with fusion *gugak* musicians, I heard from “normative” musicians that some fusion *gugak* musicians pretend to play multiple instruments to cover a member of a group who could not make it to an event. Usually, audiences would not notice, unless they are professional *gugak* musicians, because the performers use AR and their motions are “quite beautiful and realistic.” I wanted to check directly with fusion *gugak* musicians to find out if this was a real story. During my interviews with fusion *gugak* musicians, even before I asked them, they told me about a person who regularly “plays” the *haegeum*, which is not her major instrument.

This is different from the previous cases I described above in which musicians are called at the last minute to play a part in a group of which they are not a member. Instead, this person regularly plays the role of a *haegeum* player in her group when actual players are unavailable for gigs. One fusion *gugak* musician hesitated to tell me about this practice because it was embarrassing for her as a person who works in the same field. Responding to my request to clarify a source of the information, she says that she knows her in person. According to her, this is all about the motion, because this person can perfectly present the *haegeum* player's movements to AR. She finds it truly annoying, because this is the kind of practice that leads to further devaluation of fusion *gugak* as a whole, despite her group's efforts to play live music as much as possible.

With regard to visual aspects on stage, musicians state that live musicians cannot compete with someone who pretends to play, because the range of movements is limited when actually playing the instruments. A *daegeum* player indicates that the way she blows into the *daegeum* makes her face look funny, but with AR, it is possible to make a smiley and pretty face while performing. Although she acknowledges some advantages of using AR, she emphasizes that music is still her priority, and believes that she is more competent than other musicians who lip sync to AR.

Moreover, musicians demarcate themselves from other fusion *gugak* musicians “who do not release any albums, who do not play traditional pieces, and who only repeat the same repertoire over and over again”—the very language that normative musicians have used to criticize fusion *gugak* musicians as a whole. A leader of a fusion *gugak* group stresses that her group members have continuously studied various styles of music, including traditional music as well as electronic dance music, and plan to actively release

more albums so they can clearly distinguish themselves from those who remain passive and stagnant.

7.5. Coda: Future of Fusion Gugak

One might wonder about the visible consequences of narrative resistance of fusion *gugak* musicians. I believe that it is changing slowly but certainly. Several fusion *gugak* musicians note that no one had dreamt about becoming a fusion *gugak* musician, since the current form of fusion *gugak* did not exist when they first started *gugak*. Today, however, there are people whose goal is to become a fusion *gugak* musician. Some fusion *gugak* musicians have received a personal message from a student asking for advice about becoming a fusion *gugak* musician. Moreover, considering the recent establishment of an Applied Dance major for studying K-pop, jazz, and hip-hop dances, they anticipate the establishment of an “Applied Gugak major” (*siryong gugakgwa*) in colleges in the near future. Considering that *gugak* critic Yun Junggang suggested the establishment of an Applied Gugak major and Gugak Academy, reflecting the increasing popularity of fusion *gugak* (Kim Taegyeong 2006), the establishment of the new major may be only a matter of time.

Confident attitudes of musicians have also had a positive influence on conservative musicians around them. One musician says that her colleagues studying traditional music together teased her about playing fusion *gugak* by saying “You become so much prettier after playing fusion *gugak*, the master of fusion *gugak*.” Their judgement was based on their belief that fusion *gugak* musicians are only concerned about their appearance and not their music. After she showed them what she did,

however, they stopped making fun of her and respected her decision. Other musicians, too, indicate that their teachers who expressed major concerns at the beginning have changed to support their decisions. As demonstrated in these cases, I believe that, as a marginalized group, fusion *gugak* musicians' narrative resistance offers a site where their stories can be told, and ultimately challenges the hegemonic discourses by providing alternative discourses.

Conclusion

I began this project with self-awareness on my lopsided perspectives focusing on particular issues regarding mainstream female *gugak* musicians. I decided to pay close attention to the voices of often unheard groups and selected two seemingly discrete groups of musicians: male *gayageum* players and female fusion *gugak* musicians, the former considered to be enjoying various advantages and the latter considered to be having misfortune. Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated how individual musicians' experiences are shaped by interacting with gender ideals, roles, and stereotypes within the *gugak* community and in Korean society at large, and how these gendered experiences interact with their gender identity and musical performance.

Each society has its own gender role expectations, and there are cultural and systemic outcomes when individuals make certain choices. Male *gayageum* players, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, and the members of all-male *gugak* ensembles, discussed in Chapter 4, selected their instrument according to their personal preference. However, as their personal decision and society's gender role expectations conflict, they have faced junctures that challenge and reinforce their masculinity, eventually leading them to redefine that masculinity—and more broadly their identity.

To be more specific, in Chapter 2 I have examined the series of experiences that male musicians have managed to deal with, mainly because they are biologically male in the female-dominated field of *gugak*. Although the scarcity of men has brought certain advantages to the male musicians, they have encountered various challenges in relation to gender role expectations and dynamic social changes in Korea. Male musicians' experiences are related to specific circumstances within the *gugak* field; however, at the

same time their experiences are firmly embedded and situated within the larger context of Korean society. The younger generation that these male musicians are involved in has shaped distinct identities, as they have experienced both the collapse of hegemonic masculinity and the emergence of new types of masculinities without the alternative masculinities which can adequately replace hegemonic masculinity. Within this context, new social trends and problems have appeared, such as loser culture, survivalism, and misogyny, and have deeply affected the experiences of male *gayageum* players.

Male *gayageum* players are expected to serve certain roles that are considered to be masculine, especially within a group of female *gayageum* players. They carry other female *gayageum* players' *gayageum* and work backstage because they are thought to be physically stronger than women. However, in the larger society, they face a different set of stereotypes as men who play "women's instruments." Because they are different from hegemonic masculinity, male *gayageum* players can easily be emasculated in the eyes of the public. Meanwhile, the gracious bodily movements of certain female *gayageum* ensembles have become widespread, as if they are now the standard practice for *gayageum* ensembles using the 25-string *gayageum*. Consequently, male *gayageum* players face a dilemma: if they do not adopt the current performance practice, they receive criticism from *gugak* professionals; but following the practice means to adopt another form of emasculation.

By closely analyzing their performance practice, specifically through "Chudeuri" in Chapter 4, I have argued that their performance is an important strategy to survive in the predominantly female field of *gugak*. Furthermore, I contend that their performance—strategically designed—is one of the crucial ways in which they reinscribe

their masculinity by overtly displaying what they perceive to be “masculine.” Moreover, these masculine practices sharply contrast with the oft-exaggerated feminine practices of fusion *gugak* musicians—the topic of Chapters 5, 6, and 7. I believe that reading male musicians’ experiences in juxtaposition with those of female musicians provides a better opportunity for understanding the dynamics and complex relationships between distinct groups in the *gugak* field.

In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I have investigated negative discourses about fusion *gugak* musicians, the discursive process of producing these discourses, and the ways in which fusion *gugak* musicians resist discursive constraint by using narrative resistance. Fusion *gugak* performances feature the often sexualized “ideal feminine bodies” in Korean society, following the trend of K-pop girls groups. Unlike the critical views of mainstream *gugak* musicians, fusion *gugak* musicians emphasize that it is their active decision to perform fusion *gugak* because it provides them with satisfaction and experiences that other musicians can hardly gain. However, as their performance are stigmatized as overly sexual and commercial, which does not comply with the norms within the *gugak* community, fusion *gugak* musicians become otherized as failures and deviants, occupying a subordinate position in the field.

To gain a thorough knowledge about the weight of constraint that fusion *gugak* musicians have experienced, it is important to understand the circumstances in which these musicians were immersed as they grew up. For many of them, it takes a few years to have the courage to finally say with confidence that they are fusion *gugak* musicians, because it means that they have changed, or even broken out of, the value system that had shaped their entire life as *gugak* musicians. In so doing, I argue that fusion *gugak*

musicians ultimately establish their own identity, instead of shunning the *gugak* community or feeling ashamed of themselves whenever they perform fusion *gugak*.

Although *gugak* is largely a female-dominated realm in terms of the number of musicians, it still seems to be dominated by masculine norms, as presenting “overly feminine qualities” is often discouraged, or even denigrated, by the majority of mainstream musicians. Moreover, the narratives of fusion *gugak* musicians simultaneously reveal that they have internalized the dominant views that they hope to resist, such as perceptions of fusion *gugak* musicians as incompetent, sexual, and commercially oriented. It is ironic that their narrative resistance simultaneously reproduces and resists the dominant negative discourses, which demonstrates Foucault’s notion of discourses and power at work in society (1990, 1995). Nonetheless, establishing their own identities is a significant step toward taking control of their own lives. I contend that this is of particular importance, since fusion *gugak* musicians create a space, albeit one that is still marginal, where they can destabilize the “norms” or the “canons” of the field. I envision that, eventually, their confidence in their career will challenge the negative perceptions of fusion *gugak* in the *gugak* field.

Through in-depth interviews and case studies, I have demonstrated how cultural ideals of gender roles intersect with different ideas and trends of society, and how these roles influence one’s gender identity, experiences, and performance practices. It was not hard for me to imagine the struggles of fusion *gugak* musicians, since negative discourses about them have prevailed in the field for more than a decade. On the other hand, however, I could not easily conceive those of male *gayageum* players, since they are often thought to be better off due to the fact that they are simply male. But, in fact, male

musicians also have experienced challenges and conflicts unique to their own situations, stemming from a different set of gender role expectations.

Although lived experiences of individual musicians differ greatly from one another, both of these two seemingly distinct groups of musicians have struggled to lead their own lives by simultaneously accepting and resisting existing gender norms. As a result, their performances become the main site where their own ideas of masculinity and femininity are put on display. At the same time, their ideas of gender are constantly reproduced or redefined through gendered aspects of their performances. People seem to have certain ideas that distinguish what is masculine and feminine, but nonetheless, the ideas presented in their performances and narratives suggest the gender distinction as a fluid concept as each musician shapes their own gender identity through complicated interactions with multiple layers of society. I believe that understanding the ways in which people shape their ideas of gender will become more important as gender boundaries become more blurred and porous in our society today.

In this dissertation, I have examined gendered experiences and performances of two particular groups of musicians with a primary focus on their roles as musicians. Considering their multiple roles in society, such as teachers, spouses, and parents, I acknowledge that the pictures I have presented are partial views of individual musicians. For instance, during interviews, several musicians expressed their concerns about marriage, childbearing, and returning to work after childbirth, but I could not fully explore these issues which open up a potential topic for future research.

Moreover, I want to point out that with rapid social changes, a new generation of *gugak* students/musicians may have a completely different experience from the

generation of musicians discussed in this project, currently in their late twenties and early thirties. I already notice that the perception of *gugak* has become more flexible among younger people, and alternative forms of masculinity and femininity have emerged. Within this changing environment, related topics such as the gendered experiences of different generations of musicians and changes in gender associations of certain instruments and genres/styles will need to be explored in future studies.

In addition, ideas from linguistic anthropology, as nicely presented in Nicholas Harkness' works (2011, 2013, 2015), are something that I plan to incorporate in future research. I think that it would be useful for developing my discussions on discourse about music and individual practices by linking musical sound to language about music, gender, nationalism, etc. in contemporary Korean society.

I believe that this dissertation contributes towards fostering scholarly discussions of what has been often excluded in the field of ethnomusicology as well as in Korean music scholarship: male musicians' voice and what is thought to be "bad" music. By revealing untold stories and unseen cultures, my study provides an opportunity to gain a more comprehensive picture of musicians and their communities. Moreover, my work has useful implications for the larger academic community in fields such as anthropology, sociology, and gender studies concerning the complex interplay between individual actors, diverse ideas of gender, and performance, as it offers similar but different perspectives pertaining to unique social and cultural circumstances in Korea.

Although there have been extensive studies on particular genres, pieces, and musicians in Korean music, in this dissertation I have paid close attention to what has been invisible in other accounts of Korean music culture. In this process, I shed light on a

unique network of *gugak* musicians and their struggles as they face junctures between different gender norms within the *gugak* community and in Korean society at large. If the term “*gugak*” has been translated into English simply as “Korean traditional music,” by presenting dynamic pictures of today’s *gugak*, I want to propose rethinking what it means to be *gugak* today.

* * *

Since I started this project, the level of tension between women and men in Korea has greatly intensified. People openly condemn each other using sexually derogatory language. In the popular online communities, postings on feminism—whatever that means in Korea—as well as postings on reverse discrimination against men are continuously flowing. Without exception, hundreds of comments are made to those postings, and they often become a site where two opposing groups brutally fight and leave with more heightened tension between them. Since people tend to consider issues pertaining to themselves as more immediate and important, it is easy to forget the issues of other people, and sometimes people advocate their own rights but ignore those of others. I want to stress that the reason why I present male and female musicians’ experiences in this dissertation is not because I want to reinforce the gender binary, but because, by placing the two cases side by side, I intend to present an integrated picture of the experiences of people within Korean society in relation to changing gender roles, hoping that my work serves to foster a deeper understanding of people’s experience across gender lines in society.

Appendix 1: List of Interviews

All interviews are conducted in Seoul, South Korea, unless otherwise noted.

Choi Deokryeol 최덕렬 (Choe Deokryeol), October 29, 2016.

Choi Juyeon 최주연 (Choe Juyeon), November 12, 2016.

Han Seungseok 한승석, October 9, 2016.

Han Songyi 한송이 (Han Song-i), August 25, 2016.

Hong Minwoong 홍민웅 (Hong Min-ung), August 13, 2016.

Jeon Wooseok 전우석 (Jeon Useok), October 29, 2016.

Jeong Bora 정보라, August 25, 2015; October 21, 2016.

Jeong Isu 정이수, August 23, 2016.

Jeong Jiyoung 정지영 (Jeong Jiyeong), Facebook message, September 5, 2016.

Jo Seonin 조선인, August 13, 2016.

Kim Beomsu 김범수 (Gim Beomsu), August 13, 2016.

Kim Bomi 김보미 (Gim Bo-mi), November 14, 2016.

Kim Dohee 김도희 (Gim Dohui), July 8, 2016.

Kim Hayeon 김하연 (Gim Hayeon), October 21, 2016.

Kim Hyungsub 김형섭 (Gim Hyeongseop), June 27, 2016.

Kim Jihyeon 김지현 (Gim Jihyeon), September 24, 2016.

Kim Jinwook 김진욱 (Gim Jin-uk), October 29, 2016.

Kim Junhoe 김준희 (Gim Junhoe), July 16, 2016.

Kim Minjeong 김민정 (Gim Minjeong), October 21, 2016.

Kim Mirim 김미림 (Gim Mirim), November 12, 2016.

Kim Taehyeong 김태형 (Gim Taehyeong), August 13, 2016.

Kim Yeonju 김연주 (Gim Yeonju), October 21, 2016.

Kim Yerim 김예림 (Gim Yerim), July 8, 2016.

Lee Dayoung 이다영 (I Dayeong), August 23, 2016.

Lee Ilwoo 이일우 (I Il-u), November 14, 2016.

Lee Jonggil 이종길 (I Jong-gil), July 31, 2016.

Lee Jun 이준 (I Jun), October 29, 2016.

Lee Miri 이미리 (I Miri), November 12, 2016.

Lee Mungyeong 이문경 (I Mun-gyeong), July 8, 2016.

Lee Sangah 이상아 (I Sang-a), July 1, 2016.

Lee Sinjeong 이신정 (I Sinjeong), July 8, 2016; July 26, 2016.

Lee Sooyun 이수윤 (I Suyun), June 27, 2016; July 16, 2016.

Oh Danhae 오단해 (O Danhae), August 13, 2016.

Oh Shinae 오시내 (O Si-nae), July 8, 2016.

Park Gyejeon 박계전 (Bak Gyejeon), October 29, 2016.

Park Heejin 박희진 (Bak Huijin), October 19, 2016.

Park Heewon 박희원 (Bak Huiwon), July 1, 2016; July 25, 2016; September 23, 2016.

Park Hyejeong 박혜정 (Bak Hyejeong), August 23, 2016.

Seong Seulgi 성슬기 (Seong Seulgi), November 12, 2016.

Shim Eunyong 심은용 (Sim Eunyong), November 14, 2016.

Shim Jaegeun 심재근 (Sim Jaegeun), August 13, 2016.

Shin Changhwan 신창환 (Sin Changhwan), July 9, 2016.

Shin Soeul 신소을 (Sin So-eul), August 23, 2016.

Won Meondongmaru 원면동마루, July 9, 2016.

Yang Suyeoun 양수연 (Yang Suyeon), August 12, 2016.

Yeo Inho 여인호 (Yeo In-ho), July 8, 2016.

Yoon Sangyeon 윤상연 (Yun Sang-yeon), July 9, 2016.

Appendix 2: Glossary of Korean Terms

The glossary contains Korean terms that are significant or used more than twice in the dissertation.

7po sedae 7 포 세대: a generation giving up seven things—dating, marriage, childbirth, owning a home, social relationships, dreams, and hopes.

Ajaeng 아쟁: Korean bowed zither.

Baji jeomsu 바지점수: literally, pants score; used when male students receive a higher score in competitions because they are male.

Buk 북: barrel drum.

Changjak gugak 창작국악: literally, creative *gugak*; refers to new compositions based on *gugak*.

Cheol gayageum 철가야금: a type of *gayageum* with metal strings.

Chuimsae 추임새: exclamations that an accompanist or audience members make during performance.

Chwijip 취 집: a combination of two Korean words, *chwieop* (employment) and *sijip* (women's marriage); it means “getting married instead of getting a job,” which refers to women who completely rely on men, especially in economic aspects.

Daegeum 대금: Korean horizontal bamboo flute.

Daepungnyu 대풍류: music for the wind instruments used to accompany dance.

Dodeuri 도드리: a title of a category of traditional music featuring repetition with variation.

Durumagi 두루마기: a traditional Korean outer coat.

Dwijipgi 뒤집기: a right-hand technique to play an indicated note after quickly playing a note an octave higher.

Eumak 음악: music.

Gaenyeomnyeo 개념녀 (rational woman): a woman who internalizes and practices the Confucian and patriarchal values; often used in contrast to *gimchinyeo*.

Gapjil 갑질: a behavior in which *gap* (a person/organization in a position of power) treats *eul* (a person/organization in a subordinate position) unfairly by exercising his/her power.

Gayageum 가야금: Korean zither played by plucking with the bare fingers. The traditional *gayageum* has 12 strings, and 18- and 25-string *gayageum* were created in the late twentieth century.

Geomungo 거문고: Korean zither plucked with a bamboo stick called *suldae*.

Gimchinyeo 김치녀 (kimchi woman): a woman who demands men's economic power, is too self-centered, deviates from sexual norms, is incompetent, and is a member of feminist organizations which are widely perceived to be anti-men; often used in contrast to *gaenyeomnyeo*.

Gisaeng 기생: female courtesans whose role is often misunderstood as that of prostitutes.

Goeum gayageum 고음가야금: a type of *gayageum* played in the higher register.

Gongyeon baegeupsa 공연 배급사: performance distributors, serving as intermediaries between clients and performers.

Gugagin 국악인: *gugak* musicians.

Gugak 국악: literally national music; includes traditional music and new musical styles developed since the twentieth century based on traditional musical elements.

Gungyeilhak 군계일학: a crane among a crowd of chickens, which has a similar meaning to “a figure among ciphers” in English.

Gut 굿: shamanic ritual.

Gyemyeonjo 계면조: a traditional mode, characterized by being “feminine” and melancholic as opposed to the “masculine” *ujo*.

Gyeongdeureum 경드름: a traditional mode, known for its lively and cheerful atmosphere, in contrast to other modes such as *ujo* and *gyemyeonjo*.

Gyeonggukdaejeon 경국대전: the Code of the Joseon Dynasty.

Haengeum 해금: Korean fiddle.

Hallyu 한류 (Korean Wave): the global popularity of Korean culture such as music, TV dramas, films, and TV shows.

Hanbok 한복: Korean traditional long dress.

Hel Joseon 헬조선 (hell Joseon): a combination of the English word hell and the former official name of Korea, Joseon. It reflects young people's frustration about misery and an unfair social structure, reproducing the rigid caste system of premodern Korea.

Hoesik 회식: get-togethers, often involving alcohol consumption.

Ingan munhwajae 인간문화재: human cultural properties designated by the Cultural Property Preservation Law (*munhwajae bohobeop*) to protect intangible cultural properties such as music.

Jaebi 잼이/재비: an instrumentalist, usually one who plays folk music.

Jangdan 장단: rhythmic patterns.

Janggu 장구: hourglass-shaped drum.

Jeoeum gayageum 저음가야금: a type of *gayageum* played in the lower register.

Jeong-ak 정악: proper/elegant music; more commonly used to refer to literati/court music.

Jeong-ak gayageum 정악가야금: a type of *gayageum* used to play *jeong-ak* pieces.

Jeontong eumak 전통음악: traditional music.

Jo 조: a complex term whose definition includes not only scales, but also performance techniques, melodic progressions, and dynamics.

Jongmyojeryeak 종묘제례악: the royal ancestral ritual and music.

Meoseum 머슴: (usually male) servants.

Minjung 민중: the people.

... *Nyeo sirijeu* ... 녀 시리즈 (... woman series): a series of terms used to criticize young women who crave Chanel handbags—a symbol of conspicuous consumption—and consume Starbucks coffee—a symbol of vanity, such as “*doenjangnyeo*” (된장녀, bean paste woman) and “*gimchinyeo*” (김치녀, Kimchi woman).

Oburi 오부리: performance at various settings such as wedding ceremonies, festivals, and clubs.

Ogugut 오구굿: a type of *gut* (shamanic ritual) from the eastern coast for sending the spirit of a deceased person to the world of the dead.

Pansori 판소리: professional vocal music performed by one singer and one drummer.

Piri 피리: Korean vertical bamboo double-reed.

Pungnyu 풍류: epitomizes utopia in Korean culture, such as nature, music, arts, leisure, and beauty.

Pyujeon 퓨전: fusion.

Samulnori 사물놀이: Korean percussion music, played with four types of percussion instruments.

Sanjo 산조: solo instrumental music accompanied by the *janggu* (drum).

Segyehwa 세계화: globalization.

Seong-ak 성악: Western classical singing.

Seupek 스펙 (spec.): a list of qualifications that are required to get a job.

Sigimsae 시김새: ornaments.

Sogum 소금: Korean horizontal bamboo flute, smaller than the *daegeum*.

Ssaraeng 싸랭: a right-hand technique to play an indicated note after quickly playing a note an octave lower.

Sujeoron or *sujeo gyegeumnon* 수저론, 수저 계급론 (spoon class theory): description of the reality that one's socioeconomic status is determined by the assets of their parents.

Tal Hanguk 탈한국 or *tal Joseon* 탈조선: a phenomenon of hoping to escape from Korea.

Toeseong 퇴성: a left-hand skill of the *gayageum*; a descending slide to smoothly connect a note to the note below by pulling a string and slightly extending it.

Ujo 우조: a traditional mode, known for its upright and “masculine” melodic progressions.

Yang-ak 양악: Western music.

Ye-ak 예악: the ruling principle of the Joseon Dynasty, emphasizing the harmony of etiquette (禮, *ye*) and music (樂, *ak*).

Yeo-ak 여악: groups of female musicians or performances by these groups.

Yeo-seong gukgeuk 여성국극: all-female musical theater troupes.

Yojeong 요정: *gisaeng* houses.

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