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6-2-2020

Bo Min Kang Survey Responses

Bo Min Kang

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Recommended Citation

Kang, Bo Min, "Bo Min Kang Survey Responses" (2020). *Covid-19 Archive: Documents*. 71.
https://digitalcommons.carleton.edu/covid19archive_documents/71

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2 June 2020

1. Tell me briefly about you (e.g. class year, nationality, socioeconomic class, gender, etc.)

My name is Bo Min Kang. I was born and raised in South Korea. I am currently studying at University of the Arts London for my foundation degree.

2. How has the pandemic impacted you and your family?

The pandemic specifically impacted me and my fellow arts studio majors. I do not have any access to lectures, workshops, library and studios that allow arts students to proceed on their projects. As an art school student, there are many drawbacks of online courses like the limited research, materials, feedback on my art work, spaces to work, and so on.

My sister is a first-year student at Korea University. Her school started after the Covid-19 outbreak, so she was not able to meet her fellow students and her professors. She has been attending live online courses and submitting assignments online. Although she was looking forward to experience her first year at the university, she had to stay home and wait for the disease to come to an end.

3. How has your social or economic status/position changed with the outbreak of Covid-19?

I don't think my social or economic status changed due to the pandemic. It's because I am still a student and I do not have a job currently.

4. Tell me briefly about your school (e.g. your school name, type, size, location, school policies regarding covid-19, etc.)

I go to University of the Arts London (UAL) which is a federation of six arts colleges. As you can see from the name, of our school is based in London, England. AL mentioned a couple of policies for international and home students.

5. Why makes you decide to stay where you are currently at?

My course was scheduled to be finished in June, but when Covid-19 broke out, I was worried that I might not be able to go back to Korea if UK government shut down the boarder. Also, UK health and medical system is unstable compared to Korea. If I were infected by the virus, it would be harder to get perfectly treated in UK. I thought if this worst case scenario happens, it would be better to go back to Korea to be treated in a better system.

6. What are some advantages/disadvantages of staying with family while taking classes?

For advantages, I often come up with unexpected ideas for my art project by having constructive discussions. The disadvantages would be the lack of professional perspectives and advices.

7. What are some values of online classes you've found?

I get more attentiveness, concentration from our school professors, since the online classes were mostly one to one video chats. Also, I could prepare what I want to say rather than talking impromptu like I used to do back in London.

8. What are the drawbacks of online classes? What are some academic challenges you face?

To simplify - demonstration, presentation, feedback, first hand research, communication, inspirations, inaccessible workshops, materials, work skills improvement, lack of space to work, and much more.

I personally think learning is not a value that only needs knowledge. It needs offline practice.

9. How do you define international student? How has your definition changed as you physically stay away from the country where your school is at?

When I started my life in London as an international student, even though I was in UK, my mind and heart were still back home. However as time passed, everything came along and it was the time of my life since I was really satisfied with myself. Currently, I am staying in Korea, but my mind is still in UK, because I had no time to clear up my life in London. So, I define International student not by where we are currently located, but where our minds are at.

10. Many international students see the importance of nationality and citizenship status, as they learn to navigate the sense of cultural differences and alienation in a foreign country. What do nationality and citizenship mean to you? What roles do they play in your identity construction?

Citizenship takes a big part of who I really am, since it defines my nationality. For now, I am a Korean but I live in the UK to study and experience things that Korean education could not offer. I think this time the UK actually makes my identity stronger, since I can notice the difference between Korea and the UK.

11. We are at the moment where nations are shutting down their borders and fail to provide the need for stateless people, while simultaneously reiterating how we are vulnerable regardless of nationality and seeking international support. How has your relationship with school community and the country where your school is at changed? How did your experiences change your view of nationality and citizenship?

Our school is trying to provide many opportunities as many as possible, by giving international students guide lines to follow. Also, regarding the circumstances, personal tutors are giving one to one advice to help students. They stated that if UK government

shuts down the border, they would not be able to help us since they don't have the authority. Somehow, I felt like I was taken care by the UK government, but if the situation turns rough, I think I would depend more on our own Korean government, since they have the responsibility to take care of me.

12. Did you feel welcomed by Korean people when you came back home? How does stereotype about international students influence the way Koreans react to your arrival?

I was very welcomed by my family and friends because they cared about me. However, the people in the Internet didn't seem to have a positive opinion about international students. I have been reading the news comment section these days and have also noticed that some people consider foreign immigrants and international student as those who carry the virus. I understand that they are unhappy with the Korean government opening the national border and allowing everyone to come in.

I don't think all international students come in just to take the advantages of medical system in Korea. I have seen some of my fellow international students going back to their home even when the situation of pandemic was worse there than that of UK (around Feb). Perhaps, they were concerned of their family or they were afraid of not getting the chance to see their own family and friends when the lock down happens. We do suffer to take the advantages that we have. Being able to move across the countries is not just a gift that has just fallen from the sky. Personally, I think it is hard to earn it and hard to maintain it.

The second question's premise seems to be stating that there is a stereotype about international students before this COVID 19, but I do not personally think that there were much stereotype or perception about international students. Therefore, I believe it didn't influence the current reaction of Koreans that much.

13. What is something you think should be preserved in public memory about this time?

To some of us, this pandemic is not a terrifying threat economically or socially. However, there are many individual proprietors such as small stores, restaurants, etc. that are going out of business these days. I feel like this part hasn't been exposed publicly enough. So, I would like the painful but strong stories to be preserved and to be announced all around the world. Thus, we could help each other more effectively.