

Ember Suh

Mr. Tyler Gillespie

WRIT 102

14 April 2020

OMG! I Heart K-Pop!

INTRODUCTION

When people think about minorities in the United States, like the word “Korean-American,” they believe that Korean-Americans belong to both Korean and American identities; however, that belief is not true. We are neither true Koreans nor true Americans. As a child, I had a hard time discovering the truth of minorities to the point that I hated learning Korean. Fortunately, I became exposed to multiple Korean media — Korean literature, Korean dramas, Korean variety shows, and modern K-Pop — that made learning Korean intriguing. K-Pop really fascinated me because I realized that I could use singing as a method to speak in the language, and ultimately, I embraced my Korean-American identity.

Hearing K-Pop songs that stretch across the Ole Miss Grove from the Student Union Plaza after my exhausting 11:00 classes reminded me yet again not only of the catchy melody and rhythm but also the smooth language of Korean. The familiar dance choreographies that I constantly watch on YouTube caught my eyes as well. People circled around the performers, and they reminded me of the beauty in K-Pop. Ole Miss Generation, an on-campus student organization that practices and performs the tricky dance choreographies of female and male Korean idol groups (more technical term of K-Pop dance groups), surfed on the “Hallyu wave” and became devoted to “learn and spread the knowledge of Korean pop culture through music

and dance” (OMG 1). Ann Johns, a linguist from San Diego State University, noticed that people congregate together, like a community or genre, when they reveal common interests. Ann Johns further defines such organizations as a “discourse community,” or a community in which the members have similar goals, communication methods, one or more genres, language, and knowledge (500). Dirk, another analyst of genres, added that repetitive, ongoing responses and patterns of a work, such as K-Pop, generate genres, such as fan bases and fandoms (252). K-Pop is a music sub-genre that originated in South Korea as singing groups shifted to dances and songs that intrigued young adults and teenagers. In the 1990s, Seo Taiji and Boys initiated the great phenomenon as their unique, novel music appealed to preadolescents and young adults. Eventually in the late 1990s and early 2000s, two contrasting boy groups, SECHSKIES (a charismatic-and-chic-feel boy group) and H.O.T (a bubbly-and-cute-feel boy group) [rivalled](#) that even their fans, consisting of teenagers and young adults, rivalled among themselves, elevating the peak of the K-Pop wave. After the groups’ disbandments, many entertainment agencies began to follow the trend, and Korean popular music expanded to countries outside South Korea, like Japan and Thailand. The sensations of [BIG BANG](#), [Girl’s Generation](#), and [Shinee](#) in the United States and [Japan](#); [TVXQ](#) in [Japan](#); and [Super Junior](#) (Fig. 1¹) in the United States, [Thailand](#), [Argentina](#), Malaysia, [Indonesia](#), and Japan broadened the fan base of K-Pop and heightened the peak of the Hallyu wave again. The global and domestic fans’ responses to K-Pop music videos generated a genre— K-Pop dance covers. With a common interest and goal, Ole Miss Generation, or OMG for short, joined the discourse community of K-Pop dance cover groups as they all share a common platform, particularly YouTube, with common elements, such

¹ Refer to Appendix I to see figure

as their logo, personas, and dance choreography. Ole Miss Generation also contributes to the genre of YouTube's K-Pop dance cover as well.

MORE THAN A MUSIC GENRE?! OMG!

Co-founders Delaney Mason and Olivia George established Ole Miss Generation in 2017 at the height of the “Hallyu wave” after they experienced a small, unofficial K-Pop dance cover group with a graduating senior in the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA), or now known as the Vietnamese American Student Association (VASA). To join the University of Mississippi's K-Pop dance cover group, members had to attend an interest meeting (Fig. 2²) where the co-founders discussed future plans and goals. “Because so many [members] are international students and go back [to their home countries], we renew our memberships every year,” co-founder Delaney Mason said. According to a questionnaire I conducted³, approximately 40% of Ole Miss Generation's members are international students, and approximately 83% of its members joined with interest in K-Pop idols and singers. Together the international and domestic students in the University of Mississippi enhance the “ability to work with other K-pop fans on their similar interest” (qtd. in Noe, par. 6).

To demonstrate their strong K-Pop fandom, Ole Miss Generation performs at events, like K-Pop Night and International Culture Night, where they can inform the audience of Korean pop culture. Ole Miss Generation also hosts Flash-Mob Performances at the Ole Miss Student Union Plaza, where I first encountered the dance cover group. Some professional K-Pop dance cover groups also perform flash-mob performances in the busy streets of South Korea to entertain passersby and to demonstrate their hard work. However, with digital technology on the rise,

² Refer to Appendix I to see figure

³ Refer to Appendix II for full data and responses of the questionnaire

many K-Pop dance cover groups upload their performances on social media platforms, particularly YouTube, like official K-Pop idol groups and singers. The uploaded videos expand the number and diversity of the viewers with YouTube's global usage and allows people to watch missed performances and rewatch the same performances.

Ole Miss Generation, an example of a discourse community, has a common attraction to the Korean culture. In the recent survey I created, most Ole Miss Generation members stated that they joined the group because they were interested in K-Pop while the other top reasons of joining are interests in Korean culture and the Korean language (Fig. 3⁴). Similar to K-Pop fans in South Korea, K-Pop fans in the University of Mississippi "share love of [the music] genre" by following dance choreographies of popular Korean songs (Noe, par. 1). Moon Chang Ho, the Executive Producer of 2011 K-Pop Cover Dance Festival, further stated, "The cover dance boom has created a platform for fans from all around the world to actively participate and enjoy K-pop" (qtd. in Billboard Korea Staff, par. 3). With pure hearts, the fans of modern popular songs in South Korea created the now-trending genre of K-Pop dance covers.

To communicate within the extensive K-Pop fan community, Ole Miss Generation follows a common genre, or method of communication. According to Ann Johns, the "genres" of the groups and affiliations allow communication within and outside the community but mainly interact within their "specialization" (504). By uploading dance cover videos on YouTube, Ole Miss Generation can interact with other K-Pop fans and dance cover groups across the country and the world. Kim Suk Young, a professor of Critical Studies and the Director of the Center for Performance Studies at the University of California in Los Angeles, emphasized that "highly

⁴ Refer to Appendix I to see figure

medium-specific” K-Pop music videos rely on YouTube because it serves as a producer-convenient and audience-accessible platform (94). The public videos depict the high value of visuals, or the “aesthetic feature” of K-Pop genre, rather than vocalization (Um 199). Since fans recognize the visuals as the key feature of music videos, Ole Miss Generation and other dance cover groups reflect the feature in their uploaded videos that show the imitations of K-Pop dance choreographies.

Discourse communities, including Ole Miss Generation, can connect to one another through accepted channels and forums, such as public media, with a qualified format (Porter 38-39). The dance cover videos usually have a logos scene in the beginning or end of videos, dancers who take on roles of personas, and very similar dance choreography. [BTS](#)’ (or Bangtan Boys) “MIC Drop” music video has an introduction logo for the first eight seconds to verify who they are. Similarly, [Ole Miss Generation](#) presents a logo for the first four seconds. On the other hand, the [Koreos](#), a dance cover organization at the University of California in Los Angeles who inspired cofounders Delaney Mason and Olivia George to establish Ole Miss Generation, did not have a logo; instead they added a “Follow us on social media” page. The professional dance cover group, [5150 CREW](#), had a seven-second logo of the costume designers and an ending scene of the dance group’s logo. The logo scenes inform the viewers exactly who they are watching and gives a professional sense. Sometimes, to integrate the Korean language and the English language for global audience, dance cover groups include both languages in their YouTube videos’ titles, such as Koreos’ “[Koreos] BTS 방탄소년단) - Mic Drop Dance Cover 댄스커버" and 5150 CREW’s “[5150 CREW] 방탄소년단 BTS - MIC DROP | 커버댄스

DANCE COVER | costumed by SFDH x MASTERNUMBER.” The multilingual titles depict integration, knowledge, and credibility in K-Pop and Korean pop culture.

Dance cover videos also illustrate the dancers and their fake identities and personalities, or personas. Kim Suk Young argued that K-Pop music videos no longer have “liveness,” or naturalism, as visuals gradually became more important than vocalization (93). Haekyung Um, the Director of Postgraduate Research and lecturer in music at the University of Liverpool, further adds that members of groups also have a persona, or role that they take, such as being the “tough guy” (196). Wearing black jackets, pants, shoes, and dark camouflages with red and white accents, BTS members are seen as dark, tough young men in [“MIC Drop” music video](#). To exhibit the same persona and follow the original work, [Ole Miss Generation](#) and [Koreos](#) wore similar clothing styles as they wore black clothes, loose clothes, camouflage, dark clothes, and red and white accents. BTS also lingered at car junkyards and recording studios that look abandoned in the music video. Likewise, Ole Miss Generation and Koreos perform in parking garages with low light exposure while [5150 CREW](#) performed in a dark, abandoned wrestling ring. To perform with the right emotions, one must apply the songs’ “interior” as K-Pop requires the addition of emotions from the melody and lyrics as if the song is a melodramatic drama (Krieger, par. 3). In a personal interview, Delaney Mason of Ole Miss Generation mentioned the different advanced subgroups of the dance cover group that require auditions (Fig. 4⁵) to see what “feel” they can express the best: OMG-Y, the “badass” and “tough girl group,” (Fig. 5⁶); OMG-X, the “cool” boy group with “sharp movements” like [EXO](#); OMG-R, the undebuted “sexy [and] sensual” girl group; and other groups that focus on cute styles and popular songs in

⁵ Refer to Appendix I to see figure

⁶ Refer to Appendix I to see figure

general. The emotions can be fully understood when considering not just the melody and dance choreography but also the meanings behind the lyrics. Expressions of the fake personas benefit the fans to understand the Korean language and culture.

With the personas that they embrace, Ole Miss Generation mirrors the original K-Pop dance choreographies. Intertextuality creates a “web” where people can borrow and “create new discourse” (Porter 34). The digital K-Pop music videos created a discourse community of K-Pop dance covers as intertextuality included “iterability,” or use of “repeated moves, phrases, and traditions” (Porter 34). Ole Miss Generation, Koreos, and 5150 CREW reflect the choreography of “MIC Drop” by BTS as they perform and practice the same dance moves; however, the video formats and choreography styles can also be seen as variable formats. Porter, a professor of English and Armstrong Interactive Media Studies at Miami University, also refers to intertextuality as a “web of meaning” (34). Through different interpretations and personal values to the audience, original works and music videos can be shown in a variety of ways depending on who is in the individual dance cover group. Consequently in an interview, Ole Miss Generation’s social media content manager⁷ related dance choreography as a way to “better connect” with the original K-Pop idol group and interact with other K-Pop idol groups and their songs as well as she mentioned in an interview. Through open opinions and interpretations of the music videos and the songs, fans can understand the K-Pop idol groups, and the language of Korean.

DISCUSSION

⁷ Due to confidentiality of the member’s identity, his/her position in Ole Miss Generation has been used.

A number of K-Pop experts do not classify K-Pop dance covers groups as discourse communities or professional groups because they consider them as trends and the members as hard-core fans. However, they do have characteristics of discourse communities and genres. Johns', Porters', and Dirks' articles enabled me to indirectly classify YouTube dance covers as a genre because I easily found examples of discourse community's criteria. Through analysis of the dance cover videos of Ole Miss Generation, Koreos, and 5150 CREW, I was able to see dance covers as a subgenre or derivative of original K-Pop songs. Um and Kim helped me recognize the unique features of K-Pop, which I was able to use as the common features of all K-Pop videos. My primary research of personal interviews and a questionnaire gave me insights as to what Ole Miss Generation members value and what their interests are. Deriving from the sources, I was able to conclude that K-Pop fans with similar tastes and love for K-Pop form a discourse community on YouTube by imitating their favorite K-Pop groups and style.

Although the genre of YouTube as a communication method among K-Pop fans and cover dancers is not widely recognized, the strong value and interest in K-Pop fandom reached out and established other discourse communities, such as K-Pop cover dances. Ole Miss Generation, a specific discourse community located in the University of Mississippi, constructs K-Pop dance cover videos with common elements — introductory logos to introduce the groups, fake personas to understand the meaning of the Korean lyrics and the songs' hidden stories, and the rigorous dance choreography to connect with the K-Pop artists more personally. The audience determines discourse and genres through interpretations of published works (Porter 38). Likewise, K-Pop fans did exactly what Porter emphasized to create a new phenomenal discourse community under the direction of the genre, or communication method — YouTube. YouTube

provided space for producers and companies to share K-Pop music videos to the public and to everyone. Using original music videos as precedents and examples, K-Pop fans evolved the K-Pop genre to include dance covers. Without YouTube and other social media platforms, fans outside and inside South Korea cannot become one K-Pop phenomenon; in addition, K-Pop singers and groups cannot receive feedback and interact with fans. Without YouTube, K-Pop might not even exist.

Despite what I have learned about Ole Miss Generation and other dance cover groups, I was not able to research the art of K-Pop dance covers due to lack of scholarly secondary sources that directly correlated to YouTube dance covers as a genre, particularly for K-Pop. The specificity of the topic limited possible sources. Most sources defined K-Pop dance covers as a trend, not a genre or a community of fans. However, with indirect relations and considerable thoughts, I was able to connect the opinions about K-Pop genre to K-Pop dance covers. I would have looked more deeply into additional professional K-Pop dance cover groups, but due to the lack of time and large number of dance cover groups in YouTube, I was unable to fulfill the more thorough research. Ole Miss Generation is the only K-Pop dance cover group in the south according to co-founder Delaney Mason, and consequently, she would like to expand Ole Miss Generation on campus. However, not many people outside the discourse community approve the art of K-Pop dance cover. When I told a classmate that I am doing research on Ole Miss Generation and what the group does, the classmate frowned and even made a booing gesture. In addition, when the social media content manager of Ole Miss Generation asked me for confidentiality in my research, I immediately suspected the outside community's unacceptance to

K-Pop. I could have also researched deeply into the issue, but I decided to analyze K-Pop dance cover groups as discourse communities first before I could talk about the issues they are facing.

Works Cited

- ARTBEAT. “[5150 CREW] 방탄소년단 BTS - MIC DROP | 커버댄스 DANCE COVER | costumed by SFDH x MASTERNUMBER.” *YouTube*, 23 Oct. 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ar2M35h-brw>.
- Be Free Tour. Image. 2017, <https://www.befreetour.com/en/detail/7626-smtown-superjunior-film-concert-ticket>
- Big Hit Labels. “BTS (방탄소년단) ‘MIC Drop (Steve Aoki Remix)’ Official MV.” *YouTube*, 24 Nov. 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTlv5_Bs8aw.
- BillBoard Korea Staff. “A Look Inside the ‘K-Pop Cover Dance’ Trend.” *BillBoard*, 18 Oct. 2011, <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/465675/a-look-inside-the-k-pop-cover-dance-trend>.
- Dirk, Kerry. “Navigating Genres.” *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, vol. 1, Parlor Press, 2010, pp. 249-62.
- Faith. Personal interview. 11 March 2020.
- Johns, Ann M. “Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice: Membership, Conflict, and Diversity.” *Text, Role, and Context: Developing Academic Literacies*, 1997, pp. 499-505.
- Kim, Suk Young. “Simulating Liveness in K-Pop Music Videos.” *K-Pop Live: Fans, Idols, and Multimedia Performance*, Stanford University Press, 2018, pp. 93-127. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/olemiss/detail.action?docID=5430258>.
- Koreos. “[Koreos] BTS (방탄소년단) - Mic Drop Dance Cover 댄스커버.” *YouTube*, 30 Nov. 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNK2IbXl4oE>

- Krieger, Daniel. "Gym or Dance Floor? Either Works." *New York Times*, 6 Dec. 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/06/nyregion/k-pop-dance-classes-from-bounce-studio-in-manhattan.html?searchResultPosition=4>.
- Mason, Delaney. Personal interview. 17 Feb. 2020.
- Noe, Eliza. "K-pop fans share love of genre in university dance group." *The Daily Mississippian*, Mississippi Press Association, 5 Sept. 2018, <https://thedmonline.com/fans-share-love-of-korean-culture-in-university-dance-group/>
- Ole Miss Generation. "[OMG] MIC Drop (Steve Aoki Remix) | Full Length Ver. BTS Dance Cover." *YouTube*, 2 Jan. 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Km_lfM3m5IU.
- . "At The Lyric Oxford." 2020, https://www.facebook.com/pg/OleMissGeneration/photos/?ref=page_internal
- . "At Turner Center." 2020, https://www.facebook.com/pg/OleMissGeneration/photos/?ref=page_internal
- . "Here comes your favorite flyer of the semester [heart-eyed emoji] That's right, OMG is recruiting for our Fall 2019 members! Be at Bryant Hall 209 this Thursday @ 6:30 pm to join the fam!" 2019, https://www.facebook.com/pg/OleMissGeneration/photos/?ref=page_internal
- Porter, James E. "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 1986, pp. 34-47. *Jstor.org*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466015>.
- SM Entertainment. "Members of Super Junior pose at their 100th 'Super Show' concert at the Jamsil Indoor Stadium in Seoul on Sunday. (SM Entertainment)." *The Korea Herald*, 2014, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140922000910>

Suh, Ember. "OMG Members' Survey." Questionnaire. 27 Feb. 2020.

Um, Haekyung. "The Voice of Popular Korea: Styles, Genres, and Contexts." *Made in Korea: Studies in Popular Music*, Routledge, 2016, pp. 191-200, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/olemiss/reader.action?docID=4684067&ppg=206>.

Appendix I

The following are figures mentioned in the paper.

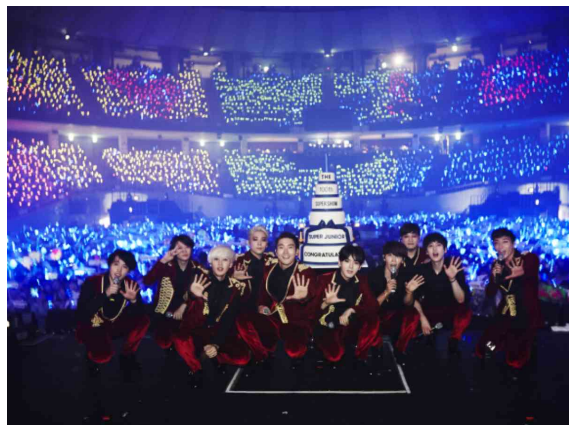


Fig. 1. (Top) Super Junior posing in front of concert attendees and fans. (Bottom) Super Junior concert attendees from the back of a stadium. In courtesy of Korea Herald and befreetour.com.



Fig. 2. OMG's interest meeting flyer that contains English and Korean. In courtesy of Ole Miss Generation Facebook.

Reasons Why Students Joined OMG

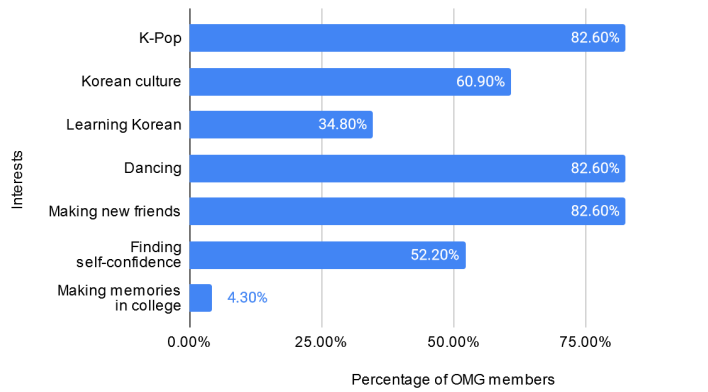


Fig. 3. Why students joined Ole Miss Generation according to my questionnaire. Students were allowed to choose more than one answer.



Fig. 4. University of Mississippi students audition for Ole Miss Generation (OMG)'s advanced subgroups: OMG-Y, OMG-X, and OMG-R. In courtesy of Ole Miss Generation Facebook.

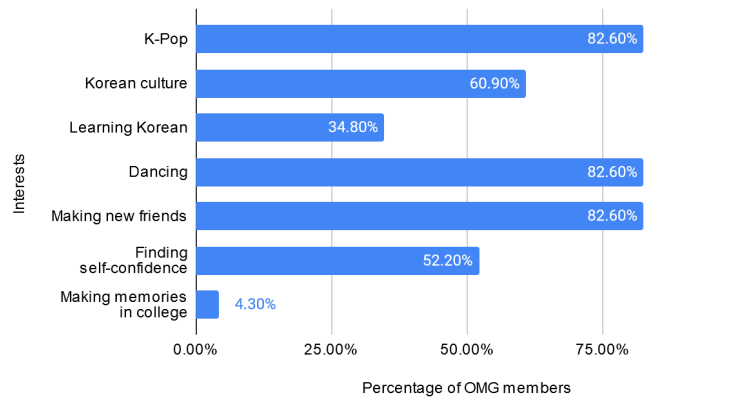


Fig. 5. (Top) OMG-Y performing at Code Pink event in the Lyric Oxford. (Bottom) OMG-Y posing. In courtesy of Ole Miss Generation Facebook.

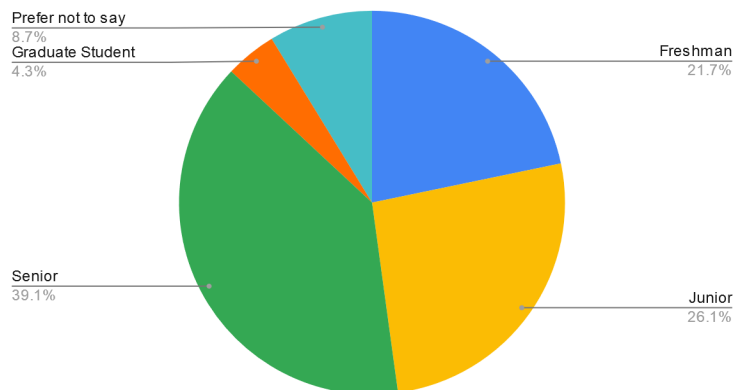
Appendix II

Questionnaire data collected over the course of research.

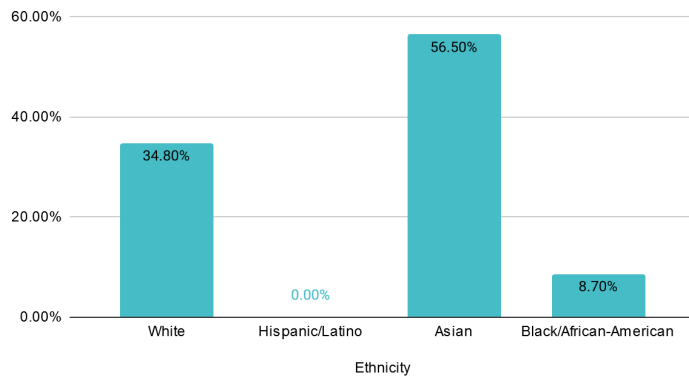
Reasons Why Students Joined OMG



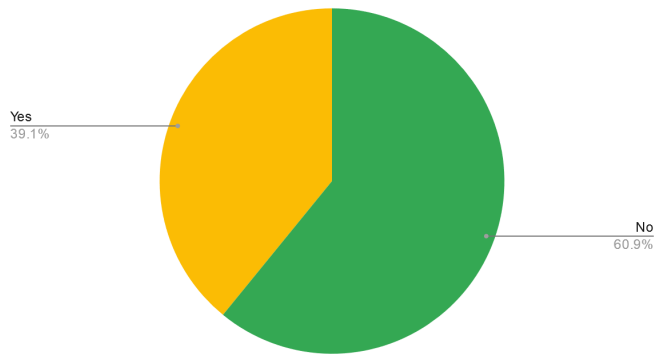
Distribution of Student Classifications



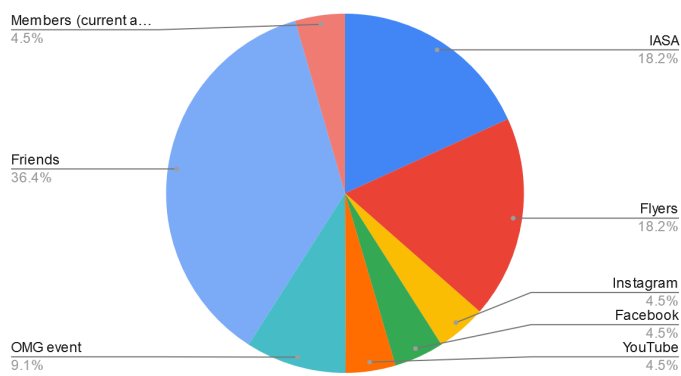
Distribution of Ethnicity



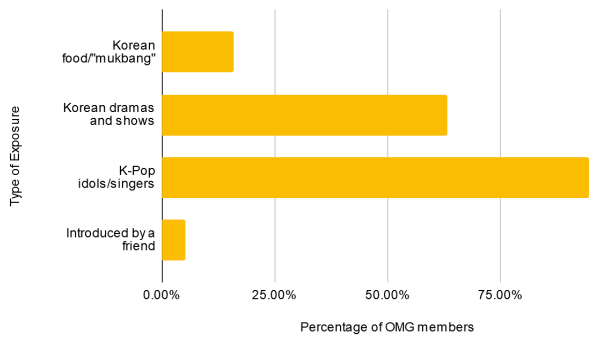
Are you an international student?



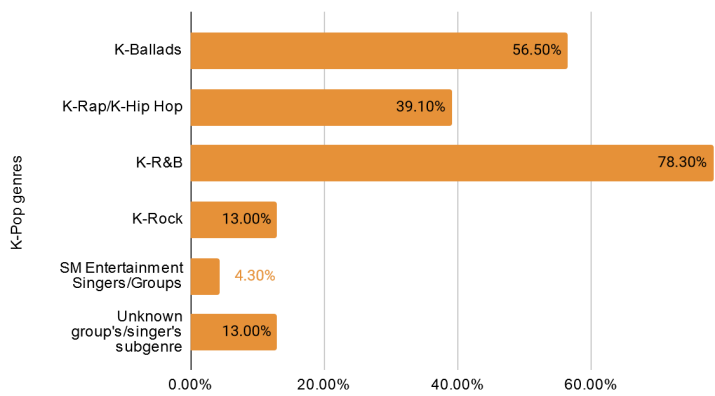
How Members First Heard about OMG



How Members Got Interest in K-Pop and Korean Culture



Favorite K-Pop genres



Favorites K-Pop Groups/Singers

