대학생의 지역사회 관여에 대한 주제분석과 지역사회 개념의 재해석*

김 지 수** / 양 기 용***

　본 연구는 대학가 지역사회에서 대학생들의 관여 경험을 탐구하는 것을 주요 목적으로 한다. 구체적으로는 대학생들의 대학가 지역사회에 대한 인식, 참여 동기, 그리고 지속 가능한 참여를 촉진하기 위한 방안을 모색하였다. 이를 위해 국립대학 육성사업의 일환으로 진행된 지역사회 관여 프로그램에 참여한 12명의 대학생을 대상으로 초점집단면접(FGI)을 실시하였다. 면접 결과에 대한 주제분석을 통해 두 개의 핵심 주제와 일곱 개의 하위 주제가 도출되었다. 이를 통해 대학가 지역사회의 개념을 재조명하고 대학생들의 태도 변화를 확인할 수 있었다. 전통적으로 대학생들은 지역사회에서 일시적이고 자기중심적인 존재로 인식되어왔으며, 주민으로서 통합되기 보다는 자신들의 필요 자원을 활용하는 상호작용의 한정된 모습을 보여왔다. 비록 대학생들의 관여가 자기중심적인 특성을 보일지라도, 그들의 경험은 새로운 형태의 연대와 공동체로 발전할 수 있음을 시사하며, 관여 과정을 통해 대학생들의 자존감, 효능감, 지역사회에 대한 애착이 증진됨을 확인하였다. 본 연구는 대학생들을 학업 생활에 머물러 있는 수동적 관찰자가 아닌 적극적인 지역사회 참여자로 이끌어야 할 필요성을 강조하며, 이를 위해 지역사회, 정부, 대학 간의 협력이 필수적이며, 체계적이고 실효성 있는 정책 및 제도적 프로그램의 뒷받침이 필요함을 역설한다.

주제어 _ 대학가 지역사회, 대학생 참여, 지역사회 관여, 주제분석, 지역발전

A Thematic Analysis of University Students' Community Involvement and Revisit to the Concept of Local Community*

Kim Ji-su** / Yang Gi-yong***

This study explores university students' involvement in university town settings, with a focus on their perspectives, motivations, and conditions that foster sustained engagement. A thematic analysis of focus group interviews with 12 students participating in the National University Development Project in Busan identified two primary themes and seven sub-themes. These findings readdress the concept of university town communities and highlight significant changes in students' attitudes and their community involvement. Traditionally perceived as transient and self-serving, students have often been seen as taking advantage of community resources without fully integrating. However, the study demonstrates that community involvement can temporarily incorporate students into the community, transforming self-interest-driven activities into new forms of solidarity and community. This engagement enhances students' self-esteem, sense of efficacy, and attachment to the community. The study underscores the importance of collaboration between communities, governments, and universities in supporting student involvement through comprehensive policy frameworks and institutional programs that bridge the gap between academic life and community participation.

I. Introduction

The demographic challenges confronting municipalities and regional higher education institutions in South Korea, which include low birth rates, an aging population, and youth migration to urban areas, have precipitated a significant population decline, particularly outside the Seoul metropolitan region. These challenges have profoundly impacted local socio-economic structures, leading to job losses, reduced consumption, and declines in essential services such as education, healthcare, and childcare. In turn, local government revenues have decreased, exacerbating administrative deficiencies and threatening community stability (Moon, 2021). In parallel, regional universities have faced declining enrollment due to ultra-low birth rates since the 2000s, leading to an enrollment shortfall from 2021 onwards. This crisis, combined with the contraction of regional universities, is likely to accelerate local extinction by further reducing the youth population, weakening the economy, and diminishing regional competitiveness (Kwon et al., 2021).

Various initiatives have been implemented to address these issues. Local governments have focused on improving living conditions, promoting community revitalization, and increasing resident participation through community-building projects. The central government has supported regional universities with increased funding, research and development projects, and industry-university collaborations, emphasizing the establishment of regional university governance to enhance its competitiveness. One example of these efforts is the partnership between academic institutions and local communities (Lee et al., 2021).

The significance of cooperation between universities and communities has only recently gained recognition in South Korea. Historically, universities have existed somewhat separately from their surrounding neighborhoods. While efforts have been made to foster collaboration by opening university facilities to the public and supporting economic engagement, practical boundaries and psychological gaps between university students and the community persist.

Numerous studies underscore the imperative of university-community collaboration, classifying various partnership models and proposing strategic directions for the evolving roles of higher education institutions (Kim and Lee, 2017; Lee and Jang, 2019; Kim, 2013).

Additionally, empirical investigations have examined types of community involvement activities by university students and the resultant shifts in their perceptions and attitudes (Jeong and Jung, 2019; Lim and Kim, 2021).

The existing literature primarily discusses university−community collaboration by emphasizing institutional tactics, such as forming memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between university administrations and local governments or establishing cooperative bodies. However, it tends to overlook specific collaborative activities or processes within these partnerships. While a few studies position university students as central figures in volunteer activities and service learning, a significant limitation is that students engage with the community primarily as altruistic volunteers or mandatory course participants rather than as active residents.

In response to these challenges, this paper examines the motivations, effects, and limitations of university students' involvement activities by analyzing the university−community networking program conducted as part of the National University Development Project in Busan in 2022. This analysis aims to elucidate how students perceive their roles within the community and how their involvement experiences have influenced their overall attitudes toward it. Specifically, this study attempts to address the following three research questions:

1. What perspectives do university students hold regarding the university town community in which they reside? This question seeks to illuminate students' self−perception as community members and analyze the relational dynamics between students and the local community, along with the community's distinctive characteristics.

2. What underlying motivations drive university students' engagement in community activities, and what forms of interaction arise from such involvement? This investigation explores how students' passive attitudes are transformed through their engagement experiences.

3. What conditions and foundational premises are necessary to sustain university students' active involvement in the community?

II. Literature Review

1. Discussion on local community and university town community

The content and characteristics of local communities are shaped not by a universally accepted definition but by the specific objectives and motivations of each community and its members. Traditional discussions, as described by Tönnies (1887), highlight geographical proximity and the bonds among members. In contrast, contemporary perspectives emphasize more flexible participation, marked by transient and weak ties, leading to communities focused on interest-based problem-solving and personal affinity issues, such as childcare (Lee, 2016; Lee, 2015; Jung, 2011; Gu and Jang, 2020). Network communities, for instance, consist of individuals who voluntarily participate based on shared interests, functioning as open systems without specific geographical constraints (Neal, 2013). Rhizome communities evolve from network communities, aiming to create an organic and complex structure interconnected across various dimensions of time and space (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). Unlike traditional local communities, rhizome communities move away from fixed, closed, and hierarchical structures; instead, they develop into organic, complex, and horizontal systems (Lee and Lee, 2017).

Despite these modern interpretations, scholars like Hillery (1955) argue that the concept of local communities still largely adheres to the idea of a "space" where members interact to solve problems or foster emotional bonds and a sense of unity within a defined area (Chaskin, 1997; McMillan and Chavis, 1986). From the polis of ancient Athens to modern village communities and virtual communities that transcend spatial boundaries, various communities have emerged based on participants' needs and desires. However, space and locality remain crucial elements in defining diverse forms of local communities. In today's world of fluid mobility, geographical space may struggle to serve as a stable foundation for social connections. Nonetheless, as tangible entities, communities play a crucial role in meeting humans' fundamental biological and social needs. They provide a space where emotions, values, tastes, and norms are shared and perpetuated through bonds and interactions (Kim and Seo, 2012).

The university town community also shares these fundamental characteristics with local communities. However, compared to urban and rural areas, there is a notable scarcity of discourse and empirical research on university town communities, and even a consensual definition of the university town has yet to be established. Moreover, much of the existing research on university−community collaboration rests on the implicit assumption that universities and local communities are fundamentally distinct and separate entities. This perspective frequently fails to recognize or adequately explore the potential for a more profound interconnection and integration between the two spheres.

The university town community examined in this study is similar in size and function to a campus village, which supports students' daily lives, economic activities, and social engagements (Song, 1996). However, it extends beyond these functions to cultivate a unique culture marked by distinct consumption and leisure activities, vibrant artistic and cultural endeavors, and a flexible and permissive approach toward individual and group activities. This community actively promotes mutual growth and interaction by sharing university facilities, resources, knowledge, and information infrastructure, while also emphasizing the organic development of relationships between the university and the local community (Lee, 2017). As a result, the university town community not only supports students' academic life but also contributes significantly to the social and economic fabric of the surrounding area, and it fosters a symbiotic relationship that benefits both the university and the local residents.

2. Collaboration between Universities and Local Communities

The contemporary influence of universities on local communities is steadily expanding, accompanied by a growing interest in leveraging universities' diverse specialized resources for community development. Historically, however, academic institutions have been less proactive in engaging with local communities compared to corporations and social organizations. This hesitance can be attributed to their insular and independent nature, as well as their preference for global partnerships with academic institutions over local community involvement.

The increasing challenges faced by both universities and local entities have sparked discussions on the critical importance of collaborative efforts between these institutions to

achieve mutually beneficial outcomes and foster harmonious coexistence. Goldstein (1995) highlights the advantages of such collaboration, including technological innovation, industry cluster formation, the provision of skilled personnel, lifelong learning opportunities, and enhanced local leadership through volunteer activities. To realize these benefits, Uyarra (2010) advocates for a paradigm shift in the roles of universities within their communities, suggesting that the traditional concepts of the "relational university" and the "entrepreneurial university" should evolve into the "engaged university" or "civic university."

Studies have explored various forms of university–community collaboration, examining how universities leverage their resources and cooperate by sharing facilities, offering expertise, and providing consulting services for economic development (Kim and Lee, 2017). These collaborations can also be categorized into four types of cooperation based on levels of network participation and strength of those networks: exchange–based, value–discovery, problem–solving, and knowledge–sharing industry–academia partnerships (Lee and Jang, 2019). Beyond discussing the necessity and types of university–community collaboration, it is essential to analyze the actual interactions and dynamics among the involved parties.

Despite numerous initiatives, university–community partnerships continue to face significant limitations, such as short–term, isolated, and passive engagements with weak networking. Divergent interests among university stakeholders often impede sustained collaboration in community development. Faculty and specialists frequently participate in one–off, project–specific community activities (Kim, 2010), which causes universities to prioritize superficial achievements over long–term impact. This inconsistency obstructs the establishment of essential networks and frameworks, leading to a shortage of dedicated personnel and departments within universities and communities. Consequently, formal and informal networking between students, residents, and academic institutions is undermined (Lee and Jang, 2019; Cha and Ha, 2021).

3. Discussions on University Students' Community Involvement

This study focuses on the involvement of university students in their communities, an area that has received less academic attention than the participation of local residents. Community

involvement encompasses a range of actions, such as expressing interest in the community, identifying with it, voicing opinions, and engaging in voluntary activities to address different community issues (Offe, 1985). It is important to distinguish community involvement from political participation, which seeks direct political influence on public decision-making within the community through activities such as voting or petitioning (Cunningham, 1972; Pretty, 1995). While similar to volunteer activities, where individuals donate time and effort for altruistic reasons, community involvement is broader in scope.

Rothenbuhler, et al. (1996) extended the concept of community involvement within the local media sector by emphasizing the importance of forming and sustaining meaningful community ties through community attachment and involvement. The former refers to members identifying with their community, while the latter involves cognitive and active community interaction. Rothenbuhler defines community involvement as the process of considering community issues, staying informed about relevant news, engaging with others, and participating in problem-solving activities. Thus, community involvement is a comprehensive concept that encompasses both cognitive and active interactions with the community. It includes developing an interest in the community, understanding its needs, seeking solutions to local issues, and participating in activities for the betterment of the community (Stukas and Dunlap, 2002).

Compared to permanent residents, university students often exhibit less interest in and connection to the local community. Despite this, many universities persist in providing opportunities for students to engage with their local communities through community-based education and related initiatives. These approaches help students understand complex local issues while fostering a sense of community, civic awareness, and empathy (Oliveira et al., 2020). Discussions about student involvement primarily focus on community service, community-building activities, and community-based learning.

As shown in Table 1, these studies have revealed positive outcomes of student engagement programs among participants. Furthermore, Korean universities are increasingly enhancing students' abilities as proactive community members. Cha and Ha (2021) found that students facilitated network expansion by interacting with stakeholders in university-community projects and increased trust. In addition, Y University opened the course "Introduction to

Village Studies" to provide students with opportunities to experience political participation and boost their engagement capabilities. Following the course, students expressed a strong interest in community involvement, with many applying to join the Sinchon Urban Regeneration Project's residents' association (Lee, 2017).

〈Table 1〉 Typologies of University Students' Involvement in Local Communities

Area	Studies	Main findings
Community service	Lim & Kim (2021)	Community service fosters students' growth, maturity, and professional development, high-lighting the importance of character education and volunteer programs through experiential learning.
	Jeong & Jung (2019)	Community service learning enhances creativity, self-concept, and community belonging through creative problem-solving and team-based learning.
Community-building activities	Cha & Ha (2021)	Community projects alter network structures and behaviors, promoting community develop-ment and mutual growth by fostering bonds and shared values among participants.
	Lee (2017)	University volunteer clubs in urban regeneration projects support community recovery and empower residents, addressing the challenges of short-term administrative support.
Community-based learning	Lee et al. (2017)	CBL improves students' sense of belonging and social capital but may decrease their trust in political processes, indicating a need for enhanced course content.
	Choi & Choi (2021)	CBL is vital for competency-based education. Recommendations include integrating class and volunteer activities, developing learning models, and establishing supportive networks to enhance student competencies and community problem-solving.

However, existing research and case studies often lack detailed accounts of university students' interactions with local communities. They also fail to adequately address the motivations, achievements, and limitations students experience—gaps that this study seeks to fill through an empirical analysis of these interaction processes. Given the increasing emphasis on fostering student engagement in local communities, examining students'perceptions of their communities, the impact of their involvement, and strategies for sustaining engagement will provide valuable insights for academic institutions and local communities alike.

III. Case Study and Methodology

1. Overview of Case Study: Community Involvement Program

The research utilized a qualitative approach to examine the 'Namgu Resident Student Activity Program,' which was part of the National University Development Project conducted by P National University's Public Policy Research Institute in Busan from 2019 to 2022. The program, initiated in 2022, aimed to identify and address daily living issues faced by university students in local communities, with a focus on enhancing their problem-solving skills and strengthening community ties.

Eligible participants were undergraduates from P National University, organized into teams of three, with at least two members residing in Namgu, where the university is located. Participants who completed the program received scholarships and certificates. The selection process required teams to submit a detailed introduction, including their motivations for participation, the challenges they identified in Namgu along with potential solutions, and examples of their previous collaboration or problem-solving in academic or community settings. Faculty members at the research institute assessed these submissions based on criteria such as proactivity, willingness to engage, awareness of community issues, teamwork, and creativity.

In August 2022, a call for applications resulted in 17 teams applying, of which 4 were selected through a rigorous document review process. These 4 teams engaged in problem identification and resolution activities from September to December 2022, utilizing interviews, consultations, expert insights, and on-site visits to develop solutions. At the end of the program, they presented their findings to local council members and government officials, and received valuable feedback[1].

---

1) The teams each selected a specific topic to address. Key issues addressed included reducing the financial burden of student meals, improving dietary habits for students living alone, revitalizing student spaces, and tackling local odor problems.

2. Research Process and Methodology

1) Selection of Research Participants

The study explores the experiences of university students in community involvement, analyzes the changes resulting from their engagement, and reconsiders the concept of the university town community. The research focused on 12 students who had lived in the Namgu university town community in Busan and actively participated in the 'Namgu Resident Student Activity Program.' These students were deliberately selected for a Focus Group Interview (FGI) to ensure similarity in community engagement experiences. The selection criteria were limited to those who shared the same geographical and living environment, ensuring that all participants had comparable experiences in community involvement activities.

The selected group comprised 7 male and 5 female students, predominantly from the humanities and social sciences. It included 1 fourth-year student, 5 third-year students, and 6 second-year students. Among the participants, 6 lived in dormitories, 3 lived off-campus, and 3 commuted from their homes within Namgu. Additionally, half of the participants had relocated from outside the Busan area and lived in the university area for an average of 18 months or more.

2) Data Collection

In-depth interviews were deemed appropriate for this study as they enable a comprehensive and contextual examination of human behavior, cognition, and underlying consciousness (Seidman, 2006). Under the guidance of faculty and staff members from the research institute, the researcher conducted two rounds of Focus Group Interviews (FGIs) in October and December 2022. The first FGI consisted of three sessions with four participants each, exploring students' perceptions of the university locale and their progress at the midpoint of their activities. The second FGI involved four sessions with three participants each, looking into the outcomes and challenges of community involvement, as well as changes in personal competencies and community perceptions following the activities.

The FGIs were conducted in person at the school's research laboratory or nearby cafés. Each 90-minute session used a semi-structured format to facilitate a deep exploration of individual

behaviors, thoughts, and awareness related to community involvement[2]. Participants signed a consent form before the research, agreeing to voluntary participation and confidentiality measures.

3) Data Analysis

The interview data was collected and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis was chosen for its ability to reveal the realities, experiences, and meanings as perceived by research participants, accurately reflecting their perspectives. Since this study aims to uncover students' perspectives on their community and engagement experiences, thematic analysis was deemed appropriate. Although it is not a standardized method, thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data, providing a comprehensive and detailed understanding (Bryman, 2008; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis was conducted inductively, with a focus on themes and sub-themes derived from participants' experiences and the meanings embedded in the raw data (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

This study's thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step procedure. Initially, researchers involved in this proram thoroughly engaged with the data by reading transcripts and field notes, making analytical annotations to identify potential meanings. In the second phase, initial coding identified key concepts, capturing surface-level phenomena and underlying meanings. In the third phase, themes were developed by identifying and refining themes and sub-themes, ensuring alignment with the codes. In the fourth phase,

---

2) The questions used in the interviews are as follows:
  a. Perception of the university town community: How have your perceptions of the area changed from when you first entered the university to now? What differences do you notice between the university town and your hometown? What does the university town community mean to you? Have you changed your official residence to the university town, and do you intend to continue living here after graduation? Do you have any close neighbors in your dormitory or off-campus housing?
  b. Experience with community involvement: Are you interested in community issues, or have you addressed them before? What motivated your participation in the activities, and what were your expectations? What achievements or challenges did you experience during the activities? What personal changes have you noticed through the activities? What new insights have you gained about the community and its members? What enabled you to complete the activities? Is it necessary for university students to engage with the university town community? How can we sustain university students' involvement in the community?

each theme was reviewed to confirm cohesion and distinctiveness. In the fifth phase, themes were further refined through collaborative discussions, with illustrative quotations selected to substantiate the findings. Finally, the analysis was summarized and presented in an academic format. In this manner, adhering to Braun and Clarke's systematic approach, the data underwent systematic deconstruction, examination, and comparison through investigator triangulation. This process elucidated representative phenomena and delineated relevant concepts, with analogous concepts being categorized, labeled, and grouped to facilitate interpretation and provide a comprehensive understanding of the observed phenomena.

IV. Analysis Results of University Students' Community Involvement Process

Analysis of focus group interviews (FGI) on university students' community involvement program unveiled their perspectives and documented the profound changes they encountered. The investigation highlighted the distinct attributes of the university town community, setting it apart from conventional community paradigms. Thematic analysis identified two principal themes and seven sub-themes, as detailed in Table 2.

〈Table 2〉 Analysis Results of University Students' Community Involvement Process

No.	Theme	Sub-theme
1	Crossing the Threshold: From Passive Observers to Community Members	From Bystanders to Engagers in Local Issues
		From University-Centered Limited relationships to community networks
		From Ignorance of the Community to Understanding Its Complexities
		From Self-Doubt to Self-Efficacy Within the Community
2	A Rhizome Community with Nomads at Anchor	Community as a Nomadic Land
		Selective Involvement
		The Need for Institutionalizing Involvement

1. Crossing the Threshold: From Passive Observers to Community Members

1) From Bystanders to Engagers in Local Issues

Before participating in the program, students exhibited minimal interest in community issues. This disinterest likely stemmed from their reluctance to view themselves as part of the community, which prevented them from recognizing local phenomena in their daily lives as significant issues. Additionally, students who did not change their registered address had no voting rights in local elections. They showed low interest in local matters, were unaware of local politicians, and were unfamiliar with youth policy programs tailored for them within their community. Personal commitments, such as preparing for employment, further detracted from their focus on community matters. These attitudes reflect a diminished sense of interest or responsibility as residents of the university town community, indicative of bystander behavior.

Participant 2: Even though I felt uneasy about local matters, I used to think others would voice those concerns. As university students, we rarely file complaints ourselves.

Participant 5: Students don't raise issues because they don't see any major problems that directly affect them.

Participant 7: Most students are too focused on preparing for their careers and enjoying their time, so they're too preoccupied to pay attention to local issues.

Participant 12: I don't really get involved in politics.

Nevertheless, the program increased the students' interest in local issues. It is important to acknowledge, however, that university students who already demonstrated an interest in community issues were more inclined to apply for and be selected for the program, which suggests that prior experience with community activities may have influenced the selection process. Despite this potential limitation, most participants reported that their interest in local issues increased due to the program. While it may be premature to claim that participating

students have fully assumed the roles of responsible community members or democratic citizens, their active involvement in the program led to a deeper examination of local issues. The process of engaging with specific community agendas contributed to an increased sense of attachment and investment in these matters.

Participant 2: Because we identified and chose the problems ourselves, we felt more motivated to find solutions. As we addressed these challenges, our connection to them grew stronger.

Participant 8: Compared to before participating in the program, I now feel much more connected to the community. I no longer see myself as just a student passing through, but as someone who belongs here and can speak up as a local resident.

Participant 11: Since starting this activity, I've felt more connected to the community. It has given me the opportunity to meet new people, listen to their concerns, and get involved in community work. I now believe that being a resident is more than just living in an area; it's about actively engaging in community activities and building relationships with fellow residents. This experience has made me feel like I truly belong here.

It is challenging to anticipate a profound shift in university students' perceptions of the community within a short period. Nevertheless, as they began exploring local phenomena with a heightened sense of problem awareness, these students transitioned from passive bystanders to active engagers. Although they have not yet progressed to vigorously advocating for community change or initiating problem-solving efforts, they no longer overlook community issues but approach them with genuine interest and readiness to address them.

2) From University-Centered Limited Relationships to Community Networks

Participation in the involvement program facilitated university students' integration into the local community network. At the beginning of the program, students reported that they had limited ties to the community and felt hesitant about expressing their viewpoints or seeking

support from local stakeholders. Their social circles are mostly confined to peers, faculty, and extracurricular activities. There was skepticism among the students regarding the willingness of stakeholders to cooperate or show any interest in their initiatives.

Participant 3: When I need help, I reach out to my club friends, but I rarely communicate with my next-door neighbor. I don't even know who lives there.

Participant 12: I was concerned that the officials might doubt the relevance of our topic.

Through collaboration with local government officials, specialists, community advocates, and university faculties, students gained valuable insights, explored potential solutions, and exchanged perspectives. This engagement received positive responses and active support from the community, strengthening students' connections and expanding their networks.

Participant 10: I had the chance to communicate with various professors and meet with council members multiple times, which made them seem more approachable. I realized they weren't as intimidating as I had thought, and I felt confident that they would be there to help whenever I faced challenges.

Participant 12: Before meeting the person in charge, I assumed they might not take the interview seriously since it was being conducted by university students. However, they were very kind and answered my questions sincerely, completely changing my initial impression of them.

Consequently, the psychological barriers between the students and the community stakeholders diminished, which led to greater trust and a more favorable perception of the community. Interacting with various community stakeholders allowed the students to move beyond their university-centered relationships.

3) From Ignorance of the Community to Understanding its Complexities
Engaging with influential figures enabled students to recognize their potential and

responsibility as proactive community members. These interactions provided a deeper understanding of local issues' practical context and constraints. Initially, students expressed frustration with unresolved local problems, the lack of better alternatives, and little faith in public institutions.

Participant 4: I often felt like there wasn't much I could do about local issues. I wanted to make a difference, but we didn't receive any support from the district office.

Participant 6: It feels like the issues that could be resolved have already been addressed, and the remaining ones have valid reasons for not being changed.

However, their engagement with community members unveiled the intricacies of these issues and the institutional factors intertwined with them. They also realized that projects requiring financial investment posed greater challenges, compounded by hidden constraints from political differences and conflicts of interest among various community groups. This experience enabled them to grasp the complexities of the community.

Participant 4: It's frustrating that officials are willing to help but lack the authority to manage budgets effectively. Council members prioritize popular ideas due to party influence, while administrative staffs grapple with limited resources, making governance a real challenge.

Participant 7: I met with a council member, hoping to resolve some issues, but I quickly realized that the problems were beyond the council member's authority. It wasn't due to incompetence, but rather the complexity of interconnected issues that required intervention at higher levels.

4) From Self-Doubt to Self-Efficacy Within the Community

University students demonstrated a passive response to issues within their environment. Rather than proactively addressing concerns, they frequently tolerated inconveniences without taking action. Even when they expressed concerns, their expectations for resolution were low.

This passivity can be attributed to a sense of self-alienation, where students doubted their ability to address problems, believing such matters were beyond their capacity to solve.

Participant 6: At first, we had big dreams of solving community issues, but as university students without the necessary resources or means to coordinate such an initiative, our ambitions gradually faded.

Participant 7: This issue has persisted for quite some time, and I doubt it will be resolved quickly. There are people far more knowledgeable than us who haven't been able to solve the problem, so I don't think we can fix it immediately just by taking action.

However, the participatory process provided students with invaluable personal experiences. They cultivated pivotal personal competencies, including leadership, planning, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, they acquired political efficacy by recognizing that their proposals could attract policy attention. These experiences empowered students to execute their roles more effectively within the community and make meaningful contributions to community development.

Participant 4: I used to feel that community issues were distant from me, but I realized that there are things I can do. If I pay more attention and put in the effort, I can actively participate in the budgeting system to bring about change.

Participant 5: I found it challenging when I first started addressing local issues, but I soon realized that determination can lead to solutions. As a university student, I engaged senior council members and experts in discussions, which convinced me that these issues could be resolved.

Participant 8: Unlike typical school projects, this involved real-world experience that helped me acquire practical skills.

Ultimately, participants observed a positive evolution in their roles and impact within the community. They began to connect intimately with local issues, grasp the intricate realities of the community, and foster a profound sense of accomplishment and belonging.

2. A Rhizome Community with Nomads at Anchor

1) Community as a Nomadic Land

The most noticeable distinction between students residing in a university town community and traditional community members is their status as temporary residents. Upon graduating, most students are expected to leave the town, either to pursue jobs elsewhere or return to their hometowns. As a result, many do not bother to update their residency status, which can result in limited legal rights and access to administrative services.

Participant 8: I don't see the point in changing my resident registration; I can still enjoy the local amenities without it.

Participant 10: If my parents call me back home, I'll go, so I see myself as being here temporarily.

Most students, confined to their university years, resemble nomadic inhabitants with minimal interest in or attachment to the community. However, despite this transient outlook, they still participate in essential activities such as securing lodging, part-time employment, and social interactions within the university town. Some even find the university town more comfortable and convenient than their hometowns, leading to greater satisfaction with their lives there.

Participant 2: I've become accustomed to the convenience of the university area. It almost feels like a second home, although nothing beats the comfort of being in my hometown.

Although students typically reside in the town for only 4-5 years, and often view the community as a resource to be utilized during their stay, their presence should not lead to

isolation or marginalization by the local community. On the contrary, these students can be seen as having positive roles and potential that contribute to the community, as they approach and egage with the community in their own distinctive ways.

> *Participant 10: Participating in this activity made me feel more connected to the local community. I was proud to independently identify and solve issues in the area. Additionally, running a pilot community program for students living alone deepened my sense of belonging to this place.*

This study's community involvement program demonstrated that university students are not merely passive exploiters but possess the capacity to actively engage and participate in the community. As indicated in the interview, these transient students' experiences with the local community fostered a sense of attachment and belonging to their current environment. Consequently, the university town, often considered a nomadic land, has the potential to transform from a place of temporary exploitation into a site for building solidarity.

2) Selective Involvement

The ways in which students engage with the community differ markedly from traditional forms of participation. Traditional engagement is usually structured by local organizations or civil society experts within a hierarchical government framework, often escalating to assertive demands when public institutions fail to resolve significant issues. This form of involvement embodies the political expression of residents who persistently exercise their rights and duties until problems are resolved. In contrast, university students' community engagement is relatively selective in terms of goals, motivations, methods, and content.

> *Participant 4: At first, we planned to address the issue of revitalizing local festivals, but then we decided to shift our focus to the problems faced by university students in Namgu.*

> *Participant 12: Honestly, I wouldn't have participated if it weren't for the scholarship.*

Participant 1: Even without the scholarship, I would have participated because I needed more competition experience.

Their involvement often focuses on issues pertinent to the student population, with motivations combining altruism and personal goals. Many students see these programs as opportunities for economic compensation, such as scholarships, or as a means to enhance their resumes for future employment. These motivations are self−serving and disconnected from the traditional concepts of rights, duties, and responsibilities as community members. Moreover, the methods and content of their involvement are diverse, and the level of engagement varies based on individual student choices, ranging from research and advocacy to direct implementation of solutions. Thus, student community engagement can be characterized as 'selective involvement.'

Through this program, these university students, who exhibited a selective approach, demonstrated their ability to manage and sustain their own communities. For instance, one of the participating teams established a pilot community where off−campus students cooked and ate together to improve their dietary habits. The team independently secured external financial support to run the program.

Participant 8: Participants actively and wholeheartedly took part in our program. Even though the activity had finished, some people wanted to keep going, so they started a new group chat.

This initiative fostered emotional bonds among the students, with many expressing a desire to continue the activities. Furthermore, it illustrates how students can lead the formation of autonomous groups that integrate virtual and offline networks, thereby establishing rhizome− like connections that effectively mobilize the community.

From a normative perspective, students' selective community involvement may appear arbitrary or opportunistic. However, given their precarious status and the variability in their capacities and conditions, it is reasonable to expect that their participation is largely driven by individual choice. While this involvement may be characterized by its intermittent and selective nature, it nonetheless positively influences the students. Should opportunities for

such engagement increase and participation become more consistent, the university town community could sustain its collaborative and cohesive character.

3) The Need for Institutionalizing Involvement: Policy and Program

Unlike traditional communities, university town communities often struggle with stability and experience lower levels of sustained involvement due to the transient nature of the student population. Overcoming these inherent challenges requires more than the voluntary goodwill and efforts of students alone. Proactive responses from key institutions, such as local governments and university authorities, are essential. Although university town communities tend to prefer non-hierarchical organizations, enhancing student involvement necessitates intentional institutionalization and policy support from external sources, as outlined in the following suggested solutions. To begin with, offering diverse incentives, such as scholarships, research grants, and academic credit, might be crucial to fostering student's active community involvement.

Participant 5: Students would be more likely to get involved in the community if such programs were structured as extracurricular activities.

Participant 9: As university students, it's challenging for us to continue without any material compensation, given the investment of both time and money.

Participant 12: I'd be willing to try if the council or the school provided support, but if they expect us to do it on our own without any help, I wonder how we're supposed to manage. I want to keep going, but it's difficult to handle alone without proper support.

As indicated in the interviews, incentives enhance students' motivation and offer tangible support for addressing community challenges. The strategic implementation of these incentives, driven by collaboration among educational institutions, local governments, and other relevant stakeholders, is essential for enhancing student engagement and ensuring that their contributions to community development are sustainable.

Secondly, it is essential to establish accessible entry points for students. This requires

creating platforms that facilitate ongoing discussions about local issues and implementing mechanisms to address student grievances.

Participant 4: Establishing a system for regular feedback with politicians and district office officials would be beneficial. University students can't tackle these issues alone, so having a platform for collective discussion would be really helpful.

Participant 8: I thought about adopting programs from the district or city council to sustain our activities, but doing it alone feels overwhelming. Forming a new team and starting from scratch is challenging.

Participant 11: We need a space or platform where we can freely express ourselves whenever necessary.

Potential entry points include forums, workshops, and programs like the "Namgu Resident Student Activity Program," designed to enhance student-community interaction. However, institutional efforts from organizations such as local government offices and universities must support establishing and maintaining these entry points. Without such structures, students may struggle to effectively raise their concerns due to uncertainty about where or how to initiate discussions and publicize their issues, as they may feel overwhelmed by the challenges of addressing these matters on their own.

Finally, there is a clear need for an organization that advocates for university student's opinions and positions and serves as an intermediary between students and relevant authorities.

Participant 6: Creating a community specifically for university students would be beneficial, as it would give them a platform to voice their concerns.

Participant 8: The community organization needs to convey residents' concerns to the district office. Similarly, we need a youth organization to act as an intermediary and represent young residents' opinions to the authorities.

Participant 11: We should ensure that young people are represented at residents' meetings.

The proposals to establish student communities, create representative organizations, participate in resident meetings, and convey recurring issues to local councils reflect students' strong desire to have their voices heard by the authorities. However, despite these ambitions, students have expressed reservations about who will take responsibility for establishing and managing such organizations, as well as the sustainability of these initiatives, as reflected in the following interview excerpts.

Participant 4: Since university students eventually leave, it's challenging to manage and operate a community in such a short time.

Participant 2: Someone needs to take charge and plan how to run the organization or community.

Participant 10: Shouldn't the district office be responsible for creating this for us?

These concerns show the need for a collaborative effort between universities and the local community to enhance institutional support and develop concrete strategies for sustaining student involvement.

Ⅴ. Concluding Remarks

The paper examined the involvement of university students in community activities within university town settings, focusing on their participation processes and impacts. Through thematic analysis of Focus Group Interview (FGI) data, the study revealed shifts in students' perceptions of their roles in the community and clarified the characteristics of university town communities.

This study has identified several important implications regarding university students' involvement in community activities within university town settings. First, students' engagement in Busan demonstrated positive effects similar to those reported in previous research on community service and community–based learning. These effects included heightened interest in and attachment to the community, as well as renewed trust in its members. Second, students displayed a more proactive attitude in addressing their own issues, such as improving dietary habits, reducing food expenses, and revitalizing student communities. This finding suggests that when students perceive themselves as local residents, they are more likely to achieve positive outcomes through collaborative efforts with community members. Third, it became evident that continuous effort is required to encourage students, who found it difficult to establish connections with their neighbors, to take an interest in their surroundings and engage in local problem–solving activities. Particularly, given that students with self–serving motivations are unlikely to participate in community activities voluntarily, institutional efforts by universities and local governments are necessary.

However, this study has limitations that point to avenues for further research. A key issue is the extent to which the findings from Busan can be generalized to university students in other areas, such as Seoul and Gyeonggi provinces. While these regions share some similarities, students in metropolitan universities often come from more diverse backgrounds, resulting in greater cultural heterogeneity. Moreover, the Seoul metropolitan area offers more substantial employment opportunities, which likely affects students' levels of job–related anxiety, key competencies for career exploration, and labor market outcomes (Jin, 2013; Park, 2020). As a result, their personal interest in the community and attitudes toward community engagement may differ from those of students in Busan. Given these differences, a comparative study between these regions could provide valuable insights.

Nonetheless, similar to their counterparts in Busan, many students residing in university town communities within the Seoul metropolitan area are temporary residents with a nomadic tendency. They often commute from nearby areas or return to their hometowns during weekends and holidays, making it difficult for them to establish relationships with neighbors. Consequently, it is challenging to expect altruistic community engagement from these students. Therefore, as this study suggests, university town communities in

Seoul metropolitan area require robust institutional efforts from both universities and local governments to promote and sustain meaningful interactions between students and the community.

Secondly, while this study primarily examined the promotion of community engagement from the perspective of university students, future research should also consider the viewpoints of other key stakeholders, including university administrations, local stakeholders, and local councils. Such an approach would yield a more comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of the dynamics involved.

Lastly, future research should examine the concept of university students as part of the 'de facto population[3]' within university town communities. This approach offers a potential solution for revitalizing areas experiencing regional decline (Lee et al., 2024). Although students are not legal residents, recognizing them as de facto members of the community can enhance regional vitality. Engaging with these students and building relationships with them can further contribute to the community's dynamism. Investigating the role of university students as de facto population members could provide valuable insights into effective strategies for regional revitalization.

---

3) According to the "Special Act on Support for Population Decline Areas" by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of South Korea in 2023, the term "de facto population" refers to individuals who reside in or stay within a specific area while engaging in daily activities. Specifically, this includes either 1) individuals registered as residents or 2) individuals who visit and stay in a specific area for commuting, studying, tourism, recreation, work, or regular interactions. Additionally, people who stay in the area at least once a month for more than three hours a day can be considered part of the de facto population. (Lee et al., 2024)

■ Reference ■

Braun, V. & Clarke, V.(2006). "Using thematic analysis in psychology", *Qualitative research in psychology,* 3(2): 77–101.

Bryman, A.(2008). "Why do researchers integrate/combine/mesh/blend/mix/merge/fuse quantitative and qualitative research", *Advances in mixed methods research,* 21(8), 87–100.

Chaskin, R.J.(1997). "Perspectives on Neighborhood and Community", *Social Service Review,* 71(4): 521–547.

Cunningham, J.V.(1972). "Citizen participation in public affairs", *Public Administration Review,* 32: 589–602.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F.(1980). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Goldstein, H.(1995). "University–Community Partnerships: Issues, Models, and Directions", *National Civic Review,* 84(2): 139–155.

Hillery, G.A.(1955). "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement", *Rural Sociology,* 20(2): 111–123.

Maguire, M. & Delahunt, B.(2017). "Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars", *The All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education,* 9(3): 3351–33514.

McMillan, D.W. & Chavis, D. M.(1986). "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory", *Journal of Community Psychology,* 14(1): 6–23.

Neal, Z.P.(2013). *The Connected City: How Networks are Shaping the Modern Metropolis,* published by New York: Routledge.

Offe, C.(1985). "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics", *Social Research,* 52(4): 817–868.

Oliveira, J.T., LaVelle Hendricks, E.D. & MohdZain, Z.(2020). "Student Engagement: Universities' Initiatives to Promote Student Community Involvement", *Journal Interdisciplinary Education,* 16(1): 156–169.

Pretty, J.N.(1995). "Participatory Learning for Sustainable Agriculture", *World Development,* 23(8): 1247–1263.

Rothenbuhler, E.W., Mullen, L.J., DeLaurell, R. & Ryu, C.R.(1996). "Communication, community attachment, and involvement", *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73(2): 445−466.

Seidman, I.(2006). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (3rd ed.), published by New York: Teachers College Press.

Stukas, A.A. & Dunlap, M.R.(2002). "Community involvement: Theoretical approaches and educational initiatives", *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(3): 411−427.

Tönnies, F.(1887). *Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)*, published by Leipzig: Fues's Verlag.

Uyarra, E.(2010). "Conceptualizing the Regional Roles of Universities, Implications and Contradictions", *European Planning Studies*, 18(8): 1227−1246.

Cha, J.Y. & Ha, H.S.(2021). "Analysis of the Expansion Process of the Network of the University−Community Linkage Projects and its Policy Implications", *Korean Public Management Review*, 35(2): 115−145.

Choi, Y.H. & Choi, K.A.(2021). "The Present and Future Tasks of Community−Linked Education for Liberal Arts Education in College", *Korean Journal of General Education*, 15(6): 179−190.

Gu, S.A. & Jang, W.H.(2020). "A Study on the Increasing Number of 'Taste Communities' Based on Loosely Coupled Social Networks", *Humanities Contents*, 57:65−89.

Jeong, M.S. & Jung, S.Y.(2019). "A Study of Qualitative Case about Community Service Learning for Developing University Students' Creativity", *Korean Journal of General Education*, 13(1): 199−225.

Jin, M.S.(2013). "An exploratory study on inequality of core competence of college students in Korea", *Korean Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23(1): 105−127.

Jung, S.H.(2011). "The Significance of Intimate Communities in Modern Urban Life", *Journal of Philosophical Ideas*, 41:347−377.

Kim, C.D. & Seo, Y.J.(2012). "The Strategies for Citizen Autonomy through Rebuilding the Neighborhood Community", *Seoul Institute Policy Research Report*, 1−171.

Kim, C.Y.(2013). "A Study on Revitalization of Local Communities Through Collaboration with

University – Focusing on Case Studies of Collaboration Planning Program between Local Universities and Communities in Japan", *Journal of The Urban Design Insitute of Korea,* 14(5): 65–78.

Kim, J.E.(2010). "A Case Study of Neighborhood Renewal through University–Community Partnership: UIC Neighborhood Initiative", *Seoul Studies,* 11(3): 69–86.

Kim, T.H. & Lee, T.H.(2017). "The Current Status and Promotion Measures of University–Community Cooperation in Seoul", *Policy Report,* (228), 1–19.

Kwon, O.H., Kim, J.H., Suh, S.H. & Lee, J.W.(2021). "Causes and solutions of local university crisis", *Journal of regional studies,* 85–105.

Lee, G.J., Cho, S.E., Kim, J.S. & Park, T.Y.(2021). "A Study on the Causes and Solutions of Local University Crisis", *The Journal of Educational Administration,* 39(4): 85–106.

Lee, J.H. & Jang, H.E.(2019). "Development Stages and Characteristics of Place–Based Industry–Academic Cooperation Projects: The Case of Universities Participating in the LINC+ Project", *Journal of the Economic Geographical Society of Korea,* 22(1): 96–109.

Lee, J.M. & Lee, M.H.(2017). "Community Conceptualization in Alternative Community Theories and Related Ordinances", *Seoul Studies,* 18(2): 177–192.

Lee, M.H.(2016). "An Exploratory Study on the Crisis and Restoration of the Local Communities", *Journal of East Asian social thoughts,* 19(1): 87–115.

Lee, S.S., Yoon, B.H., Ha, H.Y., Jeong, S.K. & Jeon, S.R.(2024). "Issues of De Facto Population and Strategies for Urban and Regional Policy Utilization", *Urban Information,* (505), 4–17.

Lee, T.D.(2017). *Introduction to Village Studies,* published by Pureungil.

Lee, T.D., Kim, E.Y., Seo, J.K., Yoo, I.T., Sohn, H.D. & An, J.B.(2017). "Experiments of Community–Based Learning on Trust", *Korean Political Science Review,* 51(2): 5–22.

Lee, T.H.(2015). "Examinations of Meanings of Community Participation in Urban Regeneration and Their Applications in Regeneration Policy", *The Korea Spatial Planning Review,* 86:139–159.

Lee, T.M.(2017). "A Case Study of Village Regeneration Utilizing the University's Major Service Circle – Focusing on Busan Metropolitan City Village Regeneration Project", *Journal of the Regional Association of Architectural Institute of Korea,* 19(3): 27–36.

Lim, S.H. & Kim, H.A.(2021). "Becoming a Social Professional of College Students Who Have Experienced Community Service: A qualitative Content Analysis", *Journal of the Korea Academia-Industrial cooperation Society,* 22(1): 641–649.

Moon, B.H.(2021). "Decentralization and Countermeasures against local annihilation", *Local Government Law Journal,* 21(3): 243–288.

Park, K.(2020). "The Stigma of Local Universities and the Impaired Social Identity of Local University Students", *Journal of Social Science,* 59(2): 171–205.

Song, K.C.(1996). "A study on the campus town planning elements and process", Master's Thesis, Dankook University Graduate School, Seoul

김지수 Kim, Ji-su   jisu12350@naver.com

경희대학교에서 국제정치학 석사학위를 취득하고, 현재 부경대학교 행정학과 박사과정에 재학 중이다. 주요 관심 분야는 지역공동체와 아동, 청소년의 참여 등이다.

Obtained a master's degree in International Politics from Kyung Hee University and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Public Administration at Pukyong National University. Her main areas of interest include local communities and the participation of children and youth.

양기용 Yang, Gi-yong   yang@pknu.ac.kr

미 델라웨어대학교에서 도시정책학 박사학위를 취득하였으며, 현재 부경대학교 행정학과 교수로 재직하고 있다. 최근 주요 관심분야는 지역공동체와 사회서비스이다.

Yang, Gi-Yong earned his Ph.D. in Urban Affairs and Public Policy from the University of Delaware. Since 2001, he has been teaching public administration and policy at Pukyong National University. His current research interests include social services and local community development.