

## Original Research

# Banal Orientalism on YouTube

## “Eat Your Kimchi” as a New Cultural Intermediary and its Representation of South Korea

Mikah Lee<sup>1</sup> & Younghan Cho<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Korean Studies, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

<sup>2</sup> Department of Korean Studies, Graduate School of International and Area Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Republic of Korea

**Corresponding author**

Younghan Cho  
Department of Korean Studies, Graduate School of International and Area Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, 107, Imun-ro, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul 02450, Republic of Korea  
Email: choyn@hufs.ac.kr

**Acknowledgements**

This work was supported by the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund. The authors appreciate David Oh and colleagues at the Center for Koreanophone Studies for commenting on an earlier version of this study.

**Received**

14 March 2021

**Revised**

16 July 2021

**Accepted**

08 September 2021

**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the emergence of YouTube and its content creators as a major platform for introducing, mediating and interpreting South Korea to global audiences. By exploring *Eat Your Kimchi* (EYK), a YouTube channel based on content about Korea, this study discusses the novel roles and strategies of YouTubers as transnational cultural intermediaries, who as white expats continue to translate and interpret the East (i.e., South Korea) to the West, (i.e., Anglophone audiences). Firstly, EYK employ a strategy of selectively articulating their dual identity both as amateurs with no academic background or authority, and as cultural experts based on their hands-on experiences in South Korea. Secondly, EYK reproduce the discursive themes of infantilizing and othering South Korea, emphasizing cultural hierarchy, though in a subtle, everyday manner. This study suggests these discursive strategy and themes as seminal constituents of banal Orientalism that EYK as transnational cultural intermediaries produce in the process of introducing Korean society and its people to the globe. By highlighting banal Orientalism, which is repeatedly and successfully constructed in EYK's discourses, we call attention to the cultural politics of YouTubers as one of the most influential transnational cultural intermediaries for online representation across countries, their cultures and societies.

**KEYWORDS**

YouTube, cultural intermediary, transnational cultural intermediary, South Korea, banal Orientalism

This paper examines the cultural politics of YouTube and its role in introducing, interpreting and representing South Korea (hereafter Korea), its people and everyday practices to global audiences. By exploring popular YouTube videos on South Korea created by western expatriates, this study raises two main questions. How are Western YouTubers developing their identities in the processes of introducing Korea? Secondly, what are the major themes in their translation of Korean culture, people, and daily life to Western audiences?

Propelled by the popularity of K-pop, i.e., the Korean Wave, Korea has garnered interests, attentions, travelers and even migrants from all around the world during the past couple of decades. Anyone with internet access is able to find information on Korea and its cultures through search engines, which often link related videos as well. Accordingly, the Korean government and its tourist organization have been investing their efforts in the online landscape of Korea. For the past couple of decades in particular, the Korean Wave has become a point of cultural diplomacy in which both governmental and non-governmental sectors converge to enhance its national image, prestige and soft power through culture (Kang, 2015). Nonetheless (or, simultaneously), foreigners, particularly some expatriates who temporarily or permanently live in Korea, have stepped up to share their experiences and understanding of what it is *really* like to live in Korea as a foreigner. Among various contents and websites, these foreigners often create their own video contents on recounting their daily experiences and encounters with Koreans through YouTube, which has become much more accessible and even preferred by global audiences. User-generated contents on Korea, including K-pop, celebrities, landmarks, and food, have been widely and extensively produced both by Koreans and foreigners.

Vast academic attention has been paid recently to digital platforms as well as their contents and participants not only because more people have grown up in increasingly online environments but also because online contents and their circulation have become a vast and profitable business. Major trends of existing scholarship tend to focus on the novelties as well as the constraints of digital media as new technology and even takes for granted that internet users, including creators, audiences, or

viewers are part of a universal culture. However, it is not surprising to find concerned voices over the limited agency on the internet in which “user agency is defined more than ever by the capital-intensive and technology-driven economies of global, vertically integrated markets” (van Dijck, 2009, p. 54). Furthermore, Burgess and Green (2018) point out that YouTube’s “logics of popularity and how they are expressed as metrics [...] may continue to reward noise and controversy over all else” (p. 130), suggesting that the ongoing content production on YouTube is and will continue to be predominantly commercially motivated. They also write that because of this, the matter of questioning what platforms such as YouTube should be doing to encourage “audience engagement for diversity” instead of “only rewarding the loudest voices” (p. 130) is an urgent one. On the other hand, “YouTube has generated public and civic value as an unintended and often unsupported consequence of the practices of its diverse and global users” (Burgess & Green, 2018, p. 123), and so it is unsurprising that such social media platforms have become the object of research for many different disciplines.

Instead of following the major direction of past research, this study pays attention to digital media’s transnational capacities and mediating role between different countries, nations and cultures. For this purpose, this study follows and examines *Eat Your Kimchi* (hereafter EYK),<sup>1</sup> a YouTube channel once entirely devoted to Korea content created by Canadian couple Simon and Martina, who lived in Korea over 7 years (2008–2016), and reached celebrity status as full time YouTubers with over 1 million subscribers (1.4 million as of August 2020). Compared to Oh and Oh (2017), who focus on White and Western superiority and privileges of EYK, this study attempts to reveal nuanced and emerging

<sup>1</sup> Kimchi being a now globally known Korean dish most often made of fermented cabbage, this title is a play on the adage “eat your greens.”

discourses on YouTube. Instead of searching for discriminating, racializing, and exoticized attitudes and languages, in particular, this study illuminates the repetitive, symbolic, and routine strategies and themes in representing and interpreting South Korea. In so doing, we suggest that such YouTubers take on a new role of cultural intermediaries who translate Korea to the globe via the internet, a topic in need of more academic discussion and critical review.

### **Banal Orientalism: Cultural Politics of a New Cultural Intermediary on YouTube**

Having started out as a platform for uploading both original and unoriginal content back in 2005, YouTube has been often described as “a major part of the *information revolution*,” with a unique participatory culture (Bloom & Johnston, 2010, p. 115). After being purchased by Google in 2006, YouTube rapidly began to grow into a mega-platform (Hosch, 2020) and simultaneously, into a “marketplace for professionally generated content” and a “new revenue for model for these major entertainment companies” (Jung & Shim, 2013, pp. 10-11). With viral videos being shared across the globe, YouTube has emerged as the most notable and efficient intermediary platform with “important new opportunities for reaching wider audiences” (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018, p. 1614). Many discovered that the low entry barrier for content creation allowed them to upload their own amateur videos and perhaps join the ranks in online stardom by having their own content go viral. In 2007, YouTube launched its partner program, which essentially allowed original content creators to make money off of their videos and soon gave rise to YouTubers, who were able to quit their day jobs and earn a living by creating and uploading their own videos (Kim, 2012). Many studies that have explored new participants from ordinary to marginalized peoples on YouTube pay attention

to the changing natures of celebrity culture along with the emergence of a new type of celebrity, often called micro-celebrity or subculture celebrity (Jerslev, 2016; Marwick, 2015). Related to but distinct from current scholarship, this study attempts to reveal another dimension of YouTubers who play a crucial role in mediating different groups of people such as producers and consumers, experts and amateurs, and in introducing cultures, places, and practices of diverse countries, races and ethnicities. Given that cultural intermediaries are stereotypically associated with professional journalists, critics and academics, how can we configure YouTubers as new cultural intermediaries in the age of the internet and globalization?

Cultural intermediary is a term that is most associated with Pierre Bourdieu who also introduces the category of new cultural intermediaries in order to include new kinds of professionals. Bourdieu’s conceptualization of cultural intermediaries is to “describe groups of workers involved in the provision of symbolic goods and services” in his discussion of middle-brow culture (Nixon & du Gay, 2002, p. 496). Bourdieu’s term, particularly new cultural intermediary as an inclusive category, includes practitioners in design, packaging, sales promotion, PR, marketing and advertising. In the traditional realm, culture includes the arts such as theater, music, and literature, and the role of mediating this is taken by elites such as academics, ambassadors, and professional critics. Hence, the term cultural intermediary usually refers to any individual that takes on the role of mediator between creators and the public. His conceptualization of (new) cultural intermediaries is the “workers who come in between creative artists and consumers, or production and consumption more broadly” (Hracs, 2015, p. 463).

Due to the inclusivity of the term, academics are often divided in how they interpret it. A narrowed understanding of cultural

intermediaries, represented by Hesmondhalgh, suggests that both new and old intermediaries are meant to mediate between producers and consumers, and their exemplar is critics in the recording industry (2006). From this perspective, cultural intermediaries “refer to a particular type of new petit bourgeois profession, associated with cultural commentary in the mass media” (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p. 226). To the contrary, many academics tend to interpret the roles and functions of cultural intermediaries with broader and multiplied ways. Cultural intermediaries are not only mediators between producers and consumers but also co-producers, tastemakers, and generators of a new consumer culture. In this vein, cultural intermediaries also have a “certain amount of cultural authority as shapers of taste and the inculcators of new consumerist dispositions” (Nixon & du Gay, 2002, p. 497). Furthermore, new cultural intermediaries are used to highlight a set of social transformations. According to O’Connor (2015), cultural intermediaries were “associated with the challenge to cultural hierarchies: their mixing of high and popular cultures.” Cultural intermediaries indicate not only a potential not only for a democratization of culture through “the expansion of access to cultural production and consumption,” but also a culturalized economy that utilizes “culture as economic resource (O’Connor, 2015, p. 378). Along with the evolution of media and its participatory and convergent natures, new cultural intermediaries are not limited to traditional professionals, journalists, and TV personalities, but include almost anyone who might possess a vast amount of knowledge and experience in certain fields and topics.

Given its diverse utilities and extended implications, we suggest YouTubers as part of the new cultural intermediaries who often fulfill roles of trendsetters, media luminaries and even role models for younger audiences or followers. By highlighting their roles of

connecting production and consumption, or ordinary users and a wide variety of other parties, several academics already identify YouTube as a representative platform for digital intermediaries (Benghozi & Paris, 2016; Lobato, 2016; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018). In order to underpin its novelty, academics have coined the term digital cultural intermediaries who refer to various individuals and groups on the internet mediating culture between content creators and viewers or consumers in diverse areas such as food, fashion, sports, films, etc. (Lee, 2010). Digital cultural intermediaries are also “ordained through the process of imparting forms of knowledge, experience or skill to another person who did not possess this before” (Piper, 2015, p. 248), but their expertise is no longer limited to a traditional understanding of culture or high culture. Rather, these digital cultural intermediaries create a diverse range of lifestyle content based on their personal lives, hobbies, and preferences, and reinterpret cultural content from a fresh perspective based on what their viewers want to see and relate to (Kim & Kim, 2018). A recognizable example would be a micro-celebrity who emerges as a new type of celebrity by utilizing a set of self-presentation techniques and online performance designed for self-branding in a digital attention economy (Jerslev, 2016; Marwick, 2015; Yoon, 2021).

Among various roles, functions and fields, we pay attention to a particular type of new cultural intermediaries on YouTube who gain popularity by actively mediating, rephrasing and translating a specific country, its culture, and its people to a global audience. In this paper, we refer to such a type of new cultural intermediaries on YouTube as transnational cultural intermediaries. As global exchanges between people have increased significantly, the subject and roles of transnational cultural intermediaries have multiplied and proliferated. Not only local people who are born and raised in the specific country, but also international travelers or migrants rise up as

transnational cultural intermediaries who are able to translate the specific country, its culture and people to global audiences. More often than not, the latter group is more successful at attracting global attention and popularity not only because they are often shrewd with utilizing English as a medium of communicating with global audiences but also because they are regarded as neutral or informative interlocutors as third-party observers and novices to the specific country. As several governments, particularly in Asia, pay special attention to nation branding and soft power, transnational cultural intermediaries from foreign countries are more welcomed and assisted by the governments (Anholt, 2008; Istad, 2020; Schwak, 2018). Transnational cultural intermediaries actively spread their own understanding and interpretation of the specific country and its culture via uploading their own pictures and videos to YouTube. In so doing, transnational cultural intermediaries utilize YouTube as a platform not only for entertainment but also “for cross-cultural exchange and understanding” (Bloom & Johnston, 2010, p. 115).

While transnational cultural intermediaries in tandem with YouTube have the potential of connecting different countries, cultures and peoples, they often re-construct a hierarchal structure dominated by the West, Caucasians, men and English speakers. Among numerous transnational cultural intermediaries on YouTube, Caucasians either traveling or migrating from Western countries tend to get the most attention in translating new countries, which are less known or unfamiliar to the West. Such exotic cultural contents of new countries are framed as light entertainment, easy to consume due to its localized (by familiar faces such as EYK), personalized nature. As such, this sort of cultural

content that YouTube channels like EYK produce is consumed with great enthusiasm by international audiences, as evidenced by the significant number of views the videos garner. Their practices thus do not necessitate careful consideration or even balanced portrayals (going beyond the generalizations they package for their English-speaking audience). In fact, Burgess and Green (2018) write that “localisation [...] has made it increasingly unnecessary for Western, English-speaking users to encounter mundane cultural difference in their experience of online video,” citing viral hits like Gangnam Style as “little more than an exotic Asian novelty in the West” (p. 134). It is then unsurprising that North American YouTubers such as EYK are able to take on the role of transnational cultural intermediary for an audience drawn to localized, bite-sized cultural difference.

Such roles of transnational cultural intermediaries immediately remind us of the idea of Orientalism (Said, 1978). As many prominent scholars such as Said eloquently analyzed, the encounters between East and West have oftentimes elicited stereotypical and unilateral representations of Eastern societies and their people by Western visitors, travelers, or sojourners. For the past couple of centuries, Orientalism<sup>2</sup> has created and perpetuated stereotypes that are presented in a colonialist attitude that differentiates and places *us* above the *other* on a presupposed global hierarchy of culture. In the 21st century, to the contrary, blatantly colonialist and Orientalist discourses tend to be frowned upon and are rarely encountered. However, Western- and white-centric discourses in different disguises are still observable, especially in online contexts. In this vein, it is imperative to figure out how old problematics such as Orientalism have been

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘orientalism’ is an elaborate concept that, among many characteristics, “is, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world” (Said, 1978, p. 12).

disguised, transformed, or re-configured in the new platform such as YouTube. By exploring the practices and rhetoric of a micro celebrity on YouTube, this study attempts to illuminate the cultural politics of transnational cultural intermediaries on YouTube, which is referred to as banal Orientalism. Similar to new racism, banal Orientalism “fits into a framework of ‘racism without races,’” and its “dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences” (Balibar, 1991b, p. 21). Furthermore, banal Orientalism on YouTube is subtly conducted by “small, unnoticed words such as ‘us’ and ‘them’” which “equips people with an identity and ideological consciousness, and encompasses and internalizes them in a complex series of themes about ‘us’ and ‘them’—about the ‘homeland’ and the world at large” (Haldrup et al., 2006, pp. 175-176).

As an exemplar case of transnational cultural intermediary, we examine white expatriates and their vlogs, i.e. EYK who upload their own experiences of living in Korea and Korea-related content, including K-pop, food, and travel to their intended audiences. The way that EYK mediate Korea to their audience is reminiscent of the role Western travelers played in introducing Korea to the West through their travelogues more than a century ago (see Cho, 2002; Hahm, 2003; Park, 2002; Park, 2007). These early Western experts on Korea since the mid-nineteenth century were often missionaries, doctors, and academics, who spent several years on the peninsula and later published their journals and travelogues in which they recount their time in Korea and interpret or intermediate this foreign culture for Western audiences (Hahm, 2003; Park, 2002; Park, 2007). The perspective of especially North American missionaries and British explorers was that of us, the West, and them, the people of Joseon, demonstrating Orientalist viewpoints

within their first impressions of Korea as inconvenient, unsanitary, and poor (Kim, 2013, p. 20). Through the lens of banal Orientalism, we think of the limits and possibilities of transnational cultural intermediaries on YouTube which not only mediate different groups but also construct new perspectives, hierarchies and stereotypes on a global level.

### **Approaching Eat Your Kimchi in the YouTube-scape of Korea**

With the rise in popularity of the Korean Wave and K-pop around the globe, Korea, its culture and its people have appeared on the worldwide online radar. As a way of responding to global interests and the relative lack of information on Korea in the main stream media, a new group of YouTubers, whose content revolves around introducing Korean culture, people and society have emerged. Typical examples are the K-pop fans who are not merely consumers of K-pop, but also mediate their favorite content to those unaware of their favorite group, thus generating new listeners, viewers, and fans (Oh, 2017). Among them, we pay attention to white expatriates who upload their own experiences of living in Korea and Korea-related content to their intended audiences. This section illuminates the contour of the YouTube-scape of Korea as well as the details of the YouTube channel *Eat yourkimchi Studio* (EYK), and also, introduces how we approached, selected, and analyzed its contents and commentaries.

The subgroup of YouTubers that this study’s research object falls into mainly targets non-Koreans who speak English, and make their content based on questions they receive from their audience about life in Korea.<sup>3</sup> The largest channel of this kind is EYK, previously known as Simon and Martina, the main object of this

<sup>3</sup> In contrast to the subgroup of Korea YouTubers whose main target audience is (or was) Koreans, such as Korean Englishman and The World of Dave, and whose content centers on Korean food and language.



study, but other well-known examples include Megan Bowen (*Migooksaram*), Steph and Richard (*HallyuBack*), and Xander and Haepny (*We Fancy*). These channels have uploaded content based primarily on K-pop, including interviews with Korean celebrities, but their most significant common denominator is that they upload Q&A style videos in which they answer specific questions about life in Korea sent to them by their subscribers, most of whom have never lived in or even visited South Korea. By communicating with their viewers based on their hands-on experiences on Korea, these YouTubers are able to share their understandings as well as advice with those who have an interest in Korea but little to no knowledge about it. In so doing, they assume the role of mediating Korea to an international audience, and furthermore, some of them succeed in attracting hundreds of thousands of subscribers and making full time jobs out of their content creation. By interpreting, translating and shaping their understanding of Korea, these YouTubers are “generating new business models and new yet hidden roles” (Hracs, 2015, p. 464).

As representatives of this specific subcategory of YouTubers, Canadian couple Simon and Martina first came to Korea as English teachers in 2008 and then began their YouTube channel, i.e., EYK, by uploading vlogs and parodies of K-pop music videos, which gained substantial popularity among other internet users interested in Korea and Korean pop culture. In 2011, their channel gained enough subscribers and supporters for them to be able to quit their teaching jobs and become fulltime YouTube content creators.<sup>4</sup> EYK is “among the first to create Korea-specific vlogs,” and “cultivated a sizeable audience,” (Oh & Oh, 2017, p. 1) with over 1.4 million subscribers (as of August 2020). Their popularity was also recognized in Korea:

Korean news media has described the couple as “a different kind of Hallyu star,” (Kim, Y., 2012, para. 3) and “a couple that rose to celebrity status in the unfamiliar land of Korea” (Jeong, 2011, para. 1). After the couple moved to Japan in 2016, they uploaded content based on their life in Japan and slowly phased out their Korea content altogether. As of 2020, they have moved back to Canada and are producing general lifestyle content.

EYK’s Korea content is encapsulated in the late 2000s ~ mid-2010s YouTube landscape, part of “a living archive of contemporary culture” (Burgess & Green, 2018, p. 78). In fact, YouTube specifically has been attributed with enabling the global success of K-pop, “which is globally popular primarily due to songs becoming YouTube sensations” (Jin & Yoon, 2017, p. 2244). As already mentioned, EYK were able to become fulltime YouTubers in 2011, a year before the massive success of Psy’s “Gangnam Style” music video, which highlighted “the importance of a technology dimension” of the Korean wave (Jin & Yoon, 2016, p. 1284), interest for which “has grown worldwide [...] [t]hanks to digital technologies” (Gnedash et al., 2021, p. 47). The rise in global interest in Korean culture in lieu of the Korean wave is thus closely connected to digital media platforms—which provided the landscape for YouTubers like EYK being able to make a living through content that mediates aspects of Korea to a global audience. As the majority of EYK’s Korea content was curated based on what their subscribers asked for, the channel can then be seen as a time capsule of the Korea content in demand before and at the very cusp of the explosive global success of K-pop and international interest in South Korean culture.

To illuminate the characteristics of EYK, we conducted a qualitative analysis of its Q&A videos, comment sections, and linked blog posts,

<sup>4</sup> In 2014, they were even able to open up their own studio and a café (described as “promoting intercultural exchanges”) in the Hongdae area in Seoul through crowd-funding alone (Kim, 2014).

specifically targeting topics that contained value judgments of various aspects of Korean culture. We approached languages and narratives in EYK's videos and their comments as discourses that are useful for tracing dominant and competing ideas, sentiments and ideologies on YouTube. These videos were uploaded by EYK on their side channel on YouTube titled *simonandmartinabonus*, on their main channel *Eatyourkimchi Studio*, where their more recent videos were posted, and their website ([eatyourkimchi.com](http://eatyourkimchi.com)),<sup>5</sup> where they posted blog entries to accompany each video they upload on YouTube. The Q&A video series is titled *TL;DR* (Too long; didn't read), in the spirit of answering viewers' questions in video format in the space of a few minutes. With over 140 videos uploaded between 2011 and 2015, this series covers diverse topics from EYK's personal backstories to student life, beauty standards, food, flirting, the K-pop and drama industries, and general customs in Korea. To narrow down the data, we focused on videos with over 200,000 views which were specifically about cultural differences observed in Korea, rather than their relationship or general information. This Q&A video series as well as the accompanying blog posts were particularly useful for exploring how the creators identify themselves and how they mediate Korea and its culture to an international audience. By employing critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1993), we examined the key strategies and themes that are recurring both in EYK's videos and comment sections. Critical discourse analysis is effective for analyzing the various representations and narratives by which "particular discourse discourses are articulated within certain contexts in order to generate a set of knowledge and beliefs" (Cho & Kobayashi, 2019, p. 666). In particular, we paid attention to categorizing the repetitive, symbolic, and routine narratives and schemes deployed by EYK. The

video content, blog posts, and their replies to comments provide ample sources for tracing their discursive themes as well as strategies in describing Korea.

### **Constructing a Dual Identity both as Amateur and Expert**

As a way of explicating old and new problematics that transnational cultural intermediaries on YouTube pose, we explore how EYK perform in interpreting, representing and translating Korea to a global audience. For this purpose, we examine its two dimensions, which are discursive strategies and discursive themes. These discursive strategies and themes enable EYK to humorously generalize their experiences in Korea and to elicit popular attention while avoiding blatant, pejorative and condescending language to racialize Koreans and Korean culture, which are seminal elements of banal Orientalism. In this section, we analyze EYK's discursive strategies in which they negotiate a dual identity by alternating their roles between amateur and expert on the topic of Korea, its culture and people. It is this strategic positioning as either amateur or expert that allows EYK to lightheartedly broach the discursive themes, which we discuss in the next section. EYK's strategy of positioning themselves using dual identities resembles the tactics of micro-celebrities who "stress the ideals of relatability, their authenticity, and accountability to" their audiences and fans (Lewis, 2020, p. 214). Their dual identity sometimes grants them authenticity, which enable them to translate Korea to their followers with authority while it also allows them to avoid criticism for their biased and surface-level opinions of Korea. We suggest that EYK's strategy of alternating their roles between amateur and expert successfully situates themselves as cultural intermediaries to their followers, many of whom have an interest in

<sup>5</sup> As of 2021, the EYK website is no longer accessible, but can be viewed using <https://web.archive.org/>



Korea but have never been there.

On the one hand, EYK situate themselves as experts who have genuine experiences, differentiated insights, and the capability of answering nearly any question about Korea. Since 2011, they are fulltime YouTubers who make a living off of creating original contents based on Korea, as well as micro-celebrities who accumulated over 1.4 million subscribers (as of 2020). While EYK can be labeled *influencers* in recent discourse by mediating Korea to millions of their subscribers and fans, unlike traditional professionals or cultural mediators, they present themselves as “not only authentic but also accessible” (Jerslev, 2016, p. 5244) and create a sense of community and co-ownership with their followers (Nazerali, 2017). The ways in which EYK practice their authenticity, design their brand and build connectedness with their followers exemplifies “contemporary processes of celebrification and the celebrified self that is called microcelebrity and enabled by social media” (Jerslev, 2016, p. 5235).

When EYK first began to upload their Q&A style videos in 2011, they actively invited their subscribers and viewers to send in questions about Korea: “So ask us about life in Korea, Teaching in Korea, Moving to Korea [...] Whatever you want to know about Korea or us (barring it’s not too personal) we’ll make a video for” (Stawski & Stawski, 2011b). According to their blog, they started answering questions in video format because they would get too many emails asking them questions about both themselves and about Korea: “we’ve answered over 15,000 emails since we started the site in 2008” (Stawski, 2011a, para. 2). With so much demand, EYK were able to offer their own experiences of Korea and opinions based on those experiences as a source of information for their viewers. By producing over a hundred videos answering questions about their life in Korea between 2011 and 2015, EYK claim their position as not *self-proclaimed* but *self-evident*

authorities on the subject of Korea. In so doing, Simon and Martina use expressions that indicate their authority when they speak about their experiences in Korea. They start their answers with words like “So yes, what you’re gonna find here in Korea” (Stawski & Stawski, 2014), insinuating that they are entitled to introduce Korea to global audiences who have never been in or do not know much about Korea.

Furthermore, EYK intend to provide a guideline or cultural map to their audiences who have not visited or lived in Korea, but have increasing interest in Korea. “We just want to prep you guys for like basic social things that you don’t learn about in a book,” EYK state in another video, “[s]tuff that you kind of have to do before you figure out it’s wrong” (Stawski & Stawski, 2011e), identifying themselves as experts in terms of having been there, done that, and offering tips and advice to other foreigners thinking of coming to Korea. In introducing Korean culture, EYK tend to treat, define and even judge various aspects of Korean culture—not only art and consumptive aspects but also social norms and values as representative. The broad and simplistic nature of the titles of their videos themselves, which are often a topic with “in Korea” added to it (“Dating in Korea,” “How to Flirt in Korea,” “Sexism in Korea,” “Drinking and Drunkenness in Korea,” “Health Care in Korea,” etc.) while of course also aimed at the clickbait nature of YouTube, reveal a trend of generalization, promising the viewer insight into a specific topic from an insider perspective. By underscoring their experiences as foreigners in Korea as authentic, EYK successfully conduct “a set of practices drawn from celebrity culture that ‘regular people’ use in daily life to boost their online attention and popularity” (Marwick, 2015, p. 339).

At times, they also make a point of mentioning their academic background based in their home country, i.e., Canada: “So, Martina studied East Asian Philosophy in University and she’s very

familiar with how Korean society (including the government and the family structure) is based on the teachings of Confucius” (Stawski, 2011c, para. 2), Simon writes in a blog entry accompanying their video on “Age Differences in Korea.” This claim is again repeated by Martina herself two years later, in a blog post accompanying their video on “Sexism in Korea”: “If you really want to understand Korean culture, you’ll need to do a lot of reading on Confucianism. Luckily for me, I (Martina) studied both English and East Asian Philosophy for five years in University, and both Simon and I studied world religion, so we knew what we were getting into when we moved to Korea” (Stawski & Stawski, 2013, para. 4). In this way, even amidst their continual hedging, EYK claim that their university education allows them to *really understand* and be *very familiar with* Korean culture, qualifying them for their position of authority as experts.

By answering questions and introducing Korean culture, EYK build connectedness, relatability and trust with their fans and audiences, which in turn grant them a sense of authority on Korea (Marwick, 2015; Yoon, 2021). In so doing, EYK successfully perform “celebrity practices by social media” in which a micro-celebrity is “connected with the display of accessibility, presence, and authenticity” (Jerslev, 2016, p. 5235). As such, EYK successfully situate themselves as transnational cultural intermediaries who can mediate Korean to a worldwide audience, many of whom have no firsthand experience of the culture they are being introduced to, and thus, EYK is placed in a unique position to present their opinions as authentic representations.

On the other hand, EYK also highlight their amateurism: their home videos are based on humor, entertainment and personal opinions, which help them to be identified “as an honest and unpretentious person” and to establish intimacy and accessibility with fans

and followers (Jerslev, 2016, p. 5234). In so doing, they underscore their personal, genuine and insignificant dimensions in defending themselves against critics toward their thoughts and judgment on Korea. An example of this is the way EYK define their amateur standpoint in the “About” section of their website, which begins with a brief introduction of their names, their nationality, how they moved to Korea in 2008 and now live in Japan. It is then followed by cartoon caricatures of themselves with their own speech bubbles. Martina’s reads: “It’s still a mystery to both of them as to why people watch their videos and endure their awkward sense of humor. In fact, why are you even reading this?” (Stawski & Stawski, 2011a, para. 5). As a way of emphasizing their amateurism, they mention their continuous befuddlement of why anyone would be interested in watching their content, even after becoming fulltime YouTubers.

When it comes to talking about culture, especially when criticized, they repeatedly emphasize their inevitably biased viewpoints due to their content being based on personal experiences. In their videos, the accompanying blog posts, as well as in their responses to comments, EYK continually express their identity as biased individuals whose personal opinions should not be taken as fact: “we’re just two people expressing our personal opinions [...] and what we’re relating” (Stawski & Stawski, 2012). They repeatedly point out that they are not professionals qualified to analyze or teach anyone about culture (despite their claim to academic qualification mentioned above), and that their words should thus be taken as biased and inconsequential opinions rather than reliably informative.

Of course it’s biased [...] it’s just a personal reaction to what surprises us. [...] It’s not a cultural lesson for a textbook. We’re not ambassadors representing any country. We’re sharing our experiences. [...] I’m not trying to

be a historian or anthropologist here. (Stawski & Stawski, 2015)

Similarly, EYK have dismissed criticism or corrections by stating that their viewers know not to rely on the information they provide. The videos and blog posts tend to conclude with an invitation for their viewers to share their own experiences about the topic in their own countries, or even to correct them. Talking about how they hate the driving in Korea, Simon writes, “We asked our Korean friends about what getting a driver’s license is like here, and they’re like, ‘you just fill out a paper test and then you get your license.’ WAHHHAT?? !! THAT’S IT!!!” (Stawski, 2012, para. 10) before going on to detail the lengthy process necessary to obtain a driver’s license in Canada. As a commenter correctly pointed out, however, this information is incorrect, as there is also a practical driving test one must pass to obtain a driver’s license in Korea. Instead of correcting the blog post, however, EYK simply reply, “don’t worry, I think most people know that we aren’t a reliable source, like a government website or something. We’re just opinion based and experienced based from our own perspective” (Stawski, 2012). By repeating their amateur status, they attempt to mitigate complaints or criticisms from audiences rather than make apologies or correct false claims they may have published on the internet.

As another example, after listing statistics on the topic at hand (in this case, how many Koreans in their 20s still live with their parents), EYK also add in a blog post: “I don’t want this to get too proper or research, though I’m sure that’s a good thing—that’s just not what we do here that much at EYK. We’d like to get back to fart jokes, if possible” (Stawski, 2014b, para. 8). They thus prioritize lighthearted humor and claim to simply be providing their viewers with biased opinions that should be consumed as entertainment rather than a source of information.

Thus, EYK justify their use of light thinking,

biased expressions, or even politically incorrect statements with the warning that viewers should not take EYK’s posting and videos too seriously. By deploying amateurism, EYK are able to package their videos as simply personal opinion in which they present inconsequential but authentic experiences in Korea, and furthermore, their humorous depictions and jokes about Korea can be used as “strategic intimacy to appeal to followers” (Marwick, 2015, p. 333). However, EYK’s claim that a joke is just a joke needs to be carefully scrutinized in the context of YouTube, “an environment in which White perspective are most popular” (Oh & Oh, 2017, p. 12). As Billig poignantly underscores, “jokes are not merely told, but they are also reacted to and talked about” as jokes “comes with ideological, historical and emotional baggage” (2001, pp. 7, 17). In their jokes and humor, YouTubers as transnational cultural intermediaries explicitly or implicitly repeat the discourse of Orientalism, which is particularly expressed and circulated in everyday, personal and trivial ways—such as telling jokes.

In developing their dual identity by alternating between expert and amateur, EYK perform the roles of cultural intermediaries, which professors, cultural critics or ambassadors had traditionally assumed, in a new format on YouTube. Compared to traditional cultural intermediaries, EYK who are not equipped with the same prestigious position and social and economic status have to balance their authenticity and expertise with humorous insight and harmless banter. In so doing, EYK has successfully attracted a worldwide audience, many of whom have no firsthand experience with the culture they are being introduced to. EYK’s strategy of dual identity exemplifies the “particular presentation technique to maximize ordinariness, intimacy and interactivity” that micro-celebrities depend on in social media platforms (Yoon, 2021, p. 7). By embodying micro-celebrity subjectivity and its self-presentation strategies, EYK successfully became one of the most popular transnational

cultural intermediaries of Korea content in the early 2010s. At the same time, it is in the authentic personas they assume through their dual identities that allow their discourse to slip into the banal dimension of orientalism.

### Infantilizing and Othering Korea

This section analyzes EYK's major themes in translating contemporary Korea to their audiences: one is to infantilize Korea, and the other is to otherize Korea's culture and people. In so doing, we pay particular attention to their repetitive, symbolic, and routine, but not blatantly condescending or intentional language, phrases, and narratives. Their discursive strategy of deploying dual identities allows EYK to speak about Korea in entertaining and casual ways as amateurs and under the rubric of credence as experts who have authentic and hands-on experiences in Korea. This results in their jokes, assessments and opinions effectively coming across as something more than simple observation and inconsequential jokes. As EYK play the role of cultural intermediary between Korea and a global audience, we highlight that EYK's major themes continue to generalize Korea, which, unwittingly or not, replicate the perspective of Western supremacy over the East, creating and perpetuating a stereotype of an immature Korea in routine, daily and banal ways.

The first notable theme in the way EYK talk about life in Korea is to infantilize Korea by personifying its culture and society in a humorous way. EYK often characterize Korea as needing guidance and further growth, especially in comparison to their North American standards:

Ok. Korea. We need to have a talk. Korea, if you can't tell by now, we love you. You're a wonderful country. We feel very, very safe here. [...] BUT... the one thing that we can't get used to is how dangerously you drive. [...] Korea: great country,

very nice people: not very good at driving. (Stawski, & Stawski, 2011c)

A comedic trope that EYK often reuse is that of personifying Korea and addressing it as though it were a child, with both amusement and bemusement. In this scenario, Korea—Korean culture—is treated as a dear friend or younger brother for whom EYK have planned an intervention of some kind. By humorously jabbing at the cultural insensitivity they have experienced in Korea, EYK, taking on the role of your friendly, self-aware North American neighbor, paint a generic picture of the everyday, naïve Korean, who simply lacks exposure to Western norms. Their attitudes signal the harmlessness of it all, that their experiences in Korea along these lines are not at all traumatizing or inherently negative, but rather humorous, quirky, and silly, rather than serious. By reiterating the stereotypical depiction of the East by Western sojourners, their jokes become “an everyday routine way of talking and acting in life—a language forces people to think in ‘us’/‘them’ dichotomies—a ‘habit’ that enables an internal orientalism to be (re)produced as a natural form of life” (Haldrup et al., 2006, p. 175). EYK's flippant attitudes normalize their experiences as being interesting, at times somewhat disconcerting, but always uniquely Korean.

EYK's video about beauty standards in Korea, for example, led them to conclude that Korean society lacks cultural education. In a video comparing Korean and North American beauty standards, EYK touch upon a personal experience of witnessing a student with tanned skin being made fun of—“hahaha teacher look! That's Obama!”—to which they comment, “Oh culturally insensitive Korea! Sometimes you make us lol [laugh out loud]! [...] You gotta work on that!” (Stawski & Stawski, 2011d). Koreans, according to this scene painted by EYK, have to learn or *work on* being culturally sensitive, and are thus implied as being a step behind

North American society. In this description, North America is at the stage where they can appreciate all kinds of face shapes and body types, while comparatively, in Korea, people have yet to learn about diversity. “[P]rocesses we learned as children didn’t really seem to transfer over to Korea” (Stawski & Stawski, 2011c), they say in another video, attributing a difference in forming queues (and seeing people cut in line) they observed in Korea to a deficit in childhood education: “[t]his is so painful to us, because it’s something that was heavily instilled in us as children” (Stawski, 2011b, para. 8). In this translation of Korea, not only do Koreans fail to live up to North American standards of behavior, but observing such failure is painful for EYK to watch—bringing to mind an image of adults shaking their heads disapprovingly at the misbehavior of a child. Again, such language used by EYK infantilizes Korea in a well-intended manner, which, in its subtlety, perpetuates the stereotype of the underdeveloped East versus the developed West.

In a subtle way, when discussing how things have changed in Korea since they first moved there in 2008, EYK write, “The beer scene is really starting to blossom [ ... ] there’s a blossoming foreign bar scene with cool beers being both imported AND brewed here,” likening Korea to a flower bud that has just started to bloom by becoming more like North America. “A lot of cocktails are still ridiculously overpriced and sweet,” they continue, and “[s]adly, bread here still isn’t that great,” emphasizing that Korea still has not reached their notably Western standards: “Korea’s getting there. Just not yet” (Stawski, 2014a, para. 7). By applying orientalist and hierarchal categorization to Korea, coincidentally or not, EYK again deploy the old rhetoric of Social Darwinism that “was established as the main reference” for modernizing early twentieth-century Korea (Tikhonov, 2016, p. 315).

By infantilizing Korea as a whole, EYK often place Korean culture and its people in the

position of an immature younger brother who still has much to learn until he reaches *their* level, i.e., that of Western, specifically North American culture. Their translation of Korea even fits into “a framework of ‘racism without races,’” in which the “dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences” (Balibar, 1991b, p. 21). While they are modern cultural intermediaries whose authority lies in their view counts and their relatable personalities, their humorous jabs at certain aspects of the culture can be easily and implicitly accepted as representative pictures of everyday life in Korea.

The second theme of EYK is to situate Korea as the *other* by differentiating the East from *us*, i.e., the West. To certain degrees, EYK’s mediations of Korea still “draw upon colonial and racist discourses of Asia(ns) to construct the Korean other as aberrant and the Western self as normal and preferred” (Oh & Oh, 2017, p. 5). When writing about their experience of queues in Korea, Simon expresses his bewilderment that line cutting appears not to be frowned upon: “we were taught to demonize all butters of lines [ ... ] Why isn’t it the same in Korea?” (Stawski, 2011b, para. 8). The dichotomy they form is presented in the form of an innocent question, yet it reveals a general attitude of framing Korea as the strange other.

As a way of othering Korea, EYK create a dichotomy between *us* and *them* in which they characterize *them* as angered Koreans who were not brought up properly, unlike North Americans like themselves. “The problem is that stupid commenters turn our comment section into a huge fight between viewers, and we’d rather people take the time to leave awesome/intelligent comments” (Stawski & Stawski, 2013, para. 3), EYK write in a blog post in which they characterize the kinds of people who leave them hate comments. They paint themselves as simply misunderstood, victims of “idiots” and “stupid commenters” whose immature nature and upbringing have rendered

them unable to listen, with an inclination to purposefully misunderstand and be offended by content that should not arouse such reactions in commenters who are not “stupid.” “[W]e aren’t going to be bullied into lying about our personal experiences” (Stawski & Stawski, 2015), they write. As analyzed in the previous section, EYK often defend themselves by emphasizing their identity as everyday individuals and by diluting their thoughts through humorous and personal tones. In so doing, EYK describe angry Koreans as enemies of freedom of speech, and part of an outdated culture and society that does not value or tolerate independent thinking. Again, this illustrates the way in which they draw a line between these culprits—the *other*—and those who are more like themselves—*us*, Western—not easily offended, not nationalist, not immature, but intelligent and thoughtful.

Another tactic of EYK for handling criticisms is to frame Korean commenters as nationalists. When faced with ardent criticism and even rude insults in their comment section, EYK respond by labeling their *anti-fans* as being too nationalistic:

Yeah, I just don’t think nationalism is a big part of our cultural upbringing. I think that Canada’s great, and if someone doesn’t feel that way I don’t feel insecure about it. [...] I can’t think of anything that could be said about my country that would get me angry enough to leave comments on a video. (Stawski & Stawski, 2015).

EYK continue to depict a dichotomy between West (North America) and East (Korea) by underscoring that such nationalism is not part of their or Western “cultural upbringing.” EYK’s denunciation of nationalism tends to repeat dichotomies between good-civic nationalism in the West and bad-ethnocultural nationalism in the East in which the latter inherently belongs to illiberal, collectivist, irrational and even authoritarian society (Brown, 2000).

EYK’s comment section blew up in 2016 when

they uploaded a video titled “Korea vs Japan, did we make the right choice?” in which they talk about how they prefer their current lives in Japan. As Japan is a regional rival and historic enemy of Korea, not to mention its former colonizer, the video elicited an endless barrage of Korean comments criticizing and even insulting the couple, accusing them of being racist foreigners who should not be making false claims about Korea. When the fans or followers “experience intense disappointment,” as Marwick points out, “the backlash against micro-celebrity practitioners can be very damning” (2015, p. 346). In reply to an English comment defending the couple against the hate comments EYK replied:

Our videos aren’t for Korean people [...] our audience is 99% overseas. Angry people in the comments can’t understand that, and only think about themselves. This video isn’t for them. It isn’t about them. They’ll never understand what it’s like being a foreigner in Korea, and instead of trying to understand, these experiences that we’re sharing are just met with anger. (Stawski & Stawski, 2016)

EYK thus clearly distinguish themselves from the Korean commenters who will “never understand” their perspective and are fundamentally different from *us*, the foreigners. “But that is not our perspective of Korea since we are not Korean!” they reply to a Korean commenter who points out in English that the title they used for the video aggravates the already tense relationship between Japan and Korea—“This is from the perspective of us living in Korea as foreigners, not as Korean born people, which is an experience you will never experience” (Stawski & Stawski, 2016). By framing themselves as having experienced Korea as outsiders, EYK attempt to situate themselves as unique cultural intermediaries who are able to accurately describe Korean society and people that Koreans them-



selves cannot understand. In so doing, EYK embed an Orientalist perception into their vlogs in which the Orient cannot define itself, warranting the West to step in to do it for them. By repeating language that forces people to think in *us* and *them* dichotomies, EYK articulate a process of othering Korea.

On their YouTube channel, EYK identify themselves as friendly guests humorously pointing out the flaws and quirks of hosts while underscoring that they are expressing their honest opinions based on their real and authentic experiences as foreigners that Koreans would neither experience nor understand. In so doing, they exercise their influence as transnational cultural intermediaries, often by promulgating careless, exotic, and even one-sided discourses on Korea. EYK's salient tactic of defending themselves is to blame their critics for being too nationalistic. As Balibar suggests, a new form of racism focuses on cultural differences, not biological ones, and its specific articulation on nationalism (1991a; 1991b). Similarly, EYK's discursive themes exemplify banal Orientalism, which effectively works through dichotomizing our, i.e., Western universalism, and their, i.e., Eastern exoticism through small, unnoticed and seemingly harmless language and narratives.

## CONCLUSION

Although people are moving and migrating globally more than ever, seemingly old boundaries such as nationalism, racism, and Orientalism are not simply receding, but progressing in diverse and nuanced ways (Balibar, 1991a). As examined, foreign expatriates in Korea and their vlogs on Korea through YouTube invoke such old problematics in a novel way as they are putting on the new role and influence of transnational cultural intermediary, representing Korea to global audiences. In so doing, EYK reach the status of micro-celebrity

as a representative of Korea content produced by non-Koreans online at the cusp of K-pop's significantly international reach. While their discursive strategies of constructing dual identities contribute to the success of EYK with a focus on their transnational attributes, their discursive themes do not always yield positive results (Marwick, 2015). EYK have attempted to sustain a sense of authenticity, interactivity, and accessibility as a way of building connectedness with their followers (Jerslev, 2016). Meanwhile, EYK iterate discursive themes of infantilizing and othering Korea in a seemingly benign, humorous fashion, simultaneously characterizing Korean culture and people as being in need of growth—with the West as the standard. As Haldrup et al. (2006) suggest, cultural identities as well as the sense of Otherness are increasingly constituted and negotiated in everyday, bodily, sensuous practices in mundane and even routine forms.

By positing EYK as transnational cultural intermediaries, conclusively, we attempt to demonstrate a newly forged form of Orientalism embedded in their discursive strategies and themes in translating Korea to global audiences. By suggesting the term banal Orientalism, we characterize the cultural politics of YouTubers, i.e., arguably the most influential and popular transnational cultural intermediaries on the internet. Banal orientalism that is performed, practiced and (re)negotiated in daily life, effectively works through the way in which EYK do not disparage, discriminate, and even racialize people and culture of Korea in a blatant way, but in how they subtly generalize their experiences and dichotomize our, i.e., Western norms, and their, i.e., Eastern exotics through humor and parody.

The attention to roles of transnational cultural intermediaries as well as banal Orientalism on YouTube is crucial while Korea recently attracts vast attention from the globe. Unlike traditional cultural intermediaries, on YouTube, anyone can produce and share their images, thoughts,

and experiences of Korea. Particular travelers or migrants from the West often gain popularity and great influence by introducing their experiences in Korea, and some of them have managed to make this their full-time jobs. Consciously or not, the discourse they employ shapes the impressions of their audience, who view them as veritable experts in the culture they live in, if only because they provide a relatable narrative as fellow foreigners and, more importantly, as white, English-speaking Westerners. As Haldrup et al. (2006) put it, the voice of banal Orientalism becomes so naturalized that it “makes everybody forget that ‘our’ history and geography is produced and constructed” (p. 176). Furthermore, banal dimensions of Orientalism and similar kinds of racism and nationalism tend to be easily ignored. In his seminal discussion of banal nationalism, Billig (1995) also argues that banal does not imply benign, nor that banal nationalism is innocent. Banality is “not synonymous with the harmless” (Haldrup et al., 2006, p. 176), but rather reproduces exclusions and repressions by “normalizing and naturalizing hierarchal notions of difference to an extent that quasi-racist views and expressions are regarded as unproblematic, banal and almost commonsensical utterances” (Haldrup et al., 2006, p. 183). Furthermore, banal Orientalism is easily connected and expanded into blatant, threatening, and institutionalized ways of performing Orientalism.

As the role of transnational cultural intermediaries on YouTube begins to attract public and academic attention, we suggest that banal Orientalism provides a nuanced lens of illuminating and explicating the multiplicity of the Korea-related YouTube-scape. In turn, serious attention to banal orientalism helps Korean people and society to perceive banality in nationalism and racism (Jeong & Cho, 2010; Kim & Cho, 2021). Compared to the vast literature on racism, “little analytical attention is given to the mundane, even routine forms

of harassment” (Noble, 2005, p. 111). Our analysis of banal orientalism enables us to have a better understanding of how various racism and nationalism in banal form are represented and exercised, particularly online, and, then, to take steps to increase the mutual and reflexive understanding between different groups.

## REFERENCES

- Anholt, S. (2008). ‘Nation branding’ in Asia. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 4, 265-279. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pb.2008.22>
- Balibar, E. (1991a). Preface. In E. Balibar & I. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Race, nation, class: Ambiguous identities* (pp. 1-13). Verso.
- Balibar, E. (1991b). Is there a ‘neo-racism’? In E. Balibar & I. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Race, nation, class: Ambiguous identities* (pp. 17-28). Verso.
- Benghozi, P.-J., & Paris, T. (2016). The cultural economy in the digital age: A revolution in intermediation? *City, Culture and Society*, 7(2), 75-80. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2015.12.005>
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. Sage.
- Billig, M. (2001). Humour and hatred: The racist jokes of the Ku Klux Klan. *Discourse and Society*, 12(3), 267-289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926501012003001>
- Bloom, K., & Johnston, K. M. (2010). Digging into YouTube videos: Using media literacy and participatory culture to promote cross-cultural understanding. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2(2), 113-123. <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/jmle/vol2/iss2/3>
- Brown, D. (2000). *Contemporary nationalism: Civic, ethnocultural and multicultural politics*. Routledge.
- Burgess, J., & Green, J. (2018). *YouTube: Online video and participatory culture* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Cho, H. (2002). *Munmyeongwa Yaman - Tajau*

- Shiseoneuro bon 19segi Joseon* [Civilization and barbarism: 19th Century Joseon through the eyes of the other]. Cheksesang.
- Cho, Y. & Kobayashi, K. (2019). Disrupting the nation-ness in postcolonial East Asia: Discourses of Jong Tae-se as a *Zainichi* Korean sport celebrity. *International Journal of History of Sport*, 36(7-8), 681-697. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2019.1657838>
- Fairclough, N. (1993). *Discourse and social change*. Polity Press.
- Gnedash, I. A., Ivanov, N. S., & Khaimina, A. D. (2021). The Korean wave as a tool of South Korea's soft power in 1990-2020. *Theories and Problems of Political Studies*, 10(2A), 44-55. <http://publishing-vak.ru/file/archive-politology-2021-2/4-gnedash-ivanov-khaimina.pdf>
- Hahm, H. (2003). Korean culture seen through westerners' eyes. *Korea Journal*, 43(1), 106-128. <https://www.dbpia.co.kr/Journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE09376027>
- Haldrup, M., Koefoed, L., & Simonsen, K. (2006). Practical orientalism: Bodies, everyday life and the construction of otherness. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 88(2), 173-184. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3878386>
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2006). Bourdieu, the media and cultural production. *Media, Culture & Society*, 28(2), 211-231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443706061682>
- Hosch, W. L. (2020). *YouTube*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/YouTube>
- Hracs, B. J. (2015). Cultural intermediaries in the digital age: The case of independent musicians and managers in Toronto. *Regional Studies*, 49(3), 461-475. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2012.750425>
- Istad, F. (2020). Two-way engagement in public diplomacy: The case of Talk Talk Korea. *Asian Communication Research*, 17(3), 115-141. <https://doi.org/10.20879/acr.2020.17.3.115>
- Jeong, H. (2011, February 15). *Isyueo-gimchidatkeom Saimeon-Matina Bubu... Bulpanwi Gyeranjjim Dongyeongsang Dae-bak!* [EatYourKimchi.com Simon-Martina... 'The steamed egg on a grill video was the best!']. Donga Ilbo. <https://www.donga.com/news/article/all/20110215/34845295/1>
- Jeong, J., & Cho Y. (2020). Banal misogyny: Inventing the myth of "Women Cannot Drive" and its online hate speech in South Korea. In P. Hall, M. Kang, M. Rivé-Lasan, & W. Kim (Eds.), *Beyond hate and fear: Hate speech in Asia and Europe* (pp. 43-58). Routledge.
- Jerslev, A. (2016). In the time of the microcelebrity: Celebification and the YouTuber Zoella. *International Journal of Communication*, 10, S233-S251. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/5078/1822>
- Jin, D. Y., & Yoon, K. (2016). The social mediascape of transnational Korean pop culture: Hallyu 2.0 as spreadable media practice. *New Media & Society*, 18(7), 1277-1292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814554895>
- Jin, D. Y., & Yoon, T.-J. (2017). The Korean wave: Retrospect and prospect - Introduction. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 2241-2249. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/6296>
- Jung, S., & Shim, D. (2013). Social distribution: K-pop fan practices in Indonesia and the 'Gangnam Style' phenomenon. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17(5), 485-501. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877913505173>
- Kang, H. (2015). Contemporary cultural diplomacy in South Korea: Explicit and implicit approaches. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 21(4), 433-447. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2015.1042473>

- Kim, A. (2014). *We live in Korea too*. Elle Korea. [https://post.naver.com/viewer/postView.nhn?volumeNo=8407079&memberNo=12504201&pageType=detail&commentGroupId=12504201&commentObjectId=8407079\\_12504201&contentsId=50434&requestQueryString=rid%3D2033%26contents\\_id%3D50434](https://post.naver.com/viewer/postView.nhn?volumeNo=8407079&memberNo=12504201&pageType=detail&commentGroupId=12504201&commentObjectId=8407079_12504201&contentsId=50434&requestQueryString=rid%3D2033%26contents_id%3D50434)
- Kim, B. (2013). A study on the Western residents' daily lives and the differentiation of their perception on Korean culture in the period of port opening. *Yeoksagyoyuk*, 125, 1-35.
- Kim, B. & Cho, Y. (2021). A study on banal racism in South Korea: Focusing on news reports on multi-cultural children. *Korean Journal of Journalism & Communication Studies*, 65(1), 71-103. <https://doi.org/10.20879/kjics.2021.65.1.071>
- Kim, J. (2012). The institutionalization of YouTube: From user-generated content to professional generated content. *Media, Culture & Society*, 34(1), 53-67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443711427199>
- Kim, J., & Kim, B.-Y. (2018). Personal media as cultural intermediaries, YouTube Channel *Korean Englishman*. *The Journal of Korean Cultural Contents*, 18(6), 50-62. <https://doi.org/10.5392/JKCA.2018.18.06.050>
- Kim, Y. (2012, September 20). *Jeonsegye Paen 30 man... Keipap Jeonpahanenun Keopeulseuta [300,000 Fans worldwide... couple celebrities spreading K-pop]*. Donga Ilbo. <https://www.donga.com/news/article/all/20120920/49537716/1>
- Lee, S.-G. (2010). Cultural intermediaries reconsidered: From mass media to on-line media. *Korean Journal of Communication and Information*, 52, 154-176.
- Lewis, R. (2020). "This is what the news won't show you": YouTube creators and the reactionary politics of micro-celebrity. *Television & New Media*, 21(2), 201-217. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1527476419879919>
- Lobato, R. (2016). The cultural logic of digital intermediaries: YouTube multichannel networks. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 22(4), 348-360. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856516641628>
- Marwick, A. E. (2015). You may know me from YouTube: (Mirco) Celebrity in social media. In P. D. Marshall & S. Redmond (Eds.), *A Companion to celebrity* (pp. 333-350). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118475089.ch18>
- Nazerali, S. (2017, October 2). *How YouTube influencers are rewriting the marketing rulebook*. Huffington Post. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-youtube-influencers-are-rewriting-the-marketing\\_b\\_59d2b250e4b03905538d17c3?ncid=engmodushpimg00000004](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-youtube-influencers-are-rewriting-the-marketing_b_59d2b250e4b03905538d17c3?ncid=engmodushpimg00000004)
- Nielsen, R. K., & Ganter, S. A. (2018). Dealing with digital intermediaries: A case study of the relations between publishers and platforms. *New Media & Society*, 20(4), 1600-1617. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1461444817701318>
- Nixon, S., & du Gay, P. (2002). Who needs cultural intermediaries? *Cultural Studies*, 16(4), 495-500. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380210139070>
- Noble, G. (2005). The discomfort of strangers: Racism, incivility and ontological security in a relaxed and comfortable nation. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 26(1), 107-120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860500074128>
- O'Connor, J. (2015). Intermediaries and imaginaries in the cultural and creative industries. *Regional Studies*, 49(3), 374-387. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2012.748982>
- Oh, D. C. (2017). K-Pop fans react: Hybridity and the white celebrity-fan on YouTube. *International Journal of Communication*, 11,

- 2270-2287.  
<https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/6307/2049>
- Oh, D. C., & Oh, C. (2017). Vlogging white privilege abroad: Eat your Kimchi's eating and spitting out of the Korean other on YouTube. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 10(4), 696-711.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/cccr.12180>
- Park, J. (2002). Land of the morning calm, land of the rising sun: The East Asia travel writings of Isabella Bird and George Curzon. *Modern Asian Studies*, 36(3), 513-534.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X02003013>
- Park, J. (2007). A study of historical stereotypes: Images of Chosun by E. J. Oppert and P. G. von Moellendorff in times of occupancy of western countries. *Koreanisch-Deutsche Gesellschaft Fuer Sozialwissenschaften*, 17(1), 351-380.
- Piper, N. (2015). Jamie Oliver and cultural intermediation. *Food, Culture & Society*, 18(2), 245-264.  
<https://doi.org/10.2752/175174415X14180391604288>
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.
- Schwak, J. (2018). All the world's a stage: Promotional politics and branded identities in Asia. *Asian Studies Review*, 42(4), 648-661.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2018.1509299>
- Stawski, S. (2011a). *TLDR Thursdays*. EYK. Retrieved August 10, 2020.  
<https://www.eatyourkimchi.com/tldr-thursdays>
- Stawski, S. (2011b). *Crazy driving and line butting*. EYK. Retrieved August 13, 2020.  
<https://www.eatyourkimchi.com/crazy-driving-line-butting>
- Stawski, S. (2011c). *Age differences in Korea*. EYK. Retrieved August 10, 2020.  
<https://www.eatyourkimchi.com/age-differences-in-korea>
- Stawski, S. (2012). *Why we hate the driving in Korea*. EYK. Retrieved August 10, 2020.  
<https://www.eatyourkimchi.com/driving-in-korea>
- Stawski, S. (2014a). *How Korea has changed since we came here*. EYK. Retrieved August 13, 2020.  
<https://www.eatyourkimchi.com/how-korea-has-changed>
- Stawski, S. (2014b). *TL;DR- living with parents... forever*. EYK. Retrieved August 13, 2020.  
<https://www.eatyourkimchi.com/living-with-parents-forever>
- Stawski, S. & Stawski, M. (2011a). *About*. EYK. Retrieved August 13, 2020.  
<https://www.eatyourkimchi.com/about>
- Stawski, S., & Stawski, M. (2011b). *TL;DR Thursdays!* Retrieved August 10, 2020.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INOLd592u48>
- Stawski, S., & Stawski, M. (2011c). *Crazy driving and line butting in korea*. Retrieved August 13, 2020.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXsVlzGXAg4>
- Stawski, S., & Stawski, M. (2011d) *Korean vs. North American beauty standards*. Retrieved August 13, 2020.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7zW9KjSzOQ>
- Stawski, S., & Stawski, M. (2011e). *Five things you should not do in Korea*. Retrieved August 14, 2020.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWYzAi-qSU0>
- Stawski, S., & Stawski, M. (2012). *TL;DR - Bullying in South Korea*. Retrieved August 10, 2020.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gj8xA0eF\\_-I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gj8xA0eF_-I)
- Stawski, S. & Stawski, M. (2013). *Sexism in Korea*. EYK. Retrieved August 13, 2020.  
<https://www.eatyourkimchi.com/sexism-in-korea>
- Stawski, S., & Stawski, M. (2014). *How Korea has changed, you Youngins!* Retrieved August 13, 2020.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KskbnmYlxcE>

- Stawski, S., & Stawski, M. (2015). *What surprises us about Japan and South Korea*. Retrieved August 13, 2020.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vi6H2EK34OY>
- Stawski, S., & Stawski, M. (2016). *Japan or Korea: Did we make the right choice?* Retrieved August 13, 2020.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXerN0feQFs>
- Tikhonov, V. (2016). Social Darwinism as history and reality: “Competition” and “the weak” in early twentieth-century Korea. *Critical Asian Studies*, 48(3), 315-337.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2016.1189839>
- van Dijck, J. (2009). Users like you? Theorizing agency in user-generated content. *Media, Culture & Society*, 31(1), 41-58.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443708098245>
- Yoon, K. (2021). Micro-celebrities from the North: Young North Korean defectors’ vlogging on YouTube. *First Monday*, 26(7).  
<https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i7.11565>