Sticky Activism: The Gangnam Station Murder Case and New Feminist Practices against Misogyny and Femicide

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the convergence of online and offline political action in the form of "sticky note activism" following the 2016 Gangnam Station murder in South Korea, which involved the posting of handwritten sticky notes in public spaces and the dissemination of images of the notes through digital media. I argue that, as an alternative feminist media practice, sticky note activism has helped catalyze the formation of affective counterpublics by mobilizing women's affect, challenging dominant narratives about the misogynistic murder, and, thereby, broadening the context for the collective articulation of new feminist voices and practices.

On May 17, 2016, a twenty-three-year-old woman was stabbed to death in a public bathroom near Gangnam subway station, a bustling part of Seoul, South Korea, characterized by high pedestrian and motor traffic. The Gangnam District is the modern, affluent center of Seoul, home to high-end restaurants and bars, shopping malls, and entertainment companies.[1] The murderer in the case had never met the victim before and allegedly commit-

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1   Claire Lee, "Korean Women Respond to Gangnam Murder Case," *Korea Herald*, May 19, 2016, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160519000691.

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ted the crime because he felt he had been ignored by women.[2] Security camera footage shows that he waited for a female target for more than an hour, ignoring six men who entered the unisex bathroom. However, mainstream newspapers such as *Chosun Ilbo* and *Dong-a Ilbo* and television news programs such as *Yonhap News*, *SBS News*, and *MBC Newsdesk* reported the incident as a *mutjima sarin*, which translates roughly as "random killing" or "motiveless crime."[3] *MBC Newsdesk*, the nightly newscast of South Korea's major broadcasting network, for example, in a headline described the murder as "presumed the result of paranoia [i.e., mental illness] not misogyny."[4] Similarly, police investigating the case concluded that the killing was not a hate crime against women but rather the tragic act of a mental patient with a history of schizophrenia.[5]

When news of the murder was made public, on the morning of May 18, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter and other online forums were flooded with posts sharing news as well as thoughts and opinions about the case. In addition, Twitter user @0517am1—an account named after the date and time of the incident that was created for the purpose of publicizing the case—suggested that tributes be left to the victim at the nearby subway station: "Let's leave a chrysanthemum flower [a symbol of mourning in South Korea] and Post-it notes at Gangnam Station Exit 10. It is now society's turn to provide an explanation for the violence and murders committed against women."[6] Within a day, this post had been retweeted more than 8,000 times on Twitter and shared through other popular online women's communities, such as *yeoseongsidae* (Women's Generation). As a result of the popular interest and fervent responses, Gangnam Station Exit No. 10 where the murder occurred became the focus of mourning for the victim and was eventually adorned with more than a thousand sticky notes on which were written messages of sadness and anger and calls for change (Figure 1).

Both online and offline, many women began to speak out, seeking in part, and in contrast with the reporting in the mainstream press, to define this murder as a misogynistic hate crime rather than a random killing. There is no specific law against hate crimes in South Korea, and the murder case sparked considerable social debate about the issue and specifically about femicide, the killing of women by men simply because they are wom-

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2   Bo-eun Kim, "Random Murder Triggers Angry Response from Women," *Korea Times*, May 19, 2016, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/03/113_205091.html.

3   Jae-Min Lee, "Memorial of Events Surrounding 'the Gangnam Station Motiveless Crime,' Presumed Due to Paranoia, Not Misogyny," *MBC Newsdesk*, May 19, 2016, http://imnews.imbc.Com/replay/2016/nwdesk/article/3975007_19842.html; Chang-Kyu Park, Sung-Hui Kang, and Min Kim, "Commemorating the Victim of Bathroom Motiveless Crime at Gangnam Station Exit 10," *Dong-a Ilbo*, May 20, 2016, http://news.donga.com/3/all/20160520/78199519/1; and Ji-Hye Yang, "Police and Pyo Agree with the View That 'The Gangnam Station Crime Was Motiveless, and It Is Difficult to Conclude That It Was a Misogynistic Crime,'" *Chosun Ilbo*, May 19, 2016, http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/05/19/2016051901748.html. All of the news articles cited here were originally written in Korean. All translations are mine.

4   Lee, "Memorial of Events."

5   Hyun-ju Ock, "Gangnam Murder Was Not a Hate Crime: Police," *Korea Herald*, May 22, 2016, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160522000287.

6   Kim, "Random Murder."

Figure 1. Sticky notes at Gangnam Subway Station Exit No. 10. Photo by Heehoon Lee, OhmyNews, 2016. Photograph reprinted with the permission of the photographer.

en.[7] To be clear, there were many similar crimes and other acts of violence against women in South Korea before and after the Gangnam station murder. As the newspaper *Hankook Ilbo* observed, the Gangnam station murder "is not the first incident of femicide, but it seems to be the first incident to be called femicide."[8]

This important change in the categorization of the incident was made possible by women's activism online and offline, especially the use of the sticky notes to express their emotions and responses regarding the incident and to make visible the gendered nature of the crime. By way of example, the online hashtag #*saranamatda* (survived) was created for reporting everyday gender-based violence, and group pages called "Gangnam Station Exit 10" were created on Facebook and Twitter for the purpose of uploading and sharing online the sticky notes left at the memorial site and announcing other actions in support of the victim.[9] In addition, a number of protests and gatherings offline took place around Gangnam station and in other parts of Seoul, including a candlelight vigil protesting violence against women and calling for safety at night and a "street filibuster" involving continu-

7   Na-Young Lee, "Misogyny, Gender Discrimination, and Feminism: A Feminist Project of Social Justice Surrounding the 'Gangnam Station 10th Exit,'" *Korean Journal of Cultural Sociology* 22 (2016): 147–186. For academic discussions of femicide in other social contexts, see Jill Radford and Diana E. H. Russell, eds., *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (New York: Twayne, 1992); and Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano, eds., *Terrorizing Women: Feminicide in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

8   Sun-Young Park, "[Femicide Shock] Misogyny Goes to Extremes: 'We are afraid but we will not succumb,'" *Hankook Ilbo*, May 19, 2016, http://www.hankookilbo.com /News/Read/201605192050507352.

9   Gangnam Station Exit 10: "Gangnam Station Exit 10," Facebook, https://www .facebook.com/entrance10gn ; Twitter, https://www.twitter.com/entrance10gn.

ous speeches by participants occupying downtown and protesting violence against women.[10]

In this article, I explore the role of women's activism online and offline surrounding the Gangnam murder case in raising public awareness about the prevalence of misogyny and gender-based violence in South Korea. Based on my analysis of the sticky notes and social media posts with the hashtag #*sarana-matda* and my interviews with participants in the activism associated with the murder case, I argue that the "sticky note activism," both online and offline, has played a crucial role in forming what scholars have called "affective counterpublics."[11] In particular, I show how sticky note activism facilitated the mobilization of women's grief, rage, fear, and guilt; disrupted and challenged the dominant narratives about the killing; and provided an alternative discourse around femicide. This activism, I argue, added to a broader politicization of women's everyday discrimination and safety and the collective articulation of feminist voices and practices challenging misogyny in South Korea.

As a result, within a month after the murder, the South Korean government announced measures designed specifically to address crimes against women. These measures included the expansion of a hotline for reporting violence against women, counseling services for female victims, workshops to raise awareness of and combat the problem, and the distribution of guidelines to schools and public organizations for responding to crimes against women.[12] In recognition of the symbolic importance of the sticky notes, the Seoul Metropolitan Government collected those left at the memorial site for display in city hall and later archived them permanently at the Seoul Foundation of Women and Family.[13]

The social significance of the incident is also reflected in the individual stories of women who participated in anti-misogyny activism in recent years. During interviews with me, some of these participants pointed to the Gangnam station murder case as a key moment in terms of raising their consciousness around gender, misogyny, and feminism in South Korean society. These newly self-identified feminists have come to be referred to as "post-Gangnam station subjects" or "the Gangnam station generation" by scholars and journalists.[14]

10 Sung-jin Choi, "Women Throw Out Fear, Anger at 'Street Filibuster,'" *Korea Times*, May 21, 2016, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/03/113_205218.html.

11 See Yeran Kim, "The Affective Public Sphere," *Media & Society* 18, no. 3 (2010): 146–191; Anthony McCosker, "Social Media Activism at the Margins: Managing Visibility, Voice and Vitality Affects," *Social Media + Society* 1, no. 2 (2015): 1–11; Kaitlynn Mendes, Jessica Ringrose, and Jessalynn Keller, *Digital Feminist Activism: Girls and Women Fight Back against Rape Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Zizi Papacharissi, *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Sarah J. Jackson, Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles, *#HashtagActivism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020).

12 So-Jung Park, "S. Korea Rolls Out Measures Responding to Gangnam Murder," Yonhap News Agency, June 22, 2016, https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN2016062200290 0315.

13 Nak-yeon Won, "Memorial to Gangnam Murder Victim Moved to Seoul City Hall," *The Hankyoreh*, May 24, 2016, http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national /745207.html.

14 Yong-lim Choung and Na-Young Lee, "Post/Gangnam Station: Collective Resistance against Gender Discrimination and Re/construction of Feminist Subjects," *Issues in Feminism* 18, no. 1 (2018): 181–228.

In what follows, I begin my analysis of sticky note activism by situating it within the context of feminist alternative media practice. Next, I discuss the crucial role of affect in mobilizing women's responses to the Gangnam station murder case and in the formation of affective counterpublics. I then approach the personal stories and testimonies preserved on the sticky notes as archives of the participants' experiences of gender-based violence that provide a field of learning about misogyny and femicide. The article concludes with a discussion of some of the challenges to and limitations of such feminist publics.

My analysis of the Gangnam station murder, then, is based on the archives of the sticky notes left at the Gangnam station memorial site.[15] I also draw on social media, in particular the aforementioned #*saranamatda* hashtag on Twitter and the Twitter page "Gangnam Station Exit 10."[16] I complement the picture obtained through this research with in-depth interviews with activists who responded to the murder case as well as an organizer of the Gangnam Station Exit 10 feminist group.[17]

STICKY NOTE ACTIVISM AS AN ALTERNATIVE FEMINIST MEDIA PRACTICE

I coin the term "sticky note activism" to refer to the use of Post-it notes and similar products as a means to express personal opinions, messages, and sentiments as well as solidarity with broader social and political movements.[18]

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15 I analyze the themes that recur in the messages documented in the book *Gangnam Station Exit 10 and 1,004 Post-it Notes*, which, as its title suggests, preserves the texts from over a thousand of the sticky notes left at the Gangnam station memorial site. The numbering of the sticky notes here follows that of this book. See Kyunghyang Shinmun, *Gangnam Station Exit 10 and 1,004 Post-it Notes* (Seoul: Woodpencil Books, 2016).

16 This group was created by the feminist group with that name and includes posts about feminist activities associated with the incident. When the group changed its name from "Gangnam Station Exit 10" to "Femimonsters," the URL for the group page also changed in September 2017. See Femimonsters (@femimonsters), Twitter, https://www.twitter.com/femimonsters.

17 These interviews were conducted between June 2016 and July 2018. Because the murder occurred during my initial fieldwork in Korea in 2016, I was able to visit the memorial site and to attend related protests and conferences in person, which is how I recruited some of my first interviewees. Most of those whom I ended up interviewing were women in their late twenties or early thirties who were attending college or working and had not previously been involved with women's or feminist organizations but rather had learned of the memorial site through social networking services or online communities. During the interviews, I asked about their reasons for participating in the protests or other forms of activism relating to the case. All names of interviewees appearing throughout the article are pseudonyms adopted to protect interviewees' identities.

18 Sticky notes have been used for activism in other countries as well. For example, during the 2014 Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong, protestors created a Post-it wall outside government offices, and, in the United States, New Yorkers put sticky notes on the wall inside subway stations to share their thoughts—often despairing—after the 2016 presidential election. See Pauline Chiou, "Hong Kong's Revolution: Post-it Notes & Smartphones," CNBC, October 2, 2014, https://www.cnbc.com/2014/10/02/hong-kongs-revolution-post-it-notes-smartphones.html; David Ingram, "New Yorkers Build Walls of Sticky Notes in Defiance of Trump," Reuters, November 15, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-new-york-postits/new-yorkers-build-walls-of-sticky-notes-in-defiance-of-trump-idUSKBN13A2IV; and Charles Passy, "New York City's Post-Election 'Subway Therapy' Sticky Notes to Be Preserved," *Wall Street Journal*, December 17, 2016, https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-citys-post-election-subway-therapy-sticky-notes-to-be-preserved-1481968802.

This form of activism typically involves posting sticky notes bearing hand-written messages on surfaces in public spaces and uploading and disseminating images of them through digital media as a form of voluntary civic engagement. Similar terms, such as "Post-it protest," have been used by South Korean newspapers and global media outlets to describe this form of activism at various protests in South Korea and other countries.[19] I prefer the term "sticky note activism" because of the resonance with the concept of "stickiness" in scholarly discussions. Hence, I develop and use the term "sticky note activism" in three distinct but related senses to describe (1) material protest artifacts such as sticky notes, (2) an audience's attention to and participation in a media text, and (3) the circulation and accumulation of affect.

As described by Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, "stickiness" refers to the capacity of media to attract and hold individuals' attention and engagement, often in contrast to the concept of "spreadability."[20] Scholars have also spoken of the stickiness of affect in reference to the repetitive use of certain signs or physical objects.[21] For example, Sara Ahmed, in a discussion of the accumulation of affective value, argues that "signs become sticky through repetition; if a word is used in a certain way, again and again, then that 'use' becomes intrinsic; it becomes a form of signing."[22] Sticky note activism, then, encompasses affect, protest artifacts, the capacity of media, and participants' attention and activities. The activism surrounding the Gangnam station murder case is sticky in the sense that it extended the reach of feminist activism that combined digital and analog media, thereby generating powerful collective affective resonance, raising awareness of misogyny and gender-based violence, and inspiring legislative and other governmental responses, such as the enactment of the Framework Act on Prevention of Violence against Women in South Korea in 2018.

In South Korea, sticky notes had been used in the context of other memorials and protests prior to the Gangnam murder, such as the Sewol Ferry disaster. This form of activism emerged then as a central symbolic medium for social and political protests after the murder case. It has since featured in the commemoration of the death of a subway worker at Guui station and the recent #MeToo movements in schools and universities.[23] In this respect, the sticky notes are examples of what scholars call "radical

19 See Joo-Eon Im, "The Spread of MeToo Post-it Protest," *Kukmin Ilbo*, April 11, 2018, http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0012270421; and Nicole Gallucci, "The Mighty Power of the Simple Post-it Note Protest," *Mashable*, October 31, 2018, https://mashable.com/article/power-of-post-it-note-protest-subway-therapy/.

20 Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, "Introduction: Why Media Spreads," in *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

21 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Anna Feigenbaum, "Resistant Matters: Tents, Tear Gas and the 'Other Media' of Occupy," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 15–24, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2013.828383.

22 Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 91.

23 Hyun-ju Ock, "Death of Subway Worker Triggers Wave of Protests," *Korea Herald*, June 6, 2016, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160605000257; and Victoria Kim, "Empowered by #MeToo, a New Generation Fights Sexual Abuse in South Korea's Schools," *Los Angeles Times*, February 22, 2019, https://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-south-korea-metoo-schools-20190222-story.html.

media" or "alternative media," the role of which is to challenge hegemonic ideological frameworks as such and to provide counterhegemonic and alternative visions.[24] Jenny Gunnarsson Payne connects feminist media production with alternative media scholarship in the development of the study of feminist alternative media. If the aim of alternative media is to build counterhegemonic resistance to dominant ideological frameworks, feminist activist media can be understood as an alternative to hegemonic patriarchal cultures realized through the formation of an alternative public sphere.[25] As Payne explains, citing as examples feminist posters, postcards, blogs, and zines, "the history of the women's movement has demonstrated time and again the central role of 'activist' media in the production of feminist collective identities."[26]

By connecting feminist media production as a form of alternative media with academic discussions of the materiality of protest artifacts, I frame sticky notes as a feminist activist medium that facilitates the organization of collective action, dissemination of feminist ideas, and production of discourse that counters dominant patriarchal cultures. More broadly, media and cultural studies of social movements have tended to focus on the key roles played by media and cultural artifacts, such as songs, radios, posters, graffiti, and films and videos, in shaping the meanings and collective identities of social movements and cultures of protest.[27] In his study of the material culture of South Korean social movements from the 1980s to the 2000s, Eun-Sung Kim argues that protest artifacts serve a more than instrumental purpose, also heightening emotional and sensory impacts and shaping the space and culture in which protests unfold. Thus, in contrast with the violent demonstrations against the military dictatorship in the 1980s during which stones and firebombs were hurled, the protest culture of South Korea in the 2000s took a more peaceful form that involved organizing candlelight vigils, wearing ribbons, and picketing with hand-lettered signs that invoked feelings of sadness and sympathy rather than anger and fear.[28] I accordingly situate the emergence of the sticky note as an important protest medium and resistant phenomenon within the historical material culture of South Korean social movements.

What is distinctive about recent sticky note activism in South Korea is that its spread has been facilitated by the development of digital media technologies. Unlike such protest artifacts as the posters, candles, and ribbons used in other recent movements, sticky notes have from the start connected the materiality of the paper on which they are written and the physical spaces

24 John D. H. Downing, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2001); Leah Lievrouw, *Alternative and Activist New Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011); and Jenny Gunnarsson Payne, "Feminist Media as Alternative Media? A Literature Review," *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 1, no. 2 (2009): 190–211.

25 Payne, "Feminist Media."

26 Payne, 191.

27 Downing, *Radical Media*; Feigenbaum, "Resistant Matters"; Eun-Sung Kim, "The Material Culture of Korean Social Movements," *Journal of Material Culture* 22, no. 2 (2017): 194–215; and Payne, "Feminist Media."

28 Kim, "Material Culture."

that they occupy with the digital spaces in which they are widely shared. In this sense, sticky note activism also differs from typical mechanisms of digital activism, such as hashtag activism, which mobilizes social justice issues and networked activities mainly in digital spaces.[29] Hye-Young Cho, in her study of online feminism in South Korea, has pointed out such shared features of sticky notes and social media texts as character limits, mobility, spreadability, and archivability. Both media allow for non-linear reading and conversations; they are also both mobile and spreadable, amplified through repetitive phrases and citations, and easily archived.[30] To be clear, characteristics such as spreadability, mobility, and archivability are not just shared by sticky notes and social media texts but reconfigured in the context of digital media, as networked technologies have also transformed the deployment of sticky notes by activists.[31] Also missing from Cho's discussion is an explanation for the choice by feminist activists to use sticky notes and combine "old" and "new" media.[32] For example, the interviewees for this study mentioned ethical and practical considerations related to the use of sticky notes rather than stickers. The former are much easier to remove and therefore less of a burden on the cleaners and sweepers who may end up disposing of them—most of whom, in South Korea, are women. In this sense, the reasons and motives for the widespread use of sticky notes by these feminist activists in their praxis are clear.

To better understand the role and implications of sticky note activism, I asked the participants in this study for their thoughts on the importance of sticky notes as a media practice for feminist activism. One of them, Boram, explained:

> I liked sticky notes because it's like an online style. When we think of civic movements, it is often assumed that there is an organization and that activists organize the movements. I do not like the style of civic movements. . . . But sticky notes are different. Everyone can do it without relying on an organization or a representative. I can write my own message. I do not need to hold a meeting to discuss what I write. I think this way is really meaningful and a whole new way for movements. And then, if someone who saw it and put it up again— it's another round of activism, isn't it? There may be also people who see it offline and take a picture of it and upload it.[33]

29 Jackson, Bailey, and Welles, *#HashtagActivism*.

30 Hye-Young Cho, "Intermediate Feminism: From Megalia to Gangnam Station Exit 10," *Literary Community* 23, no. 3 (2016): 1–12.

31 Lievrouw, *Alternative and Activist New Media*.

32 This article is part of a larger research project about feminist activism against misogyny in Korea in which I explore the connection between Post-it projects by Megalia, South Korea's first dedicated anti-misogyny feminist website, and the subsequent widespread use of sticky notes for feminist activism. Megalia's Post-it project began in 2015; it involved leaving sticky notes with written feminist ideas and slogans in public places, such as bathrooms, libraries, and subway stations. According to the user who first suggested the idea in Megalia, "[O]nline activities can have a great impact, but one's individual personality will be overshadowed." The hope was that such action offline, combined with the uploading of photos of the notes online, would encourage others to do the same. See "Post-it Project," Megalia, http://archive.is/EBYMt#selection-389.3-395.20.

33 Boram, interview by author, Seoul, July 18, 2016.

Boram stresses the voluntary nature of this form of activism, which does not require an organization to take the lead. Her words echo social movement scholars' discussions regarding the changes that digital media and its networked communication have brought to contemporary social movements. For instance, Boram's remark that "Everyone can do it without relying on an organization or a representative" reflects what Manuel Castells describes as "non-hierarchical, leaderless movement, decentralized network, and autonomous nodes," as well as the "multiplicity of subjects" seen in new forms of networked global social movements such as Occupy, the Arab Spring, the Indignados, and the Zapatista uprising.[34] The spread of sticky note activism through social media also exemplifies the "multi-layered diffuse and interactional nature of the processes" of contemporary social movements in that diverse actors voluntarily engage in activism, circulate the ideas associated with it, and encourage others to do the same.[35]

However, in comparison with online texts, sticky notes were perceived as more heartfelt and human, as Boram made clear:

> I empathized with other sticky notes messages; they felt personal, different from online texts. Although there are also tens of thousands of comments online about this case, the Post-it notes were handwritten and put up by people who intentionally came to visit there.[36]

Like Boram, many participants thought that the handwritten notes were more authentic, unique, and warm than online postings. Their responses can be understood as an example of "the aura of analog in the digital age."[37] Especially for the generation of "digital natives" who have grown up within a digital environment, analog media are often regarded and valued as real, iconic, and authentic.[38] In other words, while digital media were necessary to extend the mobilization and reach of activism, sticky notes, as an analog medium, were felt to lend credence to the activists' voices and actions, reflecting the importance of authenticity for the legitimacy of contemporary political mobilization.[39]

In this way, my interviewees frequently compared the sticky notes to social media, further emphasizing a relationship between these two types of

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34 Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012). For further discussion of transnational social movements, see Jeffrey S. Juris and Alex Khasnabish, "Introduction: Ethnography and Activism within Networked Spaces or Transnational Encounter," in *Insurgent Encounters: Transnational Activism, Ethnography, and the Political* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

35 Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh, *Complexity and Social Movements: Multitudes at the Edge of Chaos* (London: Routledge, 2006).

36 Boram, interview.

37 Susan Luckman, "The Aura of the Analogue in a Digital Age: Women's Crafts, Creative Markets and Home-Based Labour After Etsy," *Cultural Studies Review* 19, no. 1 (2013): 249, https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v19i1.2585.

38 Dominik Bartmanski and Ian Woodward, "The Vinyl: The Analogue Medium in the Age of Digital Reproduction," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 15, no. 1 (2013): 3–27, https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540513488403.

39 Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

media. The convergence of digital and physical media in sticky note activism is evident in, for example, the many sticky notes bearing the hashtag #*sarana-matda* and, conversely, the aforementioned online postings of images of sticky notes. Thus, "old" and "new" media are not separate but complementary and mutually reinforcing entities.

In the Gangnam station murder case, the sticky notes played an important role offline by occupying the physical, public space of the scene of the crime. As mentioned, the Gangnam subway station has symbolic meaning as a popular, crowded, and therefore safe area. The murder there revealed the public spaces in downtown Seoul to be something other than public, open, and safe for all; in fact, unlike men, women have been exposed to violence in these public spaces ranging from everyday street sexual harassment to the misogynistic murder. The occupation of this station by the sticky notes therefore generated powerful affective resonance. This point is particularly important given that, even after the incident, the all-too-common victim-blaming discourse was observed, for example, in the following note: "Don't walk alone late at night. Don't wear a short mini skirt. Be careful when you go to a public restroom. What more can I do to survive?"[40] In these respects, the occupation of the public space of Gangnam station by sticky notes printed with women's words decrying misogyny and gender-based violence served to transform the station into a space of resistance to the dominant victim-blaming narrative.

Those who visited this memorial site did not simply leave after they had read the messages or left their own but also began to gather in front of the sticky note wall at the exit from the station at what came to be called the "free speech podium."[41] There they spoke up about their own experiences of misogyny in the form of sexual harassment, dating and domestic violence, and gender discrimination. This free speech demonstration continued for eight days, from May 19 to May 27, 2016. Most members of the audience and speakers were women, ranging in age from their late teens to their thirties. This venue for open-air public address further demonstrated the importance of occupying space in the formation of counterpublics, as another interviewee, Minji, made clear:

> The words that I most often heard at the free speech podium were "this is the first time to tell someone my experience of sexual abuse." So I did. And many of them cried while they were speaking. I remember that I was the second speaker on the first day of the free speech demonstration, which was held on the 19th. And for me, I did not really have much experience telling my stories in front of a lot of people.[42]

Minji, who was among those who initiated and maintained the free speech podium, considered it significant in the history of South Korean feminist

40 Note 433, in Kyunghyang Shinmun, *Gangnam Station Exit 10*.
41 Ji-Won Yang, "Free Speech Podium at Gangnam Station Exit 10 Goes to Hongik University Station," OhmyNews, May 26, 2016, http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002212559.
42 Minji, interview by author, Seoul, July 11, 2018.

movements because the speakers were mainly women who had come to the site voluntarily, having been mobilized online. Unlike the typical demonstrations and rallies in South Korea, these speakers did not use prepared scripts but rather spoke freely and spontaneously about their experiences, as Minji again suggested:

> It was so important to exercise one's own political speech on the street or in an open square. Actually, that's what a hashtag does. It is a hashtag movement that can tell one's thoughts and personal experiences under one theme, rather than signing a petition for a campaign and going to pre-organized rallies. Women's own speaking is very important in the recent feminism reboot.[43]

Minji recognized the importance of women telling their own stories, echoing Boram's remark that sticky notes empowered her to write "[her] own message" without gatekeeping. In this respect, sticky note activism enables "the personalization of politics," an important characteristic of contemporary activism facilitated through digital media.[44] Sharing personal stories is the most accessible form of contemporary activism and is particularly important for feminist activism, given that the ethos "the personal is political" is one of the points of convergence between second-wave feminism and new social movements.[45] Like many social media postings, sticky notes provided participants a candid but compressed and spontaneous way of expressing personal stories.[46] At the same time, these personal stories took on a collective quality, as they articulated women's shared experience of violence and created a sense of solidarity among women as they called for change regarding violence against women within a patriarchal and misogynistic culture. As Minji conveyed, sticky notes, along with hashtags, played a crucial role in the realization that "the personal hashtag is political."[47]

The articulation of personal stories as a collective voice was particularly well facilitated by social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and Twitter. As José van Dijck notes, SNSs can be seen as "connective media" bringing together human connectedness and automated systems.[48] The individuals who visited and left notes at Gangnam station often made and uploaded *injeung*-shots, or "proof-shots," of the notes online; such photos "prove" that a user has engaged in a specific activity and are intended to inform others

43 Minji, interview.

44 W. Lance Bennett, "The Personalization of Politics: Political Identity, Social Media, and Changing Patterns of Participation," *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 644, no. 1 (2012): 20–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162124 51428.

45 Stacey K. Sowards and Valerie R. Renegar, "Reconceptualizing Rhetorical Activism in Contemporary Feminist Contexts," *Howard Journal of Communications* 17, no. 1 (2006): 57–74, https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170500487996; and Megan Boler et al., "Connective Labor and Social Media: Women's Roles in the 'Leaderless' Occupy Movement," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 20, no. 4 (2014): 438–460, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856514541353.

46 Cho, "Intermediate Feminism."

47 Jackson, Bailey, and Welles, *#HashtagActivism*, 27.

48 José van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

and encourage them to do the same. In sticky note activism, separate participants, sticky notes, and messages were connected through the connective affordances of social media—in particular, liking, sharing, and trending. This connectedness helped sticky note activism to spread online and reach a wide range of individuals, thereby increasing the visibility of the issue of violence against women. Thus, the sticky notes at the Gangnam subway station became a trending topic on various social media, thanks to media aggregators, repetition in the news, and heated conversations about the case, especially through the hashtag #*saranamatda* (as discussed below). In addition, those living outside Seoul created their own spaces for memorial messages in South Korea's other major cities, including Busan, Daegu, Daejeon, Ulsan, Jeonju, and Gwangju. While physically separate from the Gangnam station messages, messages at these sites were also uploaded and combined with the Gangnam station messages in shared online spaces.

Once photographed and uploaded, this content was made persistent in that it was archived in various online tools. On social media such as Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, and Twitter, for example, various archival sites were created to collect and preserve all of the messages (Figure 2). While sticky notes can easily be removed and detached, the affordances of social media, especially persistence and searchability, made possible the recording, archiving, distribution, and, therefore, increased visibility and accessibility of the sticky messages.[49]

The response to the Gangnam station murder revealed ways in which feminist activists have intentionally and cleverly combined online and offline media to address the pros and cons of each. Minji stressed the importance of social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook, for the four activists who made up the feminist group Gangnam Station Exit 10.[50] From their basecamp at Gangnam station, the group's two social media managers were able to reach a wide audience through Twitter and Facebook to initiate and expand the movement. For example, these activists transcribed the speeches delivered at the aforementioned free speech podium and uploaded them to social media. They also created and used hashtags, such as #*yeoseonghyeomoe_ matseoya_hamnida* (we need to oppose misogyny), #*urineun_yeongyeoldoelsurok_ ganghada* (the more we connect the stronger we are), and #stop_misogyny, when promoting offline action and initiating online campaigns. From this perspective, the activism surrounding the Gangnam station murder case is illustrative of the capacity of feminist activists to initiate and sustain a movement through the combination of "sticky content and spreadable practices" across online and offline spaces.[51]

STICKY AFFECTS AND AFFECTIVE COUNTERPUBLICS VIA #*SARANAMATDA*

By sticking more than a thousand sticky note messages to Gangnam station, the participants in this protest facilitated the "stickiness" of affect. In her

49 danah boyd, "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 39–58.

50 Minji, interview.
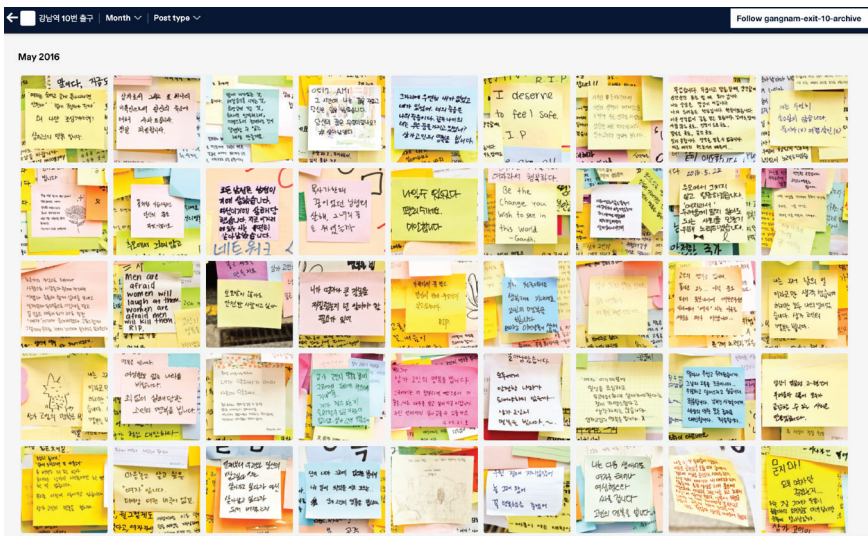
51 Jenkins, Ford, and Green, "Introduction," 4.

Figure 2. An archival site on Tumblr, 2016, https://gangnam-exit-10-archive.tumblr.com. Screen-grab by author.

study of such protest objects as tents and tear gas in the context of the Occupy movements, Anna Feigenbaum emphasizes the importance of physical objects and structures in mediating political communication; as she puts it, "[W]hen objects and architectures are repeatedly encountered at sites of struggle, they become stickier and stickier—laden with meaning and potent with feelings."[52] As more and more sticky notes amassed on the wall at the No. 10 exit of the Gangnam subway station, an ordinary public space that had been filled with the memory of a misogynistic murder became a space of feminist resistance where women were able to exchange alternative views. Many of my interviewees referred in various ways to the stickiness of intense and complex affect that first motivated them to act. For instance, as Boram described the scene:

> There were piles of flowers, and a lot of Post-it notes covered the wall. I think other people would have similar feelings. As soon as I arrived at the Gangnam subway station exit No. 10, I burst into tears. Other women were crying there. I also cried a lot. I think that women can feel shared empathy with the victim. While reading the news articles, I thought, I could have been killed, too. I feel like I am also being discriminated against because of misogyny. I cried because of such complicated feelings. How painful it must have been . . . because she was a woman.[53]

Like Boram, many of my other interviewees also articulated the crucial role of their affects—particularly grief, empathy, and fear—in mobilizing their

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52 Feigenbaum, "Resistant Matters," 17.
53 Boram, interview.

participation. In Boram's case, visiting the site further intensified her experience of the murder. I also visited the site during my fieldwork in South Korea in May 2016; like Boram, many of the women I saw were crying as they wrote their messages and read those of others. The analysis of the sticky notes by the Seoul Foundation of Women and Family corroborates this impression: in addition to commemoration, the women's messages expressed emotions such as sorrow (evident in 32.6 percent of the notes), anger (24.1 percent), and fear (6.9 percent).[54] While my interviewees often indicated their affect in the social terms through emotions such as sorrow and anger, I observed that their experiences also involved bodily encounters, affective intensities, and resonances. Another interviewee, Dasom, spoke of similarly intense experiences at the Gangnam station memorial site:

> The reason why Exit No. 10 of the Gangnam station was so intense as to change my worldview and life is because what I experienced for the first time shook my whole body, with many people at the exit of the Gangnam station. It's like the feeling of an intense collective sense of unity during a religious ritual. Gangnam Station Exit No. 10 was a place where women's anger and screaming burst out and exploded in the raw, so women who had the same experience would have felt a hot and intense explosion, catharsis, and unity, in the magnetic field of this resonance.[55]

Dasom's words are an indication of the enormous energy, emotion, and intensity of her response to the scene of the murder: her body literally trembled, and she felt a "hot and intense explosion, catharsis and unity" as if in the grips of "a religious ritual," feelings that cannot easily be captured in words. Likewise, on the Twitter account of the Gangnam Station Exit 10, one woman wrote that "[e]ach post sounded like a scream to me. I could hear their voices."[56] Such experiences demonstrate that, as much as such affect circulates and moves through bodies and objects, it can be sticky in terms of uniting bodies with particular objects.

I accordingly seek to reinterpret and reassess women's participation and activism in the Gangnam station murder case using the notion of affective counterpublics. I do so in order to highlight the potential of women's affect to drive political action through networked communication. The notion of affective counterpublics is informed by critical reconceptualizations of the public sphere in specific relation to affect and digital media.[57] Korean

54 Seoul Foundation of Women and Family, *198 Days of Records and Memories of Gender Equality: Focusing on the Gangnam Station Woman Killing Case*, November 30, 2016.

55 Dasom, interview by author, Seoul, June 16, 2017.

56 Femimonsters (@femimonsters), Twitter, May 25, 2016, 07:50 a.m., https://twitter.com/femimonsters/status/735437954860998657.

57 Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 56–80, https://doi.org/10.2307/466240; Papacharissi, *Affective Publics*; Su Young Choi and Younghan Cho, "Generating Counter-Public Spheres through Social Media: Two Social Movements in Neoliberalised South Korea," *Javnost—The Public* 24, no. 1 (2017): 15–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2017.1267155; Kim, "Affective Public Sphere"; Lauren Ber-

feminist scholar Yeran Kim, for example, coined the term "affective public sphere" to explain how women's online communities in South Korea facilitate political participation and the organization of collective action through everyday interactions and relationships based on the mutual sharing of emotions and affects like rage, hope, empathy, and care.[58] These women's communities, which originally formed to discuss issues relating to cosmetics, fashion, and plastic surgery, have emerged as important political groups in South Korea since the 2008 protests against the importation of US beef.[59] This notion of an "affective public sphere" recalls what Lauren Berlant calls "intimate publics" of "women's culture," in which women share core interests and desires and build affective and emotional ties.[60]

The Gangnam station murder case contributed to the formation of affective counterpublics by inspiring the production and circulation of a counter-discourse against a dominant patriarchal frame around femicide. At the same time, the case also contributed to the formation of feminist publics, in that it fostered the development of a collective sense of feminist identity based on shared experiences of gender-based violence and continued to fuel coordinated action opposing such violence.[61] Such affective deliberation has been afforded and facilitated by social media; in particular, the aforementioned hashtag #*saranamatda* has played an important role in expressing, collecting, and making visible women's shared vulnerability and in mediating and connecting online and offline activism.[62] The work of Sarah J. Jackson, Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles on hashtag activism similarly shows the importance of Twitter for such historically marginalized groups as women and people of color. Importantly, hashtag activism helps in connecting and amplifying feminist and anti-racist ideas and activities and advancing narratives that counter those disseminated by the mainstream media, which often neglect non-dominant voices and interests.[63] Feminist counterpublics, for example, began using hashtags (such as #YesAllWomen and #WhyIStayed) long before the #MeToo movement became prominent to help debunk social and cultural myths about sexual harassment and to offer critiques of systemic rape culture.

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lant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); and Jiyeon Kang, "Old and New Questions for the Public Sphere: Historicizing Its Theoretical Relevance in Post–Cold War South Korea," *Media, Culture & Society* 43, no. 1 (2021): 158–170, https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720939480.

58 Kim, "Affective Public Sphere."

59 Soo-Ah Kim, "Digital Technology and Young Women's Political Participation," *Issues in Feminism* 12, no. 1 (2012): 193–217.

60 Berlant, *Female Complaint*.

61 Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere"; Kim, "Affective Public Sphere"; and Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller, *Digital Feminist Activism*.

62 Rosemary Clark, "'Hope in a Hashtag': The Discursive Activism of #WhyIStayed," *Feminist Media Studies* 16, no. 5 (2016): 788–804, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2016.1138235; Kitsy Dixon, "Feminist Online Identity: Analyzing the Presence of Hashtag Feminism," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 3, no. 7 (2014): 34–40; and Samantha C. Thrift, "#YesAllWomen as Feminist Meme Event," *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 6 (2014): 1090–1092, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.975421.

63 Jackson, Bailey, and Welles, *#HashtagActivism*.

The heightened attention to the Gangnam station murder case was reflected in the trending topics in the South Korean Twitterverse through hashtags such as *#gangnamsarinnam* (gangnam murder man), *#saranamatda* (survived), *#hwajangsillam* (bathroom man), and *#gangnamyeoksarinsageon* (gangnam station murder).[64] While the gender of the perpetrator was not a focus of the media coverage, the victim was identified as "bathroom girl." This epithet placed her within a discursive series of *-nyeo* (girl) that reflects a long-standing misogynistic tradition of homogenizing, objectifying, and shaming South Korean women.[65] It is in this context that users developed such hashtags as *#gangnamsarinnam* or *#hwajangsillam* in order to make visible the perpetrator's gender. The following is one of the popular tweets with these trending hashtags: "If there is only one insane man who committed a murder, why do women who have nothing to do with it become so angry? I was not murdered because I was not there by chance and another woman was there. It was also me the murderer tried to kill. *#gangnamsarinnam #sarana-matda*."[66] This tweet, posted on May 18, 2016, was retweeted more than 2,300 times. Many women also expressed their empathy with the victim through such statements as "I survived only by luck" because they knew that they were also at risk of being a victim of a misogynistic crime.[67] The following state-ments by two women whom I interviewed, Jiyoung and Yujin, affirm this view:

I came to know the murder case through Twitter. I couldn't under-stand how such a tragedy happened to her. I usually study near the Gangnam subway station. Even on the day when the murder hap-pened, I studied there until 11 p.m. I couldn't understand how such a murder happened there. The crime site was very close to where I study, maybe 1 km away. The mere thought made me shudder. Although I left Gangnam station around 11 p.m. on that day, I could have met my friend or had a drink there. I was also shocked by the fact that the public restroom where she was killed was not a dark and remote place. And she is also the same age as me. This was not somebody else's business. I felt like I identified with her.[68]

I went there [Exit No. 10 of the Gangnam subway station] because the Gangnam station murder case was too shocking to me. As other people said, I survived only because I was lucky. Even more shocking was that the victim was the same age as me.[69]

64 Ryan Broderick and Jihye Lee, "People Are Taking a Stand after a Man Killed a Stranger because Women Ignored Him," *BuzzFeed News*, June 1, 2016, https://www .buzzfeed.com/ryanhatesthis/gangnam-bathroom-murderer.

65 Jinsook Kim, "Misogyny for Male Solidarity: Online Hate Discourse against Women in South Korea," in *Mediating Misogyny: Technology, Gender, and Harassment*, ed. Jacqueline Ryan Vickery and Tracy Everbach (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 151–169.

66 PLUTO (@hadess1138), Twitter, May 18, 2016, 07:35 a.m., https://twitter.com/hadess 1138/status/732897300247273472.

67 Su-ji Park, Soo-jin Park, and Jae-uk Lee, "Gangnam Murderer Says He Killed 'Because Women Have Always Ignored Me,'" *The Hankyoreh*, May 20, 2016, http:// english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/744756.html.

68 Jiyoung, interview by author, Seoul, July 15, 2016.

69 Yujin, interview by author, Seoul, August 17, 2016.

Jiyoung and Yujin's statements identify two factors—the victim's age and the location of the murder—as having particular resonance with many young women in South Korea. They regarded the victim, a university student in her early twenties, as an ordinary young woman and the murder site as safe because of its popularity as a place where people meet, eat, and study, even at night.[70] However, the Gangnam murder case revealed the belief that women's safety is a matter of location to be ill founded; rather, any woman anywhere can be a target of misogynistic crime. This sense of shared vulnerability invoked feelings of sympathy that were expressed through #saranamatda. In this way, sticky note activism provided a sense of collectivity and solidarity that is crucial for a feminist activism that seeks to bring about broad structural change.

The hashtag #saranamatda also functioned to mediate and facilitate activism across online and offline media. The Korean word saranamatda (survived) appeared on many of the sticky notes (1,682 instances).[71] Interestingly, many of these notes (341 appearances) also bore the hashtag symbol even though sticky notes, as offline media, do not, of course, require or support a hashtag search function. In this respect, the Gangnam station activism exemplifies the interrelationship between old (analog) and new (digital) media. Typical sticky notes related to #saranamatda included "I survived by chance; you died by bad luck. It could have been me. Let's meet in a better world next time."[72] Such phrases as uyeonhi (by coincidence) and uni joa (by luck) frequently accompanied "survive" on the sticky notes (appearing 985 and 717 times, respectively).

This shared sense of vulnerability facilitates the formation of affective connections among women. Discussing the power of grief and mourning in the face of growing global violence, Judith Butler argues that the experience of loss and recognition of shared vulnerability can be a basis for imagining community through an affirmation of individuals' relationality and connecting of others to "us."[73] Her insight into the potential of shared vulnerability is pertinent to women's experiences surrounding the Gangnam station murder case, as the following statement by Dasom indicates:

> This is the reason why Gangnam Station Exit No. 10 had such a huge explosive impact on this society. In other words, the experiences of the subject who suffered grief and the audience who listened to them were not separate but rather were tied together with the strong

70 Lee, "Misogyny."

71 In addition to Gangnam station, similar memorial sites were created in several major Korean cities, and the Seoul Foundation of Women and Family collected a much larger sample of 35,350 sticky notes from the nine largest cities, namely Seoul (21,454), Busan (5,471), Daegu (3,214), Daejeon (1,646), Ulsan (1,199), Jeonju (695), Bucheon (654), Gwangju (583), and Cheongju (434), that date from May 18 to July 15, 2016. This collection of sticky notes was made publicly available as part of the digital archives at the Gender Equality Library Yeogi in February 2019. I referred to this collection when calculating the frequencies of keywords in relation to the main themes that recurred across the country. See Gender Equality Library Yeogi, "Memory Zone Archive," http://www.genderlibrary.or.kr/bbs/list/13.

72 Note 51, in Kyunghyang Shinmun, Gangnam Station Exit 10.

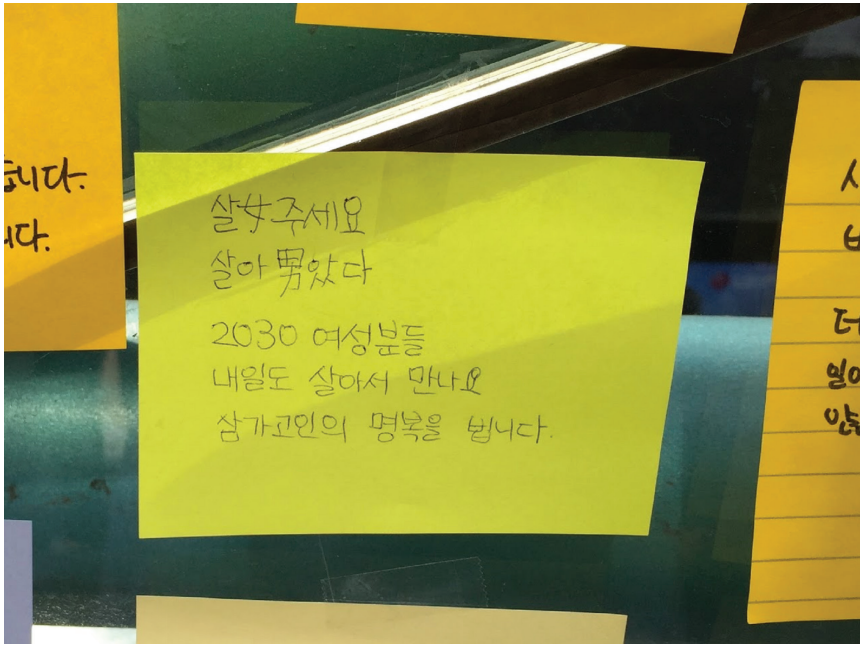73 Judith Butler, Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence (New York: Verso, 2006).

Figure 3. "Don't kill [women]; [men who] survived." Photo by author, May 18, 2016.

resonance of "Your pain was my pain." The resonance of crying together about the same pain gave me a strong sense of solidarity and relief that led to a greater sense of "women" or "us" with respect to other women whom I saw there for the first time.[74]

Dasom, then, felt a strong sense of collective identity among the women who gathered at Gangnam station as "us." As originally formulated, it was unclear whether the grammatical subject of the hashtag #saranamatda was "I" or "we." In any case, as more stories of individual survival were shared, repeated, and collected through the hashtag, they became "our" stories, the stories of a collective subject "women," because of the heightening of shared feelings of vulnerability following the Gangnam station murder. For example, the #saranamatda hashtag was also modified into the phrase sallyeojuseyo, saranamatda (Don't kill [women]; [men who] survived; see Figure 3). Moreover, because the Korean words yeo and nam are homonyms with the Chinese characters for women (女) and men (男), the phrase can be read as the sentence "Please don't kill (or save) women, men who survived." This reworking of the original hashtag is evidence that the Gangnam station murder case was widely perceived by the public as one of gender-based violence, despite the perspectives privileged by the police and mainstream media.[75]

74 Dasom, interview.
75 Sang-Hyuk Jung, "Publicizing 'Gangnam Random Killing,' the White Ribbon Cam-

THE ARCHIVE OF STICKY NOTES AS A FIELD OF LEARNING ABOUT MISOGYNY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The explosive reactions of women to the Gangnam station murder case brought to the fore the gendered nature of homicide in South Korea. The incident also amplified increasing recent efforts of feminist activists to heighten awareness of *yeoseonghyeomo* (misogyny), including the discrimination and violence that women experience daily on account of their gender. Since the 1980s, women's movements in South Korea have placed violence against women—particularly domestic violence, sexual violence, and prostitution—on the nation's social agenda, resulting in, among other things, the enactment of protective legislation in the 1990s and 2000s.[76] Nevertheless, despite the rapid and numerous legal and institutional achievements, the work of established women's organizations has not been sufficient to lead the public to concentrate on meaningful change to eliminate violence against women.[77] For instance, though crime rates in South Korea are generally considered low, the 2018 Statistics Korea report indicated significant anxiety about crime and a large gender gap; specifically, 50.9 percent of women and 40.1 percent of men expressed such concerns, with Korean women being seventeen times more likely than men to experience sexual violence.[78]

Viewed in this light, the thousands of sticky notes left by South Korean women testifying to their experiences of gender-based violence are evidence of an enormous gap between the dominant rhetoric of gender equality represented by the aforementioned legal achievements and the reality of life as a woman in South Korea. It was in this respect that many of my interviewees pointed to the Gangnam station murder case as a key moment for them, as it helped them connect the everyday discrimination that they had experienced with more extreme forms of misogynistic violence. In the words of Jiyoung, a university student:

> While my awareness of misogyny had been growing in those days, it really took shape in the context of the Gangnam station murder case. What I thought unjust in theory became a matter of survival.

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paign and Mourning on Twitter Spread," *Chosun Ilbo*, May 18, 2016, http://news .chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/05/18/2016051802197.html.

76 Lee, "Misogyny"; Sang-Sook Shin, "The Continuum of Gender-Based Discrimination and Violence against Women: Seeking an Integrated Approach," *Issues in Feminism* 18, no. 1 (2018): 267–301. Major women's organizations in South Korea have raised issues relating to prostitution as an aspect of the intertwined structural problems of violence against women and sexual exploitation. One result of their efforts was the enactment of the 2004 Special Law on Sex Trade. These efforts have also included replacing the stigmatized expression of *yullak* (moral corruption) with *seongmaemae* (commercial sex acts), advocating for the punishment of those who engage in sex trafficking and protecting the victims. For further discussion of the complicated political and feminist debates surrounding the law and prostitution in South Korea, see Na-Young Lee, "Reconsideration on [*sic*] Feminist Theorization of Sex Work," *Economy and Society* 84 (2009): 132–157; and Gap-hee Ko, "Theorizing of Prostitution as Labor and the Hierarchy of Sex/Labor/Product," *Economy and Society* 81 (2009): 112–130.

77 Lee, "Misogyny."

78 Statistics Korea, *Women's Lives through Statistics in 2018*, July 2, 2018, http:// kostat.go.kr/portal/korea/kor_nw/1/6/1/index.board?bmode=read&aSeq=368636.

I have been so cautious about my safety; I was timid. But now I real-
ized that simply being more cautious cannot solve the problem.[79]

Jiyoung gradually became interested in gender issues after she was exposed
to a women's online community in which more and more postings had been
raising the issues of misogyny and gender inequality amid the resurgence
of feminist activism in South Korea since 2015. She saw clearly a connection
between everyday misogyny and femicide, a kind of spectrum of violence
against women.

Unsurprisingly, *yeoseong* and *yeoja* (woman or women) are the most
frequent words in the collection of sticky notes (with 4,873 and 5,365
appearances, respectively). They are often used in such phrases as *yeojalaseo*
(for being a woman; 1,083 appearances), although the word *yeoseonghyeomo*
(misogyny) is also frequent (2,251 appearances). Another key theme revealed
in discursive analysis of the notes is the notion that all South Korean women
are *jamjaejeog* (potential) *pihaeja* (victims) of a misogynistic crime (264 and
1,020 appearances, respectively). In these respects, the sticky notes testify to
the gender-based violence that South Korean women have experienced and
endured. Hence #*saranamatda* is far from simply a figurative, let alone hyper-
bolic, expression, as many of the South Korean women who participated
in the sticky note activism were literally survivors of gender-based violence.
Representative incidents mentioned in the notes include the following:

I'm so sorry. I have so many thoughts in my mind. I am the second-
born of two daughters and one son in my family. Another older sister
was killed through sex-selective abortion. I could have been also
killed because I was a girl. I survived, but now I see another death
because of being a woman. We have to change this. Rest in peace.[80]

I was raped in a public restroom 13 years ago when I was a high
school student. After that, the restroom became a nightmare space
for me. You must have been more terrified than me. Let's not to be
born as a woman next time.[81]

The sheer volume of testimony about gender-based violence in the notes
reveals their connectedness, the manner in which each individual woman's
safety is always intertwined inextricably with the broader social and struc-
tural climate for women in a given culture. That connectedness is not recog-
nized in the laws designed to combat violence against women that have been
passed in South Korea since the 1990s, in which the meaning of this violence
has been reduced to narrow definitions of unlawful acts and separated into
legislative categories.[82] As a result, violence against women has not been seen

79 Jiyoung, interview.
80 Note 802, in Kyunghyang Shinmun, *Gangnam Station Exit 10*
81 Note 845, in Kyunghyang Shinmun.
82 Na-Young Lee and Min-Sook Heo, "Gendered Violence and Gender Regime in the
    Neo-Liberal State of South Korea: Reconceptualization and Reconstruction of
    Violence against Women," *Family and Culture* 26, no. 4 (2014): 58–90; and Shin,

as a product of a broader patriarchal system of discrimination and misogyny but instead as a range of more or less extreme and aberrant acts on the part of individuals. Accordingly, recent feminist scholarship calls for an integrated approach in which gender-based violence is viewed as a continuum with common features uniting various forms of violence—social, political, economic, and cultural—and involving common principles, practices, and institutions.[83] The sticky note activism associated with the Gangnam station murder case echoes these efforts, for although the sticky notes speak to various forms of violence, the theme of gender unites them.

The personal stories and experiences narrated through the sticky notes and the #*saranamatda* hashtag can thus be described as a massive material and digital archive of misogyny and gender-based violence in South Korea. Feminist scholars have highlighted the importance of feminist archival practices for engendering new historical narratives and creating new collective memories and making them integral to a society's knowledge production.[84] Although they are not intrinsically democratizing, digital archives have the potential to open up collections of data to a wide range of individuals, including activists and marginalized groups who have had limited or no access to physical repositories of data.[85] In an analysis of #YesAllWomen as a kind of digital archive of feminist activism, Samantha C. Thrift notes that this hashtag enables users to share personal testimonials of violence against women as a counter-narrative to the exceptionalist discourses about misogynistic violence.[86] Relatedly, Jackson, Bailey, and Welles describe Black feminist hashtag activism, such as that associated with #SayHerName, as "a place for memorialization" to combat the invisibility of violence against Black women.[87] These efforts reflect what Christine Bold, Ric Knowles, and Belinda Leach call "counter-memorializing" in their study of feminist sites and events commemorating the 1989 Montreal Massacre, another senseless crime motivated by anti-feminism and misogyny.[88] In this context, counter-memorializing involves creating memories that oppose those produced by hegemonic cultural forces, which actively forget the gendered nature of violence against women.

Regarding the Gangnam station murder case, social media pages on

"Continuum."

83 Lee and Heo, "Gendered Violence"; and Shin, "Continuum."

84 Maria Cotera, "'Invisibility Is an Unnatural Disaster': Feminist Archival Praxis after the Digital Turn," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 114, no. 4 (2015): 781–801, https://doi .org/10.1215/00382876-3157133; and Kate Eichhorn, "D.I.Y. Collectors, Archiving Scholars, and Activist Librarians: Legitimizing Feminist Knowledge and Cultural Production since 1990," *Women's Studies* 39, no. 6 (2010): 622–646, https://doi.org /10.1080/00497878.2010.490716.

85 Kate Eichhorn, "Beyond Digitisation: A Case Study of Three Contemporary Feminist Collections," *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 3 (2014): 227–237, https://doi.org/10 .1080/01576895.2014.958866; and Shawna Ferris and Danielle Allard, "Tagging for Activist Ends and Strategic Ephemerality: Creating the Sex Work Database as an Activist Digital Archive," *Feminist Media Studies* 16, no. 2 (2016): 189–204, https:// doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1118396.

86 Thrift, "#YesAllWomen."

87 Jackson, Bailey, and Welles, *#HashtagActivism*, 47.

88 Christine Bold, Ric Knowles, and Belinda Leach, "Feminist Memorializing and Cultural Countermemory: The Case of Marianne's Park," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 1 (2002): 125–148, https://doi.org/10.1086/340905.

platforms such as Tumblr and Facebook and websites such as Exit 10 were created to record and archive the sticky notes as a counter-memorial.[89] In this respect, the notes associated with the case can be understood as a feminist archival project created and assembled by volunteers with the aid of digital media technologies. Dasom spoke to the opportunities that this feminist archive provided to many participants for reinterpreting the incident and increasing the visibility of violence against women:

> Among the sticky notes, there were memorial posts, but also posts written about experiences as a woman. In addition to women's per-sonal experiences, there were a lot of posts about why this incident was misogynistic, why women are the weak, and why this society is oppressive against women. I read all the posts very eagerly. The Post-it field is a place where we can learn, quickly and in brief, but fully, about misogyny and the system of gender structure owing to the nature of sticky notes.[90]

This form of activism became a field of learning—in Dasom's words, a "Post-it field"—regarding the gendered power structure, and gendered injustice, in South Korean society. It was, then, a result of feminist archival practices that the sticky notes were collected and digitized by the Seoul Foundation of Women and Family and have been available to the public through the Gen-der Equality Library *Yeogi* since February 2019.[91]

CONCLUSION

"Our Fear Returned as Courage" was the title given to the one-year anni-versary commemoration of the Gangnam station murder held on May 17, 2017. During this event, which was organized and co-hosted by some fifteen feminist organizations from across South Korea, more than one thousand women revisited the scene of the crime, left sticky notes, and sang chants calling attention to the issue of women's safety. Similar memorial events were held in other cities across the country, including Busan and Daegu, on the same date. Remarkably, many of the participating organizations had only formed in the year since the incident. The rapidity with which these groups took shape speaks to the pivotal role the 2016 murder case played in galvaniz-ing public awareness of the prevalence and seriousness of misogyny in South Korea and feminist efforts to combat it.

In exploring these issues, I have understood "sticky note activism" as the convergence of online and offline activism. Building on scholarly discus-sions about stickiness, protest artifacts, and affect, I have shown why and how feminist activists chose and combined certain old and new media for their activism. In this way, I have argued, the combined online and offline activism surrounding the case contributed to the formation of affective

89 Exit 10 Archive: "Exit 10 Archive," Twitter, https://twitter.com/exit_10_archive; Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/exit10archive/; Tumblr, https://gangnam-exit -10-archive.tumblr.com/; Website, https://exit10.me/.
90 Dasom, interview.
91 Gender Equality Library *Yeogi*, "Memory Zone Archive."

counterpublics and mobilized and politicized affect and emotions such as grief, fear, guilt, and sympathy. The hashtag #*saranamatda* became a rallying cry for this activism, bringing together as it did the fears of individual women with shared gendered vulnerability. In addition, the sticky notes constituted archives of the accounts of gender-based violence and misogyny that South Korean women have experienced. Feminist activists and those sympathetic to their cause also criticized the coverage of the Gangnam murder in the mainstream media and sought to redefine it as a case of femicide, a hate crime against women. Thus, sticky note activism surrounding the murder case, enacted in the tradition of counterpublics, raised social awareness of misogyny in South Korea and inspired solidarity among women.

Despite the activists' success, the South Korean authorities' handling of the incident revealed other problems. For example, the government and police announced plans to discontinue the use of public unisex bathrooms, to double the number of security cameras in public spaces for safety reasons, and to tighten surveillance of and restrictions on mental patients, including more widespread use of forced hospitalization.[92] Korean feminist scholars and activists pointed out that such protectionist measures did not get to the heart of the issue, namely the country's long-standing misogynistic culture and tradition of gender discrimination.[93] The authorities' responses also used fear, ostensibly for women's safety, as a means to reinforce stigmas against social minorities, such as non-binary individuals (who are excluded by the return to male- and female-designated bathrooms) and individuals with mental illness (who are treated more like criminals than medical patients).

While the Gangnam station murder case has contributed to the formation of affective counterpublics and strengthened a collective sense of identity among South Korean women based on shared empathy, questions remain regarding precisely who qualifies as a woman and which women are to be protected. It was in large part because the Gangnam station victim was perceived as an ordinary young woman that her killing resonated so strongly with young women in South Korea, so this ordinariness—to the extent that it has defined the boundary of her victimhood—needs to be questioned critically and challenged. It is far from clear that the murder of, say, a trans woman would have touched off such an explosive and widespread reaction. There are, then, limitations on the use of affective counterpublics in the service of feminist political agendas more broadly, particularly in relation to privilege.

Berlant's aforementioned notion of "intimate publics" is useful for reflecting on the complexity and ambivalence that may characterize counterpublics. In challenging the overly simple counterpublic model, Berlant observes that while intimate publics claim "a certain emotional generality among women," they are simultaneously marked and organized in distinct ways that reflect established notions of race, class, heteronormativity, cisgen-

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92 Da-sol Kim, "Korea to Tighten Rules on Unisex Restrooms," *Korea Herald*, May 26, 2017, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170526000540; and Claire Lee, "Women's Groups Slam Crime Prevention Plan," *Korea Herald*, June 1, 2016, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160601000978.

93 Lee, "Women's Groups"; and Lee, "Misogyny."

der privilege, nation, and capitalism.[94] Echoing her critiques, it is necessary to think critically about affective identification, belonging, and collectivity in relation to the Gangnam station murder case and particularly the potential for the notion of "ordinary women" to exclude certain individuals and reinforce the binary gender system. As Sarah Banet-Weiser notes, even though women's presence and voices seem to be making an increasing impact in the digital sphere, this does not mean that all women are equally visible. Many women, however defined, continue to be systematically excluded from this public sphere.[95]

These critical perspectives on the public sphere help to advance discussions about who is included in and who is excluded from affective publics and about whose voices and experiences are recognized and whose are marginalized even within feminist publics. This reflection is particularly important at the present juncture, when feminism in South Korea is being popularized through digital media. To the extent that the radical potential of feminist politics is based on reflexive politicization—rather than on identity or an essentialized notion of femaleness—the formation of feminist publics following the Gangnam station murder case marks the beginning rather than the end of inquiries into the basis for feminist solidarity in South Korea.[96]

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94 Berlant, *Female Complaint*, 5.

95 Sarah Banet-Weiser, "Absence and Exclusion: Notes on a Girls' Public Sphere—A Response to Kate Eichhorn's 'Girls in the Public Sphere: Dissent, Consent, and Media Making,'" *Australian Feminist Studies* 35, no. 103 (2020): 15–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2019.1661772.

96 Clare Hemmings, "Affective Solidarity: Feminist Reflexivity and Political Transformation," *Feminist Theory* 13, no. 2 (2012): 147–161, https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700112442643.