
Article:
Im, Y. orcid.org/0009-0004-8439-5480 (2025) Pending: the temporality of crisis and normalcy during COVID-19 in South Korean queer activism. Journal of Korean Studies, 30 (1). pp. 103-126. ISSN 0731-1613

https://doi.org/10.1215/07311613-11540326

Pending: The Temporality of Crisis and Normalcy During COVID-19 in South Korean Queer Activism

Abstract:
COVID-19 has been dubbed an unprecedented crisis in South Korea and elsewhere. What does this frame explain about disruptions in the political environment during the pandemic? This paper explores how Korean queer activists navigated allegedly exceptional times. The pandemic created some procedural changes in the ways in which queer activists organized popular campaigns and participated in policy governance. However, making adjustments and being in a constant state of pending were by no means new to them. Even before the public health crisis, they had to engage with operational anomalies and dysfunctional normalcy. Therefore, the queer experience of COVID-19 calls for an alternative way to consider the temporality of the pandemic beyond a temporary crisis or transitional time. Based on ethnographic fieldwork between 2019 and 2021, this paper argues that the liberal notion of crisis as a temporary rupture obscures the lived experience of queer Koreans and proposes alternative attention to duration as a specific temporality of their political organizing.

Keywords:
COVID-19, temporality, crisis, normalcy, social movements, queer politics, South Korea

Contributor's note (expected as of March 2025; subject to change)

Yookyeong Im is lecturer in Korean studies at the University of Sheffield. She examines the political capacity of law related to gender, sexuality, and social movements in the context of contemporary South Korea. She has conducted ethnographic research projects about queer Christians' alternative notion of citizenship and the rise of legal advocacy in Korean queer activism.

Since December 2019, COVID-19 has interrupted human lives around the globe in various ways. In its extreme form, it caused a massive number of deaths. There needs to be more than the biomedical measure to understand the loss. The pandemic has significantly impacted everyone's material living, health, and sociality. In South Korea, "terror" (*kongp'o* 공포) was the most prevalent rhetoric to describe the advent of the pandemic. The ultimate fear of loss intensified the contrast between what used to be and the pandemic state, between the normal operation of the political-economic system and anomaly, and between life enjoyment and its lack in many people's

minds. This peculiar time was dubbed COVID-19 times (*korona siguk* 코로나 시국). In English, the word *siguk* 시국 may be translated as situation, state of affairs, or circumstances. However, we should pay special attention to the temporal aspect of its denotation in that the term is used to refer to the current, time-specific, and prolonged juncture in terms of the development of a situation.

The temporal ruptures caused by COVID-19, as a so-called crisis, seemed acute and exceptionally new in South Korean society. However, they were eerily familiar to many queer Koreans and activists. This paper challenges the usefulness of the crisis frame as an overarching description of political disruptions caused by COVID-19. Perspectives born out of queer political organizing offer insight into how to re-theorize normalcy, which has often been defined as an antonym of temporary crisis. This study starts with simple questions: What did the pandemic truly do to Korean queer politics? What did the preexisting normalcy look like if COVID-19 categorically impeded the usual modus operandi of people's political lives?

During the first two years of the pandemic, the entire population of South Korea had to live in the mode of "pending." All the uncertainties forced everyone to pause their normal social lives and wait for the unpromised resolution of COVID-induced problems. The situation was categorically different from what most Koreans used to expect prior to the pandemic. The fast pace was the nation's dominant temporality—in administration, social change, food delivery, building construction, and communication technology. The prolonged mode of pending was a temporal indication of crisis. However, from a queer Korean perspective, working normalcy has hardly existed.

Mainstream media homogenized the impacts of COVID-19 by privileging biomedical and governmental frames to process the disaster. However, the pandemic unevenly disrupted different social groups. When life in a constant mode of pending became universal in South Korea, queer activists were also part of the ongoing journey of hope and disappointment. Still, their journey was

more familiar, like an old bad friend. This ethnographic paper critiques the dominant notion of crisis by telling how stories of anticipation and frustration unfolded in the nation's queer politics with a focus on legal contexts.

Critical theorists in political philosophy have postulated that legality is constituted by the display of its violation or exception.[1] In temporal terms, such violation takes the form of permanent suspension that structurally excludes and disadvantages minoritized groups. This essay builds on the theoretical emphasis on the inherent intimacy between legal structure and violence. However, it departs from a certain temporal understanding of such intimacy, as exemplified by Agamben, who argued that violence is a critical quality of the original moment of sovereignty, such as political transition.[2]

The experience of queer Koreans during the pandemic suggests that COVID-19 did not pose a fundamental break as a crisis in their everyday lives and political organizing. The violence did not necessarily signal a political transition. Instead, it reconfirmed the state's selective protection of lives and moral management of so-called crises. The lack of state protection was not temporary to queer folks but part of their quotidian normalcy. In this sense, the problems of crisis and normalization are perspectival rather than temporal. The "crisis" frame obscures what truly disrupted people's lives during the *korona siguk*.

Therefore, this paper calls for expanding the temporal idioms that have been indispensable in studies of social change and politics in South Korea by moving away from the metric notion of time points to non-metric elements such as pace, rhythm, and cycle. In the following sections, I identify how the exceptional temporality induced by COVID-19 was surprisingly familiar to queer Koreans and what that eerie familiarity means in understanding South Korean legal politics. I extend the implication of this finding to problematizing the preexisting understanding of crisis as a temporal and temporary rupture in sociopolitical normalcy. Ultimately, this paper manifests that

the *korona siguk* was not, in fact, a point or limited period in Korea's linear history. *Siguk* may not be the best term to describe the temporality manifested by queer Korean experience during the pandemic. As an alternative to the privileging of linear time in Korean politics, I propose a strategic undoing of metric time geared toward progress from past to future and reorienting ourselves toward non-metric time in theorizing the pendingness lived by queer Koreans.

METHODOLOGY

This research is part of a larger project on legal advocacy in South Korean queer activism. Its findings are informed by participant observation, semi-structured interviews with activists, and archival analysis of activist publications and journalist media conducted between 2017 and 2021, besides my long-term engagement in the field since the early 2010s. I spent more than thirty-two months in Seoul for ethnographic fieldwork, but the data related to COVID-19 were mainly gathered in 2020. I attended many private meetings with the activists' permission and public events, including policy and academic conferences, press meetings, and street protests. I participated in two activist coalitions for the entire year of 2020: Pride Coalition, consisting of more than forty queer and ally organizations focusing on LGBTQ rights issues, and Solidarity for Equality, a larger coalition of human rights organizations for the anti-discrimination legislation movement.[3]

My field research was always under the influence of unforeseeable temporality, as neither my interlocutors nor I had complete control over any given legal agenda pending in legislature and courts. Furthermore, the pandemic intensified political unpredictability as the virus began spreading locally in South Korea in January 2020. I needed to reconsider every in-person research activity because of health and ethical concerns and administrative restrictions. The activists with whom I was working were in a similar situation. They had to make some difficult decisions without

knowing the endpoint. Nevertheless, we had to develop situated knowledge and praxis. This paper is grounded in that shared journey of struggle.

THE BEGINNING: IMPACTS OF A BIOMEDICAL FRAME

The turn of 2020 was an exciting moment for Korean queer activists. New political momentum appeared at the beginning of the year. For instance, two events in January and February drew exceptional public attention to transgender rights in the country. First, a transgender woman received admission to a renowned women's university in Seoul. Unfortunately, she renounced her enrollment due to fierce backlash led by trans-exclusive radical feminists in and out of the school.[4] Second, the army also became a battleground for transgender rights around the same time. The late Byun Hee-soo (Pyŏn Hŭisu), who joined the army after graduating from a special high school for future military officers, had gender-affirming surgery in 2019 after suffering from gender dysphoria for a long time. She wanted to stay in the military, but the ROK army discharged her in late January 2020. She was the first openly transgender soldier, although the state promptly forced her to leave that position.

The stories of these two women drew intense interest from mainstream news media. In the past, trans representation in South Korean journalism often lacked in-depth research and a rights-based approach. Mainstream media usually depicted trans people as peculiar or tragic. This time, however, even my most cynical activist colleagues were hopeful. Journalists reached out not only to the two women but also to the broader circle of trans and queer activists. Accordingly, they expected an outpouring of well-researched and in-depth journalism in the next few weeks.

Moreover, the General Election for the 21st National Assembly was scheduled for April. It was the right time to impose a more robust and coherent political push for policy and legal agendas on LGBTQ rights issues. Activists from the Pride Coalition were working for many weeks to

announce the year as "a special year for queer rights advancement" and launch large-scale campaigns to raise public awareness of civil rights.

However, despite the unprecedented political momentum, none of the news reports in the queue reached the public on time. In mid-February, the novel coronavirus began spreading in the Daegu metropolitan area, taking public attention away from all issues but COVID-19. Shincheonji (Shinch'ŏnji 신천지), a pseudo-Christian cult, was behind this explosive spread.[5] When the government first identified cluster infections within this religious network, authorities required the leaders to share a comprehensive list of members, to which the Shincheonji leaders did not comply. The general public and media were instantly captured by shady pictures of the secretive cult group that "penetrated" local communities just like the coronavirus did, according to the popular rhetoric. Consequently, all the pre-scheduled media publications on transgender inclusion in public spaces were postponed by several weeks.

Daily, the government held two media briefings to inform people of the most recent state of affairs. Most primetime news shows allocated more than half of their time to COVID-19 coverage for almost two months. Even the upcoming General Election gained relatively little attention. Media coverage was critical in forging popular discourses that established COVID-19 as a global and national crisis with a universal impact. Messages and keywords circulated via mass media constructed a specific awareness of risks in people's minds.[6] The three most weighted keywords between February and December 2020 were "diagnosed person" (*hwakchinja* 확진자), "deceased person" (*samangja* 사망자), and "(COVID-19) diagnosis" (*hwakchin p'anjŏng* 확진 판정). People obtained information selectively in specific limited fields of medicalized discourses rather than extending the health issues to broader social agendas.[7]

The bottlenecked media representation of COVID-19 disadvantaged queer movement organizers, as illustrated above in the cases of two trans women. Moreover, some journalist media

were critical in stimulating hostility against specific demographic groups, including immigrants and sexual minorities. Such hostility emerged from othering certain groups and projecting anger on them beyond the general fear and concerns about health risks.[8]

The pandemic caused a state of emergency in governance. The trace-and-track policy of the Korean government contributed to and was made possible by the state's powerful surveillance system that evolved throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The expedited legislation and law enforcement procedures enabled the government to collect and utilize an extensive range of personal information, including individuals' location obtained by tracking their cellular GPS, credit card usage, and CCTVs in public spaces. Unfortunately, such legislative revisions did not involve careful discussions or sufficient public hearings in the name of protection against the terror of COVID-19.[9]

CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY: THE DUALITY OF COVID-19

The destructive power of the pandemic did not play out indiscriminately throughout society. The pandemic unveiled and amplified preexisting injustices rather than introducing them anew.[10] Health concerns and administrative regulations for in-person public events resulted in the physical shrinking of urban queer community spaces to socialize through political and non-political engagements. The stake was high, especially given that many community members were not openly queer in the workplace, at school, and with their families. However, it is imperative to understand that the problem of safe space and visibility predated COVID-19. The pandemic merely rendered the old hardship starker.

Queer communities and other minority groups bore disproportionate burdens of biopolitical disease control. In particular, the government's strong trace-and-track model had gradient impacts on different social groups. During the first few months of the pandemic, getting a positive test

meant the patient's whereabouts would be known to the public.[11] The assembly of human bodies indicated an increased possibility of the pandemic's threat to everyday social life during COVID-19. The gathering of stigmatized bodies, including gender and sexual minorities, implied even heavier challenges to the state control and the public and private lives of queer individuals. Yujin's experience, which inspired this study, is a poignant illustration of such concentrated burdens.

Yujin, a full-time healthcare worker and a voluntary team leader of a queer organization, shared her experience with COVID-19 testing.[12] One day, she had a high fever. She left work early and got tested immediately. She had not come out to anyone at work. Myriad thoughts swiftly passed through her mind while waiting for the result.

> "If I test positive, what should I do? I visited the organization's office twice this week. What should I report to health authorities asking where I have visited in the past week? What should I tell them if they ask me why I came to this neighborhood and whom I met? If I report the organization's name, doesn't it mean I'd be outed at work? Besides, it might impact other team members and queer friends. Should I lie to the health authorities? What if they find it out? What if my lie has an unexpected collateral effect on others too?"

Yujin was haunted by anxiety for twenty-four hours—the time needed to get the test result. Finally, she tested negative, relieving her of her fears. The myriad questions she gave herself were left unaddressed. Yujin had a preemptive dilemma between lying to protect her queer comrades and herself from the potential outing and telling the truth to the authorities for public health purposes. Most activists shared her dilemmatic thoughts when they had to decide to move their community events online or cancel them.

Movement leaders were not overly afraid of the possibility of catching COVID-19 themselves. They were resourceful enough to fight against human rights violations they might face if one tested positive. However, they could not take all responsibilities and provide lay members with perfectly satisfactory assistance for any social, economic, and health risks that in-person gatherings might involve. The foundation of this struggle lies in the stigmas against queer bodies, which predate the

current pandemic. COVID-19 amplified the stigmas attached to queer bodies—indexing promiscuity, anti-society, and danger—but did not invent them.

In social movements, most public events, lectures, rallies, and conferences were canceled or delayed during the first few months of the pandemic. As time passed, activists increasingly realized that this abrupt public health crisis would not end soon. They learned to find alternatives, such as holding online events and organizing public activities without requiring mass in-person participation. Making guesses about the next round of government guidelines became part of their quotidian labor regardless of its success or failure. Crisis management became normalized in activist praxis. The assertions of emergency regarding COVID-19 increasingly sound both powerful *and* banal simultaneously.

When the entire country was immersed in the biomedical management of the disease in the first year of living with COVID-19, any community outbreak accompanied considerable moral baggage in the public sphere. Unknown anxiety was silently prevalent among activists who hoped to see no cluster outbreak within local LGBTQ community spaces. The superficial tranquility vanished in the early morning of May 7, 2020. A newspaper reported that coronavirus "infiltrated" the gay club scene in Itaewon, a neighborhood in Seoul famous for its gay and trans night culture.[13] Many other presses either copied or followed up on this source that highlighted how a young man in his 20s tested positive a few days after visiting several gay bars in Itaewon. The news spread at an incredible speed via online journalism and social media. These news reports enraged queer activists as they exacerbated the stigma against gay people and practically counter-served the public health goal of preventing further infections through timely diagnosis. Those who visited the clubs, and thus might have been in close contact with the first diagnosed patient, were more likely to avoid testing for fear of being outed.

Moreover, some journalists took advantage of the crisis. For example, two journalists published a "special reportage" on gay saunas (*jjimbang* 찜방) only a few days after the initial report about the local outbreak in Itaewon.[14] Pretending they were regular clients, they sneaked into a gay sauna to collect materials for their report. In the article, they defended themselves proactively against being labeled as homophobic. These journalists presented themselves as ethical citizens genuinely worried about society at large. The writers alleged they were "careful," but the entire article was saturated with voyeurism in a gloomy tone to establish the saunas as a potential hotbed for virus infections.

Intensified attention from the public and health authorities rendered gay men a distinct population exposed to COVID-19 and, thus, the virus's potential carriers. The personification of disease and virus was never new to gay communities, considering the social history of HIV/AIDS policies and discourses. Breach of privacy and unwanted dissemination of personal information became severe issues. Online news media facilitated the circulation of gossip about the Itaewon outbreak. "News" pieces were supplemented by further fabrication in personal social media and online communities. Examples of leaked personal information included the occupation, age, and neighborhood of some individuals—supposedly all gay men—who tested positive after they visited Itaewon. People also left resentful comments in various online forums, saying that they are not against sexual minorities, but they deserve hate because they do "irresponsible behaviors." The online public also condemned patrons of straight clubs for clubbing during the pandemic, but they did not single out young heterosexuals as a distinctly immoral population. The public was selective in separating one's deeds from one's identity. In their perspective, acts and identities were particularly inseparable for minorities.

The membership of gay communities in the club scene is primarily based on individual sociality and independent participation. In other words, their sociality, not registration, is the

primary identity marker for gay men. One activist shared a tragically comic anecdote at a coalition meeting a few days after the Itaewon outbreak: Her colleague at a local human rights law organization received a phone call from a municipal government officer in charge of public health administration. The officer requested a "full list of all sexual minority individuals in the town" so that the city office could trace them and urge them to get tested. We all burst out laughing and asked rhetorically to one another: "What list? Do you have one?"

Popular discourses divided people mainly into two groups: responsible citizens who sacrifice their pleasure to protect the community and the irresponsible ones who carelessly and selfishly put the entire society at risk. A punitive prototype for certain infectious diseases preexisted in the *Infectious Disease Control and Prevention Act* (Kamnyŏmbyŏngŭi yebang mit kwallie kwanhan pŏmnyul 감염병의예방및관리에관한법률) and the *AIDS Prevention Act* (Huch'ŏnsŏng myŏnyŏng kyŏlp'ipchŭng yebangbŏp 후천성면역결핍증예방법). People living with HIV (PLWH) have been the most affected subjects of this moral and judicial criminalization.[15] According to Article 19 of the *AIDS Prevention Act*, individuals with HIV may be subject to criminal punishment if they "perform any act of carrying and spreading AIDS to another person through blood or body fluids." The legal text alone does not explicitly criminalize PLWH's sexual activity, but its vague implementation contributed to discourses of moral panic and the personification of the virus.

South Korea's response to COVID-19 was situated in these histories of the state-led biomedical management. The government was intensely invested in controlling the crisis as quickly and tightly as possible. Nonetheless, the shared labor of crisis management had different implications for the government and queer activists. On May 12, 2020, the activists immediately formed the COVID-19 LGBTQ Emergency Response Headquarters (*K'orona19 sŏngsosuja kin'gŭm taech'aeng ponbu* 코로나 19 성소수자 긴급대책본부; Headquarters hereinafter). The Headquarters consisted of approximately a dozen prominent activists from HIV, LGBTQ rights, college, and

human rights law organizations. These activists committed their time and resources to respond to the Itaewon outbreak, sometimes even at the expense of their regular projects. The Headquarters organized its activities in four sections: i) providing assistance for individual cases of human rights violation, ii) encouraging gay community members to get tested, iii) monitoring journalist media, and iv) cooperating with health authorities.

Ŭnmi, a lesbian activist at one of the leading queer rights organizations, was confident to say that her experience during the pandemic reinforced her faith in the necessity of legal protection. "An anti-discrimination law will not immediately change how we fear unwanted outing when we get tested. However, the law will help us to argue that it is discrimination not to consider this and that factors in designing and implementing COVID-19 tests."[16] Some activists wishfully said that the government might finally realize the importance of anti-discrimination law as it could also serve its general public health goals in the pandemic situation.

Ironically, the typically neglected population suddenly drew attention from the state. Government officers were unusually in need of queer activists' help. The Headquarters endeavored to promote a community-focused approach in their communication with disease control authorities on the national and municipal levels. Activists urged the government to protect privacy and personal information in its practice. As a result of their ongoing communication, the Seoul Metropolitan Government conducted anonymous COVID-19 testing for the first time in the country.

COVID-19 engendered an ambivalent political momentum by being both problem and opportunity simultaneously in the nation's queer activism. On the one hand, it produced challenges for sexual minorities as a stigmatized group blamed for the spread. On the other hand, it ironically functioned as a chance for the activists to strengthen their voice about the need for including minorities in societal protection and remind the state of how everyone is interconnected under the

pandemic and every social group deserves necessary care for the sake of the entire society. They could take more initiative in their negotiations with health authorities since the government depended on their cooperation.[17]

Engaged activists had feelings of initiative, ownership, and bitterness at the same time. One activist from the Headquarters powerfully expressed this feeling by saying, "The government has ignored queer people [*kwiŏdŭl* 퀴어들] for a long time as if we were not part of this society. Now they listen to us only because they need our help to survive the political crisis hailing against them."[18] His comment is even more telling when read in conjunction with his colleague's testimony that it became difficult for them to reach the Seoul Metropolitan Government's public health authorities once the wave of Itaewon cluster infections and immediate responses to them had passed.[19] The exceptionally expedited cooperation was an effect of a "crisis" that was not their own.

THE BANALITY OF CRISIS

Crisis is one of the most salient themes saturating contemporary South Korean political economic histories. The nation's self-identification as a crisis state has supported the hegemony of condensed developmentalism since the liberation in 1945. Many scholars have emphasized that developmentalism has been a critical moto dictating Korean society that relies on a linear notion of time. Kyung-sup Chang's term, "compressed modernity," illuminates the fast pace and significance of change in the country. From conservatives to progressives, Korean politicians and the public frequently say that the nation's democracy and industrialization are a unique model developed "in a rush." South Korea's establishment as a modern state has been a dense process both in terms of time and space.[20] Compressed modernity as an ethos entails the perpetual pursuit of quick transformation, betterment, and contemporaneity in multiple fields of society.

Paradoxically, the path of compressed modernity consists of numerous crises and sociopolitical interventions, such as the Korean War, multiple crises of democracy, military coups, oil crises, the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and the reproductive crisis. In an impressionistic account that "South Korea changes so fast," even crises evolve at a breakneck pace. Such crises banalize the state of emergency because they occur too often and develop too quickly. By doing so, those crises fuel and justify the ethos of compressed modernity because they require prompt measures toward betterment.

A crisis refers to a rupture in normalcy and anticipates a return to the imagined normalcy. In this vein, the primary referential meaning of crisis is defined as an emergency requiring prompt and decisive decisions. Such a notion of crisis has long dictated South Korean ideologies about the pace, tempo, and sequential development of political economy by demarcating the normalcy—the opposite state of crisis, whether it be undisrupted progress, rejuvenation, or recovery. In the concept's ideological understanding, the crisis is temporary, and thus, it ought to be managed and overcome.

Crisis discourses populate Korea's political arena, particularly in the sense that some groups are *still* in crisis. For anti-queer Christian rights, queer Koreans are in a moral crisis and hence need to be saved. For liberal progressives, sexual minorities are vulnerable and marginalized because South Korean democracy is not yet "mature enough" to be inclusive of them. In such an understanding, South Korean democracy is *still* imperfect, and due process is *still* unachieved by the judiciary. As one of my interlocutors jokingly said, Korean progressives' primary affect is shame. They lament how shameful it is that they still cannot protect, if not save, the society, democracy, and people in crisis.

Former student activists from the so-called 86 generation often possess a confusing mixture of pride and shame as they reconstitute their generational identity through self-narratives.[21] The pride

is for the formal democracy that South Korea gained in the past three decades; the shame is for the "still" remaining failure of substantive democracy in the political economy. This still-ness as a form of lagged temporality marks Korea as a crisis state, making any "crisis" an opportunity to prove its normalcy. The COVID-19 crisis was indeed one of those.

Ironically, however, fast mending of a so-called crisis requires compartmentalization of structural problems and prioritization, which puts aside particular issues for later. Such temporal conceptualization of crisis consistently marginalizes certain groups of people, that is, situating them "out of place in time." [22] The queer being of permanent dislocation disrupts the heteronormative time.[23] It challenges "reproductive futurism" as a hegemonic mode of value production in exclusionary gender/sexual politics and as a temporal ideology limiting the present to privilege the future of human and political reproduction.[24] Queer disruptions easily meet with existing idioms of crisis in the mainstream narrative of social time in South Korea. Within that frame, queer people are positioned either as a "marginalized group still in crisis" or troublemakers who allegedly bring crisis and moral panic to Korea's gender and sexual order.

The concept of crisis serves ideological motivations. Too often, particular lived experiences are disproportionately dubbed as "crises" not because they are existentially in crisis but to normalize other particulars as standard. For example, hegemonic discourses of motherhood in the US have cast Black motherhood either as deviant or tragically heroic through the frame of crisis.[25] A financial crisis could be less about money than the cultural and moral personhood imposed on people during the emergency state.[26] Representations of crisis affect social interventions with material effects.[27]

As the anthropologist Janet Roitman theorized, "crisis narratives" are deployed as political projects to mobilize resources and determine social interventions. Her caution against understanding crisis as an analytical frame helps to see it as an object of analysis by focusing on

how certain invocations of the concept play highly political functions through their epistemological capacities. Crisis as an idiom generates specific affects. Those affects often justify actions to maintain the status quo in the name of stability. The "wars on terror and drugs" powerfully illustrate this in the United States.[28] The South Korean right-wing anti-queer movement is also closely connected to the affective deployment of crisis. Summoning imminent crisis and teleological chaos is indispensable in instigating Christian rights' feelings of urgency and transforming those emotions into political energy.[29]

Both in queer politics and COVID-19 politics, the crisis framework is mainly concerned with the nation's imminent and long-term future. Metric time presupposes measurable points and distances between those points in time. Point, referring to where we stand on the map of time, is the most crucial concept in this approach to temporality. Terms such as *past*, *present*, and *future* gain the most significance as a unit of social analysis in this notion of time. However, metric time is not necessarily the only primary anchor in how the crisis affect is established. As the queer theorist Jasbir Puar argued, affect is a porous opening that moves us away or beyond the terms of progressive time.[30] What Manuel DeLanda calls non-metric time, such as speed, pace, duration, timing, rhythms, and frequency, is a pivotal axis of temporal orientation in political organizing.[31]

Jin, a leading trans activist, emphasized a sense of exhaustion she had in the nation's queer politics in recent years.

> "We need a constant influx of new people to stay invigorated, but it has been difficult. There are multiple reasons. *Maybe COVID is also a big factor, but there is something we can't fully grasp an understanding.* It is impossible to foresee (a future). If there has been absolutely no development, and if we have a clear enemy to fight against, we could organize strongly based on collective anger. But we don't have a vision right now that some problem will be resolved for sure. We don't know very clearly who we should fight against, either. *Our arguments are repeated. We get exhausted over the course of repeating the same message over and over.* […] We are just enduring because we have to endure." (emphasis mine).[32]

Korean queer activists' repeated experience of pending is not simply a matter of being unable to move to the next developmental stage. Their orientation toward the future is not exclusively anchored to the future as a measurable point in metric time. Instead, the problem is profoundly about cyclical repetition, which gives them a deep sense of boredom and frustration instead of an acute sense of crisis. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that their boredom differs from a sense of radical negativity born out of repeated, routine crises.[33] On the one hand, queer activists hardly registered the problem of exclusion as a crisis defined as a temporal break. On the other hand, they still believed in a teleological progression toward a better future to persistently guide their politics. Legal advocacy can be a representative site illustrating this point. In the following section, I scrutinize whether the pandemic brought notable changes to LGBTQ legal campaigns and demonstrate that its effects are somewhat limited and challenging to identify.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON QUEER LEGAL ADVOCACY

Legislation

2020 was crucial for legislative advocacy as the General Election was coming up in April. Activists in the Pride Coalition planned to send out policy inquiries on sexual minority rights to political parties as a way to pressure them before the election. Many activists thought it was "this year or never" that they could have the anti-discrimination law finally passed in the National Assembly.

The comprehensive anti-discrimination law was first proposed by the Ministry of Justice under the Roh Moo-Hyun (No Muhyŏn) administration in 2007. The law intended to prohibit discrimination in various areas, such as employment, providing goods and services, politics, and

education. It also included propositions on remedy and education for prevention. The government's first draft included sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination, which ignited strong opposition from conservative Christian groups. The government shortly omitted the ground in response to organized counter-campaigns. The regression outraged queer and human rights activists. They strongly opposed the compromised bill and collaborated with Rep. Roh Hoe-chan (No Hoech'an), a leading progressive legislator and former labor activist, to propose a competing bill. Both bills eventually died out with the termination of the 17th National Assembly. This legislative failure motivated progressive activists to form multiple coalitions to pass an anti-discrimination law and establish an umbrella platform for LGBTQ and supporting organizations.

Unfortunately, the year 2007 was not the last time they witnessed a proposed anti-discrimination bill get either deferred or withdrawn due to the lack of political will in the legislature and the abundance of anti-queer mobilization led by Protestant conservatives. Two proposals made in 2011 died out when the 18th National Assembly's term ended the year after. Rep. Kim Jae-yeon proposed a similar bill in 2012. The 2012 bill remained pending for over three years and ended up being nullified at the end of the 19th National Assembly's term. Two subsequent attempts in 2013 were withdrawn due to opposition campaigns. The legislators who participated in the 2013 bills received threatening phone calls and letters from Christian conservatives, making them surrender to the protesters and eventually drop the proposals.

Fast forward: seven years passed, and the struggle for a comprehensive anti-discrimination law again became the foremost subject of legal advocacy for queer activists in 2020. This time, however, the global public health disaster seemingly disrupted activists' ambitious planning. Organizers at the Solidarity for Equality canceled lectures and minimized the size of press conference. Activists had to consider logistical changes on an ad hoc basis. COVID-19 made "not

knowing anything in advance" a general state of being shared by various social movements. Many activists especially grappled with logistical adjustments for the first couple of months. That said, such challenges hardly felt novel or unprecedented to them. They were used to maintaining "cruel optimism" despite repeated pendingness clouded by uncertainties.[34]

It is necessary to interrogate what practically changed and what did not in activists' experience to understand the intriguing combination of acuteness and déjà vu in feeling the COVID-19 "crisis." The most explicit change was that activists needed to consider specific government regulations and public health precautions in their campaigns. Most of all, they had to give up mass rallies. For Korean activists, protest holds a unique position as a powerful genre of political speech and performance. Protests generate a spatiotemporal break through various modes of disruption in the city.[35] Street protest has been a primary locus for activist-minded queer Koreans to explore and establish collective ways of willful appearing as a precondition for making political claims.[36] They gathered to call for a timely enactment of the anti-discrimination law, to condemn local governments' regulation of queer parades, and to denounce conservative media's discriminatory reportage of queer population.

However, holding a public assembly during the pandemic was deemed controversial and thus politically risky. Various subgenres of protest, including mass rallies, marches, and press conferences, were canceled in the first few months. There were limited exceptions, but they required special precautions like keeping the number of participants below 10, wearing masks, and collecting each participant's personal contact information and body temperature. At each protest, organizers had to prove they adhered to relevant guidelines and common sense to care for public health (i.e., the protest's civility). This message's intended recipient included law enforcement authorities and the public potentially watching them on the street or through online media.

Meanwhile, everyone had to make their best guess on whether the election would occur per the original schedule. Among those guessing were government bodies like the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK hereinafter). Despite the challenges, activists carried out workshops and organizational meetings for anti-discrimination legislation movement. They moved forward based on an incomplete assumption about the variable: the uncertainty about how COVID-19 may evolve.

Indeed, speculative organizing and contingency planning have been an integral part of the quotidian labor of Korean queer activists, regardless of the pandemic. For example, there are numerous cases in which municipal governments, foundations, and educational institutions withdrew their approvals for LGBTQ-related events to use their public space, ranging from local pride marches and queer women's sports games to public lectures. This tendency is profoundly related to some activists' emic descriptions of the state of their movement—that their movement is not strong enough to forecast the future and take initiatives to set up its temporality.

Activists faced the dilemma of moving forward while surrounded by external uncertainties, some caused by the pandemic and others predating it. Too often, politicians and state institutions like the NHRCK made excuses for serial delays in making legislative progress for queer people. Queer activists who were liaisons to the government and Representatives' offices sometimes lamented about their inaction regarding the anti-discrimination legislation movement. At coalition meetings, they shared how their NHRCK and National Assembly contacts conveniently used elections as an excuse. They frequently heard, "For now, it makes more strategic sense to wait and see because of uncertainties related to the election." Such a statement was an old cliché to the activists. They pointed their fingers at an apparent contradiction: the NHRCK seemed to move too slowly and too carefully due to its anxiety over real politics, whereas its public opinion poll

manifests the popular support for the anti-discrimination law.[37] The call to wait was not new to them, as it was all they had heard from the state for the past decade.

As the cultural geographer Ju Hui Judy Han asserted, "If anti-LGBTI conservatives have unsurprisingly tried to block social change, liberals have demonstrated a tendency to postpone them, arguing that sexual minority rights are temporarily premature, rather than permanently impossible."[38] The Democratic Party and its then president-candidate Moon Jae In (Mun Chaein) never dismissed queer demands completely during the Candlelight Revolution in 2016 and 2017. Instead, they facilely deferred those demands by chanting "later" (*najunge* 나중에).

When the government framed itself as more liberal and left more formal room for discussion, the activist's dilemma ironically became more bewildering. Given the futuristic benefit of the doubt and structural limitations, they could not bypass the temporality of their potential collaborators. Still, they could neither passively wait to hear back from politicians and government bodies, considering how they had witnessed too many broken promises in their movement's history. The movement's institutional memory demonstrated that a delayed promise (as a temporary notion) could be an ultimately failed one (as a permanent existential state of the political agenda) anytime soon. Any delays caused by the pandemic were subject to my interlocutors' reasonable suspicion that those new postponements might be reiterations of earlier deferrals they experienced during the Candlelight Revolution.

The shadow of COVID-19 stayed tenaciously even after the General Election in April. The National Assembly was hit by waves of local outbreaks several times. A few politicians and their assistants had brushes with the virus. In response, the National Assembly had three shutdowns in February 2020, August 2020, and June 2021 to prevent further spread. The shutdowns excused delays in the in-congress discussion of the proposed bill and activists' meetings with legislators interested in the anti-discrimination law in the 21st National Assembly. Rep. Jang Hye-Young

(Chang Hyeyŏng) of the Justice Party and ten other representatives proposed the anti-discrimination bill in June 2020. It was the sixth attempt to enact the law in the history of South Korean legislation. It took much longer for leading politicians of the Democratic Party to take on board their Equality Act proposal, whose contents were very similar to Rep. Jang's anti-discrimination bill.

Many of my activist interlocutors found those delays frustrating but not shocking. They found a strong resonance between how the winning presidential candidate, Moon Jae In, denounced the urgency of gender and sexual minority demands and how the majority-ruling Democratic Party was moving very slowly in the National Assembly. In April 2020, the Democratic Party won 180 seats in the General Election. Anti-discrimination activists argued it would be a perfect time for the Democrats to pass the anti-discrimination bill as they secured the voters' support in the most recent election. However, the Representatives from the Democratic Party claimed that such a move could cause a backlash because they could come across as arrogant by pushing the agenda forward using their majority power. Under this circumstance, even the delays caused by time-specific public health challenges felt too familiar to many activists. Most were skeptical and ambivalent about whether there would have been substantive progress if it had not been for COVID-19.

Litigation

Activist lawyers were also not confident about the direct causes behind the prolonged state of pending in many litigations they represented. Hŭisun, a queer activist-lawyer leading various impact litigations, acknowledged the COVID effect on overall delays in proceedings in 2020 and 2021 while articulating the general mystery of postponement.

> "There are cases when court proceedings are delayed without any justification and for no reason, especially at its initial stage of appeal. For example, I have one appeal

> case whose first hearing date hasn't been set for five months now. Well, appeals usually take more time to be processed and it is due to the pandemic that court proceedings have slowed down since last year. . . . But then the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court are different. You can never guess when they will proceed. The Supreme Court can hold cases in its hands forever for no reason."[39]

Nominally, the pandemic directly affected court schedules and delayed many litigation proceedings. In late February 2020, the National Court Administration released a strong recommendation to postpone most court proceedings except for urgent cases for two weeks, which was rare in the modern legal history of South Korea. Several local courts extended the recess further as a proactive measure. After that, the courts had two additional breaks in August 2020 and between December 2020 and January 2021.[40] There was a slim chance that the courts would consider LGBTQ+ impact lawsuits highly important and time-sensitive.[41] Lawyers and activists expected further delays for ongoing lawsuits, sometimes for an undetermined period.

The widely known case of *Sergeant A* poignantly illustrates the complexity of judicial delays. *Sergeant A* was one of the victims in the ROK Army's "gay witch hunt" in 2017. The army's investigation team confiscated mobile phones belonging to soldiers suspected of being gay and then accused them based on Article 92-6 of the *Military Penal Code* (Kunhyŏngbŏp 군형법) that criminalizes consented same-sex anal intercourse in bases. The special investigation, if not a raid, was conducted under the leadership of then Chief Jang Jun-Kyu (Chang Chunkyu), a devout Evangelical Christian. The General Military Court (1st circuit) declared the defendant guilty in May 2017. Both parties appealed, bringing the case to the High Military Court. This second circuit court also upheld the original decision. *Sergeant A* appealed again and finally brought the case to the civilian Supreme Court after his discharge from the army.

As of 2020, this case had been pending for a long time in the Supreme Court, and the court had yet to make a concrete promise of when the proceedings would resume. It was a preexisting situation before COVID-19. A common consensus among the involved activists and human rights

lawyers was that the court was sitting on the case instead of taking substantive action. The court was allegedly "trying to read the general public opinion," which meant it was doing a political calculation on this politicized lawsuit. On top of the intended delays, the pandemic dimmed the appellant's hope for timely court inquiries, hearings, and decisions even further. By the summer of 2020, more than three years had already passed since the army's first investigation and prosecution.

What is at stake here is how the activists could interpret such judicial delays and pinpoint the correct causes behind them. There is a big difference between delays caused "during" and "by" the pandemic. I reckon that COVID-19 did not newly introduce the work of waiting in litigatory campaigns, although it might have aggravated the difficulty to a moderate extent. For many queer litigants and their lawyers in relevant public interest cases, waiting and being in the pending mode were already ordinary parts of their engagement with the judiciary system even before the pandemic.

Queer activists' normalized waiting shares a quality of deferral with "suspension."[42] Institutionalized postponement could have also been absorbed into the logic of constant preparation prevalent in neoliberal South Korea where the present intervention is legitimized and guided based on speculative future.[43] However, queer Koreans' politico-legal experience of deferral and waiting is distinct from both suspension and preparation in terms of their agency over time. Queer activists' agency is dependent on temporal contingency but not fully seized by the postponement as they continue to work on resisting the deferral. Their labor is also different from "preparation" as they are not preparing for an uncertain yet forecasted future but striving to make one. Their situation raises two critical insights regarding queerness and law.

First, the language of procedure dominates judicial measures for a political problem in legal liberalism. Liberalism "discusses and negotiates every political detail" and "wants to dissolve

metaphysical truth in a discussion."[44] Language-oriented proceduralism is not confined to queer litigations but constitutes the shared experience of law in South Korea—unless the involved parties have extralegal power to manipulate the procedure. Second, excessive waiting has been normalized in politicized litigations, not necessarily because those cases are legally complicated but because courts consider them "sensitive" (*min'gamhan* 민감한). "Sensitive" is often a euphemistic modifier for political contention in mainstream media and politicians' discourses. Queer issues are "sensitive" and thus "difficult" problems in the state's parlance. The courts have been selective in assessing the importance of social consensus and the public's legal sentiments in their decision-writing process. It is illuminating that the abovementioned case of *Sergeant A* was finally concluded and declared not guilty at the Supreme Court only in April 2022. It was almost five years after the first circuit decision and three years after the tertiary court took over the case.

CONCLUSION: A CRITIQUE OF CRISIS-NORMALCY BINARY AND A TURN TO DURATION

The explosive emergence of COVID-19 is commonly said to have given rise to a state of exception in the political arena of human rights. Such a political state is neither external nor internal to the legal order.[45] I argue that the exceptional state induced by the pandemic was ironically familiar to queer Koreans. The state of exception has always qualified queer politics in South Korea, as suggested by many local activists and researchers. They have long asserted that their existence has been erased in law and state governance. Therefore, few found it shocking that the larger Korean society put minimal priority on their immediate politico-legal agendas during the pandemic. For them, the most significant conundrum on the table had less to do with how queer people were in a temporary crisis than with how they have had to reside in a void space under the country's legal hegemony before, during, and after the pandemic.

As time went by, global discourses about the "new normal" reached Korean queer activists with whom I was working in the two coalitions. The everyday terror was alleviated as COVID-19 became a regular part of social reality. Nonetheless, the singularity of Korean queer political experience lies in the ordinariness of the so-called anomaly. The notion of pending had been very familiar to many activists and queer Koreans even before the *korona siguk*. Being in that state, if not status, was a reality they had to live in various forms. In this sense, the "new normal" is neither wholly new nor normal from their perspectives. If a crisis is a structure of disjuncture[46], what kind of substantive disjuncture did COVID-19 impose on queer communities and activism? Maybe not so much. Queer activists have experienced disruptions in temporality in peculiar ways. If "crisis is far from being structureless but is an event in which structures inevitably take over,"[47] one must interrogate what kind of structure came into place during the pandemic.

It was popular to frame all the adjustments made in the context of COVID-19 as "transitions" in Korea and elsewhere. However, it is inadequate to identify the period of those adjustments as a transitional time because the departure and destination points look disturbingly alike. Korean queer activists' political labor engages with heteroglossia in terms of temporality. They waited; did not wait and claimed their rights to be protected right now; diligently worked as if they were climbing stairs; got bored by the cyclical dialectics of their action and backlash; and wished the time of revolutionary change to come—all at once. Such a heteroglossic state was not unique to the *korona siguk* but has been present regardless of the pandemic. Queer political claims have long been pending, and the political engagements of activists consistently centered on getting out of that pending state. Differently situated subjects experienced the alleged discontinuity of crisis in diverging ways.

Therefore, the COVID-19 experience of queer activists suggests that the concept of crisis—as an antonym for normalcy—has little explanatory power as long as it is defined as a temporary

rupture between present and future in metric time. This problem calls for a strategic undoing of the previous privileging of linear time in our understanding of political issues in contemporary Korea. Otherwise, any queer-inclusive sociopolitical change would fall into the predicament of being "out of place in time," nailing the lived present of queer Koreans to yet another cycle of epistemological pending.

Various elements constitute social change's temporality, including timing (i.e., point alignment), tempo, pace, and rhythm. The COVID-19 experiences of queer Koreans and activists suggest that the previous normalcy has always been dysfunctional to them. In other words, the discriminatory anomaly was present in the name of operational normalcy for mainstream politics, even before the allegedly temporary "crisis." Therefore, the perspectives born out of queer Koreans' cyclical experience of pending illuminates an alternative possibility to think around liberal, developmental, and progressive time. Throughout the paper, I presented a stark contrast between the general emphasis on the fast pace of social change in South Korea and the cyclical repetition of pendingness in queer Koreans' political claims. Although the notion of pace can be a non-metric category of time, the "fast pace" of Korean social life and macrosocial changes almost always presupposes specific metric directionality in popular and scholarly discourses. In other words, the assumption that contemporary Korea moves fast from one point (past) to another (future) reinforces a vector image anchored to progress.

Instead of holding onto a narrowly defined notion of futurity, queer experience during and around the pandemic questions: under what ambitions is futurity mobilized in understanding and intervening in social problems? This alternative question also stimulates another relevant question: how do those ambitions and mobilization of futurity perpetuate the exclusion of queer lives in the narrative of progress and advancement? That alternative possibility will help us understand the logic of exclusion that has been in place before, during, and after the so-called "crisis." Such

queering of Korea as a crisis state opens up a possibility of undoing the ideological baggage of progressive time toward normalization, which has long dictated contemporary Korean politics and analyses around it. The queer mismatch calls for a revisit to the temporal hegemony focusing on speed and measurable points of developmental space-time. My analysis of queer activism suggests that duration—as a problem including both resistant endurance and the chronic prolongment of pendingness—is a vital site of hope and anguish at the same time. Strategic attention to various qualities of duration would enable further intellectual engagement with sociolegal discrimination in Korea to do analytic justice to those whose lives were minoritized by the misleading "crisis" frame.

Acknowledgements

I thank queer and human rights activists in Korea for sharing their experiences with me and invoking questions raised in this paper. I also offer my deepest gratitude to the two anonymous reviewers whose meticulous comments were instrumental in improving this article. Earlier iterations of this paper were presented at the Institute for Korean Studies Graduate Student Research and Publication Workshop at George Washington University, Political Anthropology Working Group at Harvard University, and the Korean Association of Women's Studies Spring Conference in 2022. I am grateful for the comments made at the workshops. Lastly, I thank the Wenner-Gren Foundation, Social Science Research Council, and Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies for sponsoring my fieldwork from May 2019 to August 2021, and Harvard University Korea Institute and Asia Center for funding part of my doctoral research.

Notes

[1] Benjamin, "Critique of Violence" and Schmitt, *Political Theology.*

[2] Agamben, *State of Exception.*

[3] Pseudonyms are used for the two coalitions where I conducted participant observation.

[4] Kang Jaeku., "Sungmyŏngyŏdae ch'oech'o t'ŭraensŭjendŏ hapkyŏksaeng "maŭm nŏdŏllŏdŏrhaejyŏtta"

[5] *Shincheonji* (Shinch'ŏnji 신천지) was founded in the late 1980s and grew dramatically in size in the 1990s and 2000s. Their aggressive yet secretive missionary campaigns to recruit more followers rose as a severe threat to mainstream Protestant churches in the nation.

[6] Ch'oe and Hong, "K'orona19e taehan kungnae ŏllonbodo kŏmsaekk'iwŏdŭ p'aet'ŏn yŏn'gu."

[7] Ibid., 53.

[8] Yi H. and Kim S., "K'orona19 ihu han'guksahoeŭi hyŏmo tamnon," 288.

[9] Suh, "Digital Tracing that Promotes Overcriminalization," 21.

[10] Byŏn Jaewŏn's discussion at *Social Minorities and Disaster* (Sahoejŏk sosujawa chaenan), co-hosted by Solidarity against Disability Discrimination and Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights of Korea, Seoul, May 14, 2020.

[11] The problem of privacy violation was ameliorated as the government and the public became more conscious of the side effects of indiscriminate information sharing. However, during the first year of the pandemic, the tracing information of those who tested positive was open to the public for two weeks. Even this "two weeks" rule was not properly observed during the first couple of months of the pandemic.

[12] Pseudonyms are used for individual interlocutors throughout this paper. However, I followed conventional citation rules when citing activists' public presentations and publications by including the names of the presenters and authors used in the original sources.
[13] Yu, "Tandok: It'aewŏn yumyŏng k'ŭllŏbe k'orona19 hwakchinja tanyŏgatta."
[14] Yi T. and Kim S., "K'ŏt'ŭnman ch'yŏjin k'ŏmk'ŏmhan pang."
[15] See KNP Plus, *Han'guk HIV nagin chip'yo chosa*, 44.
[16] Ŭnmi, interview by author, Seoul, July 12, 2021.
[17] Na, "Kŏmjin'gwa pangyŏgŭi in'gwŏn kŏbŏnŏnsŭ," 194.
[18] Nam Ung's discussion at *Social Minorities and Disaster* (Sahoejŏk sosujawa chaenan), co-hosted by Solidarity against Disability Discrimination and Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights of Korea, Seoul, May 14, 2020.
[19] Na Yŏngchŏng's discussion at the *COVID-19 and Human Rights* conference, co-hosted by the Korean Association of Human Rights Studies, Korean Association of Human Rights Law, and the Network of Human Rights Organizations to Response to COVID-19 on July 10, 2020.
[20] Chang, "Compressed Modernity and Its Discontents"; Chang, *South Korea under Compressed Modernity.*
[21] Pak S., "386sedae chŏngch'esŏng hyŏngsŏnggwa pyŏnhwaŭi naerŏt'ibŭ chŏpkŭn."
[22] Han, "Out of Place in Time."
[23] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*.
[24] Edelman, *No Future.*
[25] Nash, *Birthing Black Mothers.*
[26] Song, *South Koreans in the Debt Crisis*; Gkintidis, "European Funds and the Hermeneutics of the Capitalist Crisis."
[27] Rudnyckyj, "Crisis Effects."
[28] Masco, "The Crisis in Crisis."
[29] Shiwoo, *K'wiŏ ap'ok'allipsŭ*
[30] Puar, *Right to Mime,* 19.
[31] DeLanda, *New Philosophy of Society.*
[32] Jin, interview by author, July 7, 2021.
[33] Muir, *Routine Crisis.*
[34] Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*.
[35] Some of these modes (of disruption-making) are conventional in the sense that there are traditional repertoires built up in the more extended history of Korean dissident movements. See Lee, *The Making of Minjung.* Over time, mass protests in South Korea have increasingly blurred the lines of festive celebration and civil disobedience as a genre of political performance since the 2000s. See Jiyeon Kang, *Igniting the Internet.*
[36] Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 155; See Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, for willfulness as a style of politics.
[37] National Human Rights Commission of Korea, *2020nyŏn ch'abyŏre taehan kungminŭishik chosa*, 57.
[38] Han, "Politics of Postponement," 237. Also, see Shiwoo, *K'wiŏ ap'ok'allipsŭ,* for how queer activists fought back against this politics of postponement, particularly between 2014 and 2017.
[39] Hŭisun, interview by author, Seoul. July 8, 2021.
[40] Pak M., "Kŏdŭptoen k'orona19 hyujŏnge p'ansadŭl 'nan'gam'."
[41] For example, Daegu High Court announced a special recess to control the COVID-19 spread in August 2020. In its announcement, the court listed three categories excluded from the universal delays during the recess: 1) Hearing sessions for provisional seizures and injunctions in civil, family, and administrative court cases, 2) custody trials for criminal cases, and 3) other sessions not suitable for delays because they need urgent attention or would have severe impacts on human rights. See Daegu High Court, "2020nyŏn t'ŭkpyŏl hyujŏngjedo shilshi annae."
[42] Xiang, "Suspension."
[43] Choi, *"Unification Preparation" in South Korea*, 115; Anderson, "Preemption, Precaution, Preparedness," 788.
[44] Schmitt, *Political Theology,* 63.
[45] Agamben, *State of Exception*, 23.
[46] Beckett, "Politics of Emergency."
[47] Scarry, *Thinking in an Emergency*, 17–18.

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Ahmed, Sara. *Willful Subjects*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Anderson, Ben. "Preemption, Precaution, Preparedness: Anticipatory Action and Future Geographies." *Progress in Human Geography* 34, no. 6 (2010): 777–98.

Beckett, Greg. "The Politics of Emergency." *Reviews in Anthropology* 42, no. 2 (2013): 85–101.

Benjamin, Walter. 1978. "Critique of Violence." In *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings.* New York: Schocken Books. pp.277–300.

Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Butler, Judith. *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

Chang, Kyung-Sup. "Compressed Modernity and Its Discontents: South Korean Society in Transition." *Economy and Society* 28, no. 1 (1999): 30–55.

Chang, Kyung-Sup. *South Korea under Compressed Modernity: Familial Political Economy in Transition.* London: Routledge, 2010.

Choi, Michelle Hyun. ""Unification Preparation" in South Korea: The Professional Labor of Preparing for a Future Scenario." PhD diss., Harvard University. 2021.

Ch'oe Wŏnchu and Hong Changsŏn. "K'orona19e taehan kungnae ŏllonbodo kŏmsaekk'iwŏdŭ p'aet'ŏn yŏn'gu" [A Study on the Search Keyword Pattern of COVID-19 in the Domestic Media]. *K'ŏmyunik'eisyŏnhak yŏn'gu* 29, no. 2 (2021): 29–58.

Daegu High Court. "2020nyŏn t'ŭkpyŏl hyujŏngjedo shilshi annae" [Announcement on the Special Recess in 2020]. August 2, 2020.
https://dggodung.scourt.go.kr/dcboard/new/DcNewsViewAction.work?seqnum=6462&gubun=41&cbub_code=000300&searchWord=&pageIndex=11

DeLanda, Manuel. *New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*. London: Continnum, 2006.

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Gkintidis, Dimitrios. "European Funds and the Hermeneutics of the Capitalist Crisis: Insights from within the Greek State." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 41, no. 1 (2018): 142–59.

Halberstam, Jack. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.

Han, Ju Hui Judy. "The Politics of Postponement and Sexual Minority Rights in South Korea." In *Rights Claiming in South Korea*, edited by Celeste L. Arrington and Patricia Goedde, 236–52. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Han, Ju Hui Judy. "Out of Place in Time: Queer Discontents and Sigisangjo." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 81, no. 1 (2022): 119–29.

Kang Jaeku. “Sungmyŏngyŏdae ch'oech'o t'ŭraensŭjendŏ hapkyŏksaeng “maŭm nŏdŏllŏdŏrhaejyŏtta” [The First Transgender Admit to Sookmyung Women’s University says, “My Heart Got Ragged.”]. *Hankyoreh*, February 2, 2020. https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/926586.html.

Kang, Jiyeon. *Igniting the Internet: Youth and Activism in Postauthoritarian South Korea*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2016.

KNP Plus. *Han’guk HIV nagin chip’yo chosa* [The People Living with HIV Stigma Index: South Korea 2016–2017]. 2017.

Lee, Namhee. *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007.

Masco, Joseph. “The Crisis in Crisis.” *Current Anthropology* 58 (2017): S65–76.

Muir, Sarah. *Routine Crisis: An Ethnography of Disillusion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Na Yŏngchŏng. “Kŏmjin'gwa pangyŏgŭi in'gwŏn kŏbŏnŏnsŭ? kŭ ihurŭl sangsanghagi” [Human Rights Governance of Testing and Prevention? Imagining its Afterwards]. Paper presented at the K'orona19wa in'gwŏn [COVID-19 and Human Rights] conference, virtual, July 10, 2020. Reprint in COVID-19 LGBTQ Emergency Response Headquarters, *K'orona19 sŏngsosuja kin'gŭp taech'aek ponbu hwaltong baeksŏ* [COVID-19 LGBTQ Emergency Response Headquarters White Paper], 189–95, 2020.

Nash, Jennifer C. *Birthing Black Mothers*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.

National Human Rights Commission of Korea. *2020nyŏn ch'abyŏre taehan kungminŭishik chosa* [A National Survey on Public Awareness of Discrimination in 2020], 2020.

Pak Miyŏng. “Kŏdŭptoen k'orona19 hyujŏnge p'ansadŭl ‘nan'gam’” [Repeated Court Shutdown due to COVID-19 Perplexes the Judges]. *Pŏmnyul Sinmun*, December 28, 2020. https://www.lawtimes.co.kr/news/166752.

Pak Sochin. “386sedae chŏngch'esŏng hyŏngsŏnggwa pyŏnhwaŭi naerŏt'ibŭ chŏpkŭn: chendŏwa kyegŭbŭi chŏp'ap” [The Narrative Approach on the Formation and Change of 386 Generation Identity: The Articulation of Gender and Class]. *Sahoesasanggwa munhwa* 24, no. 4 (2021): 85–122.

Puar, Jasbir K. *The Right to Mime: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017.

Roitman, Janet. *Anti-Crisis*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Rudnyckyj, Daromir. “Crisis Effects.” *Cultural Anthropology* 33, no. 4 (2018): 547–57.

Scarry, Elaine. *Thinking in an Emergency*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2011.

Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty. Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought.* Translated by George Schwab. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Shiwoo. *K’wiŏ ap’ok’allipsŭ: saranggwa hyŏmoŭi chŏngch’ihak* [Queer Apocalypse: Politics of Love and Hate]. Seoul: Hyŏnsil Munhwa, 2018.

Song, Jesook. *South Koreans in the Debt Crisis: The Creation of a Neoliberal Welfare Society*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

Suh, Chae-wan. “Digital Tracing that Promotes Overcriminalization” In *K-Identification and Human Rights amidst COVID-19,* Translated by Aram Ko, 21–23. Seoul: Institute for Digital Rights, 2021.

Xiang, Bao. “Suspension: Seeking Agency for Change in the Hypermobile World.” *Pacific Affairs* 94, no. 2 (2021): 233–50.

Yi Hyesu and Kim Sehyŏn. “K'orona19 ihu han'guksahoeŭi hyŏmo tamnon: kujojŏk t'op'ik mohyŏngŭl hwaryonghan ŏllonbodogisa punsŏk” [Hate-related Discourse in Korean Society after COVID-19: An Analysis of Media Coverage Using Structural Topic Model]. *Sahoesasanggwa munhwa* 24, no. 2 (2021): 261–96.

Yi Tong’u and Kim Samuel. “K'ŏt'ŭnman ch'yŏjin k'ŏmk'ŏmhan pang, 5nyŏnjŏn ch'ama motssŭn pŭllaeksumyŏnbang ch'wijaegi” [A dark room with closed curtains: A reportage of Black Sleeping Room I could not publish five years ago]. *Money Today*, May 12, 2020. https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2020051114333274105.

Yu Yŏngtae. “Tandok: It'aewŏn yumyŏng k'ŭllŏbe k'orona19 hwakchinja tanyŏgatta [Exclusive: A COVID-19 positive man visited a famous club in Itaewon].” *Kookmin Ilbo*, May 7, 2020. http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0014552714.