

Special Issue: Past, Present, and Future of the Korean Wave (Hallyu)

K-Pop Diaspora and the Paradox of Transnational K-Pop Foreigner K-Pop Idols and the Exploitation of Race and Gender by the Korean Media

Jina Lee^{ID}

Department of Radio-
Television-Film, The University
of Texas at Austin

Corresponding to

Jina Lee

Department of Radio-
Television-Film, The University
of Texas at Austin, 2504 Whitis
Ave. Stop A0800, Austin, TX.
78712, USA.

Email: jina.lee@utexas.edu

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest
was reported by the author.

Received

28 Jul 2024

Revised

18 Dec 2024

Accepted

19 Dec 2024

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to reveal the paradox of K-pop by looking at foreigner (*oe-gug-in*) K-pop idols. The paradox is that although K-pop strives to reach the global, some elements remain strictly national, one of which is the expectations toward the ethnicity of the K-pop idols. This paper argues that the experiences of *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols, and especially female idols, are colonizing because the Korean media exploit their foreignness and manufactures it into a spectacle. This is part of the long tradition of Korean media reinforcing Korea's national project that strengthens the cultural and ethnic superiority of Koreanness. Thus, this paper argues that *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols are not simply immigrants but subjects of a K-pop diaspora. With an emphasis on race and gender, this paper conducted textual analysis on a compilation video of female *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols that appeared in the famous Korean television program *Knowing Brothers*. This paper analyzed that female *oe-gug-in* idols are infantilized, silenced, exoticized, and fetishized by the Korean media, and ultimately othered as foreigners. This paper concludes that acknowledging *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols as subjects of diaspora will help understand the dark sides of K-pop that try to hide under glamor and entertainment.

KEYWORDS

K-pop, diaspora, foreigner K-pop idols, race, gender, Korean media

K-pop is a unique media text in that, unlike the direct interpretation of the term, it does not just simply mean Korean (K-) popular music (Pop). K-pop is a subgenre within the larger Korean popular music genre called *kayo*, which is the “popular music genre created under Japanese and American influence” (Oh & Lee, 2014, p. 78) and the equivalent of the English word “pop” or “popular music.” The term K-pop was coined in the late 2000s and early 2010s to specifically describe the popular music genre that first emerged in the 1990s, where

idol groups produced songs that usually targeted the youth and built strong fandoms. The debut of the first hip-hop idol group *Seotaiji and Boys* in 1992 is believed to mark the beginning of K-pop (Oh & Lee, 2014). This means that K-pop is a relatively new genre in the long history of Korean music, and the word K-pop has gone through many different changes in such a short period, as it now addresses more than the song and dance of young idol groups.

K-pop has been steadily knocking on the doors of global markets since the early 2000s, starting from geographically close and culturally similar nations like Japan and China, then expanding to Southeast Asia and South Asia, and then to other parts of the world. When talking about K-pop, its global popularity cannot be separated from the larger *Hallyu* (the Korean Wave) phenomenon. *Hallyu* is a term coined in 1999 by a Chinese newspaper to address the popularity of Korean television dramas in China (Hong et al., 2017) and its strong influence on Chinese audiences. However, the *Hallyu* phenomenon was not limited to only including Korean television series. Over time, the *Hallyu* phenomenon expanded its scope and changed into many different forms. For example, it is understood that “[Hallyu] quickly jumped up into the maturity stage of Hallyu 4.0 (K-style), [thanks to] Hallyu 2.0 (K-pop music) and Hallyu 3.0 (K-culture)” (Kim, 2015, p. 157). In other words, there is a longer history of Korean cultural texts traveling outside the national boundary of Korea before K-pop started to become globally popular and influential.

Starting with the singer Psy and his song *Gangnam Style*, Korean pop music has been leaving a significant impression on the world since 2012, and the current presence of K-pop is gaining more and more recognition in pop music environments outside Korea. This is due to the success of singers like BTS and BLACKPINK, the development of digital media technologies that make the travel of media texts easier, and the larger *Hallyu* phenomenon that is spreading the

popularity of many things Korean to the world, such as TV series, Korean food, and beauty products. Currently, K-pop is one of the most popular pop music genres from non-Western or non-English contexts that is competing in the American pop music industry. Although the starting point of this genre is Korea, K-pop is a media text that is transcending the ethnic, cultural, musical, stylistic, technical, economic, and linguistic borders of Korea. In other words, the letter K in K-pop is no longer limited to national or ethnic elements related to Korea. Rather, it is a combination of the marketing strategies of the Korean popular music industry, its production system, its unique aesthetics and visuals, its hybrid and distinctive sound, and so much more. Thus, there arises the need to view K-pop as a global or transnational media text.

Acknowledging K-pop as a text that freely travels across and beyond many different boundaries related to Korea helps us position K-pop as a unique media text that creates new meanings that are not necessarily related to Korea in any way while interacting with diverse audiences around the world. Also, Koreans are no longer the majority of K-pop consumers, making it harder to constrain K-pop in Korean contexts. However, one element that strictly remains “Korean,” or within the local, cultural, or national boundaries of Korea, is the emphasis on or expectations toward the ethnicity, race, or nationality of the K-pop idols. That is why this paper aims to focus on *oe-gug-in* (외국인; foreigner) K-pop idols. Although *oe-gug-in* (foreigner) idols are not under the main spotlight in the current research on K-pop, they are constructed to become an essential and significant position in both Korean and global contexts, which will help us further understand the structure and inner workings of K-pop.

The goal of this paper is to reveal the paradox of K-pop. The paradox is that there are elements within K-pop that cannot seem to transcend the boundaries of Korea and Koreanness despite K-pop’s aspiration to reach global markets and

become a transnational media text. This paper argues that the most significant paradoxical element is the ethnicity of the K-pop idols. For example, Ahn (2023) interrogates “the racial politics of K-pop through a careful examination of three groups—EXP, CoCo Avenue, and KAACHI—made up primarily or entirely of non-Asian members” and explains how “these groups have faced significant pushback from fan communities and generated heated controversy about how K-pop is defined” (p. 93) because of such lack of Korean members. In other words, there exist clear expectations toward K-pop idol groups on the main nationality of the members. Accordingly, having any sort of connection with Korea—this connection is usually proven by making Korean members the majority in a group or having *oe-gug-in* members be well equipped with knowledge of Korean culture and language—is a must for them as well.

This paper looks at the Korean television program *Knowing Brothers* (아는 형님) and analyzes that *oe-gug-in* idols who are female undergo colonizing experiences because the Korean media exploit their foreignness and manufacture it into a spectacle. First, this paper explores the unique position of *oe-gug-ins*, which is created and fueled by the Korean media, and the Korean media’s support of pop culture nationalism. Secondly, this paper introduces the idea of the K-pop diaspora and how *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols can be positioned as constructing a diasporic identity. Lastly, with an emphasis on race and gender, this paper conducts textual analysis on a compilation video of *oe-gug-in* female idols that appeared on *Knowing Brothers* to emphasize the Korean media’s tendency to exploit subjects of the K-pop diaspora, especially female idols.

The Unique Position of *Oe-gug-ins* Created by the Korean Media

Given that Korea is one of the most ethnically, culturally, and linguistically homogeneous

countries in the world, the word “foreigner” takes a unique position in the Korean context. The Korean word for “foreigner” is *oe-gug-in* (외국인), and the literal translation of the three letters is “outside” (*oe*), “country” (*gug*), and “person” (*in*). The meaning “outside” is thus important in understanding the Korean interpretation of foreigners, because the definition indicates that you are a foreigner if you are not Korean. When Koreans address Korea, they say “*uri nara*” (우리 나라), which translates to “our” (*uri*) “country” (*nara*). Korea is a country for Koreans which is made up of Koreans. The Korean language seals this nationalist border shut by defining all non-Koreans as *oe-gug-ins*.

In other words, the Korean language or culture does not leave much room for other races or ethnicities to become part of the “inside” or, in other words, part of the collective “*uri*.” Because of this homogenous nature of Korean society, Koreans are situated at the top of the racial hierarchy. All non-Koreans are automatically grouped as foreigners, people of color, or the “other.” Shin (2013) explains, “in Korea, it is not unusual to express one’s pride and one’s feelings of cultural distinctiveness and superiority for being a rare example of an ethnically homogenous nation. The great majority of Koreans would agree that their society is defined by a unique ‘Korean’ identity—an identity based on a sense of shared bloodline and common ancestry—and feel proud of the racial purity and ethnic homogeneity of their nation” (p. 369). Thus, the most important context in analyzing *oe-gug-ins* in the Korean context is that there exists a clear racial hierarchy and racism within Korea, where being Korean is the default identity that predominates Western Whiteness. By “predominate,” this paper refers to how “being Korean” is the basic, fundamental, and foundational identity in the Korean context, compared to the common practice of viewing Whiteness as the base identity in Western contexts or the most other parts of the world.

Oe-gug-ins, the Korean Media, and Pop Culture Nationalism

This pride in being an ethnically and racially homogenous nation is produced and reproduced constantly from the production side of Korean cultural products. Fedorenko (2017) explains how “Hallyu celebrities are automatically recruited to represent their motherland, to the world and to South Korea itself [and their] transnational popularity is to be spontaneously instrumentalized for pursuing national geopolitical and economic ambitions. Transnational Hallyu celebrities are formally and informally recruited as Korea’s ‘promoters’... [and] in contrast, celebrities who lack patriotism are punished” (p. 506). Lyan (2019) even addresses the idea of “fan nationalism,” and how this gets “fueled by the increasing popularity of Korean popular culture... [and] since the 2000s, [international] fans have joined and even replaced ethnic [Korean fans] in performing nationalism beyond Korea’s borders” (p. 3765). This shows how strongly the production side of Korean cultural products hails the idea of having pride in Korea, and this belief and the set of actions that reinforce this belief even extends to international fans.

Then, the important question becomes, how does this kind of pop culture nationalism operate toward *oe-gug-in* celebrities in Korea? For example, Lee and Abidin (2022) look into *oe-gug-in* influencers on YouTube in Korea and how this kind of content “prominently features predominantly White-presenting, non-Korean influencers who often adopt nationalist tones to endorse the excellence of Korean culture” (p. 542). The authors highlight how “Korea’s colonial history and the resultant racial-ethnic system are encapsulated in its unique ethnocentric nationalism, which has been a key driver in the construction and mobilization of Korean society since the 19th century” (p. 543-4). They explain that the *oe-gug-ins* that receive the opportunity to become a part of the collective “*uri*” are “those

whose Otherness is visually attractive and appear to be [*oe-gug-in*] enough, and whose media personae are legible to Korean ethnic nationalism” (p. 555). The authors conclude that the *oe-gug-in* celebrity ecology prioritizes White *oe-gug-ins* and “makes invisible the People of Color [*oe-gug-in*] altogether[,] [and] it is this third group who are often left defenseless against racist bigotry and growing cultures of online hate in the country” (p. 555).

In line with the idea that *oe-gug-ins* of color are further discriminated against compared to White *oe-gug-ins* within Korea’s pop culture nationalism, Han (2015) points out that “since the 1990s, the Korean public has displayed a discriminatory attitude—often reported and displayed by the media—towards foreign students and workers. Portrayals and debate about the others have become part of media performance and reportage in Korea” (pp. 13-14). Additionally, racism becomes harder to detect “since a significant portion of migrants in South Korea share an Asian racial identity, racism in the country is not solely based on White/Color racial lines but is also deeply intertwined with linguistic attributes” (Ryu & Kang, 2024, p. 2).

This means that utilizing *oe-gug-ins* is a common practice of the Korean media and the subtle discrimination on screen is more based on whether *oe-gug-ins* have familiarity with Korea such as knowing the Korean language than based on explicit differences like color. Likewise, Ryu and Kang demonstrate that “because many migrants share a racial identity with native South Koreans, language has become a potent means of racial distinction” (p. 2). Likewise, Kim (2012) points out that “racism in the global age has evolved into subtler forms, which mobilize not only race-neutral but even positive language toward ethnic minorities... [and] the Korean media’s discourse on migrants has been overwhelmingly positive” (p. 658).

As pop culture nationalism progresses, female celebrities are also subject to further scrutiny

than their male counterparts because of the patriarchal expectations that society has toward them. Consequently, the burden put on female celebrities who are *oe-gug-ins* would be larger. For example, Ahn and Lin (2019) investigated the Taiwanese female K-pop idol Tzuyu and how she had to issue an apology to Korean, Chinese, and Taiwanese fans because she waved a Taiwanese flag. The authors point out that the Tzuyu incident “precisely captures how an idol (as a cultural commodity) is treated within the K-pop system” (p. 164) and argue that “geopolitics in the Tzuyu incident is manifested in gendered narratives, showing the uneven power relations between consumers and artists as well as between China and Taiwan, and even beyond” (p. 171).

In short, Korean media have been the major driving force in strengthening the pop culture nationalism of Korea and strengthening the Otherness of *oe-gug-ins* through actively portraying them in the media and imposing subtle nuances related to their foreignness. This context regarding the birth of K-pop, as well as the discourse of race and ethnicity regarding the position of foreigners in Korean society provides us with grounds to examine *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols, who are polysemic figures within the dynamics surrounding K-pop.

Although *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols are shaped into different meanings, are placed in different positions and different contexts, and are from many different countries, they are grouped under a single cultural identity as a “foreigner” in Korea and carry inherent markers of “foreignness” in the eyes of Korean media and Korean audiences. The reason why their foreignness becomes a source of entertainment, amusement, and pleasure is because it emphasizes the superiority of Korea and/or Koreanness. Koo and Koo (2022) sum up this idea well, by explaining that “[although] the surge in foreign member recruitments, establishment of overseas fandoms, and numerous world tours manifest that K-pop now identifies itself as a global music genre[,]

the unique aspect about K-pop is that while it looks transnational and universal, it is in essence nationalistic and state-centric” (p. 179). In other words, because “the K-pop industry’s pursuit of transnationalism does not necessarily remove the K (Koreanness) from its cultural texts but, rather, creates a nationalized mode of cultural hybridity” (Yoon, 2023, p. 397), the Korean Wave works “as a complex form of cultural nationalism and soft power” (Kim, 2022, p. 102).

The Korean government has created many departments, ministries, and policies over the years to help support the export of Korean media texts that pioneer the Hallyu phenomenon (Sohn, 2009). The Lee government and the Park government, between 2008 to 2017, implemented many policies to directly and indirectly support Hallyu at a national level (Hong et al., 2017). This means that K-pop has been a national project that fosters a sense of national pride and superiority of Korea for more than two decades. Scholars like Ahn (2018) also conducted a study on how Korean media systematically boost Koreanness over all other races, ethnicities, or cultures by being acolytes of this national project. Ahn examines black Amer-Asian and white Amer-Asian celebrities in Korea, as well as compares Ko-Asian children with children with a White parent in Korean reality TV shows to see which of the two is more preferred and favored by the Korean media. Her book shows that despite the Korean media preferring Whiteness over Blackness, ultimately, the Korean media frame Koreanness as the ideal that is expected to be reached by both types of mixedness.

As many studies like Ahn’s suggest, even though global audiences have the power and autonomy to freely interact with and appropriate K-pop at their pleasure, K-pop in the Korean context is often framed and viewed as a source of national pride because it is both an economic and political capital that helps elevate that power and status of Korea in the global context. What this means is that even though Korea may not be a dominant power in

the Western-centered global pop market, and no matter how little Koreanness matters to the global audiences who are freely enjoying K-pop, K-pop has the power to oppress, marginalize, or exploit its participants to reinforce this national project that it is part of.

Shin (2013) illustrates, “there appears to exist no inherent contradiction between nationalism and globalization [in Korea]... because globalization can be appropriated for national interests and can intensify, rather than weaken, national consciousness” (p. 384). Cho (2022) explains, “South Koreans still tend to associate modernity with the West, which is a legacy of the nation’s colonial history. Persisting with this projection outwards of the modern is a strong anti-colonial nationalist tendency that is often expressed as ethno-nationalist chauvinism” (pp. 274-275). In other words, as Korea’s ethno-nationalist chauvinism becomes mixed with the results of globalization, such as the development of globally popular Korean cultural products like K-pop, K-pop gains the power to punish anyone who goes against the national project and continues to reinforce the status quo. Thus, the colonial experiences of *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols are created because of the strong power that Koreanness as an ideology, a belief, or a national project working in tandem with the Korean media has over the production and consumption of K-pop.

To transcend the limitations of looking at K-pop in a Korean context and properly look into the identity of *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols in a global context, I take from the ideas of Stuart Hall. Hall et al. (2021) argues, “instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact... we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production,’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (p. 257). He also describes that cultural identity can be seen from two points of views, the first is thought of in terms of “one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’” (p. 258) and the second is seen as a “matter of ‘becoming’ as

well as ‘being’” (p. 260). Hall points out that the second description of cultural identity is what allows us to “properly understand the traumatic character of ‘the colonial experience’” (p. 260) as well as the workings of the inner compulsion or internalization of “otherness” by marginalized bodies themselves. I believe that the first description of cultural identity is the dominant point of view towards *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols in Korea at the moment, and the second description is more appropriate in understanding the wide range of meanings and identities that these idols are constructed into.

K-pop Diaspora and the Diasporic Identity of *Oe-gug-in* K-pop Idols

If we understand cultural identity as a matter of becoming and being, its meaning is never complete and always changes. If meaning is constantly postponed, it means that there is space and openness to make discussions. It is this very space that lies the opportunity to combine and deconstruct different meanings to examine the cultural identity of *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols. This paper thus utilizes Hall’s idea to transcend the Korean context, situate K-pop in a global context, and properly understand the cultural identity of *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols and to better understand the global dynamics of K-pop occurring at a transnational scale.

Furthermore, this paper ultimately argues that because *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols are framed and structured by the Korean media to inherently carry foreignness as an identity marker, they are not just simply foreigners or immigrants but subjects of a K-pop diaspora. Paul Gilroy (1994) mentions that “the diaspora idea invites us to move into the contested spaces between the poles that we identify roughly as the local and the global. It encourages us to proceed in ways that do not privilege the modern nation-state and its institutional order over the sub-national and supra-national networks and patterns of power,

communication, and conflict that they work to discipline, regulate, and govern” (p. 211). In other words, the diaspora idea will be helpful in properly understanding both K-pop and K-pop idols, as both can no longer be considered a local, national, and ethnic text that is bound to Korea or Koreanness.

At first glance, however, *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols might not seem to fit into the traditional types of diaspora related to exile, genocide, famine, slavery, or war that many are familiar with. James Clifford (1994), although he does agree with the attempts of many other diaspora scholars like Safran on trying to “focus attention on defining diaspora” (p. 306), argues that “we should be wary of constructing our working definition of a term like diaspora by recourse to an ‘ideal type’” (p. 306). He stresses that “the transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland” and that “a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin” (p. 306). Karim (2006), while mapping the different mediascapes of diaspora, also addresses how there are different manifestations of diasporas and how “all diasporas do not have homeland myths at the centre of their consciousness” (p. 2). Reis (2004), like Karim, also makes a distinction between the classical diasporas based on violence and force and the diasporas of the contemporary world that are more complex: “Whereas classical diasporas are to a large extent directly associated with exile, as is the case of the Jews, the Palestinians, the Africans, and the Armenians, dispersal to overseas territories need not imply a decisive break with the homeland nor is the uprooting of the diasporic group considered permanent in relation to contemporary diaspora” (p. 47).

Many other scholars have similarly argued that “notions of diaspora have to be flexible enough to move beyond ‘bounded’ and ‘unbounded’ paradigms” (Mavroudi, 2007, p. 476), and how the diaspora perspective is still a valuable

and relevant theory to look at dispersion, displacement, and migration compared to other theories that address global movements like the transnationalism theory. For instance, Tabar (2020) argues that “the transnational lens does not privilege the sending state, and ultimately results in an erroneous conceptualization of the processes occurring within the contested diasporic field, in which the sending state necessarily retains greater significance and power to influence/legitimize contested diasporic capital” (p. 468) and how this works in vice versa as transnationalism puts more emphasis on the receiving state. Ang (1993) also demonstrates, “since diasporas are fundamentally and inevitably transnational in their scope, always linking the local and the global, the here and the there, past and present, they have the potential to unsettle static, essentialist and totalitarian conceptions of “national culture” or “national identity” which are firmly rooted in geography and history” (p. 13).

Ang (1993) further argues that the goal is not to position diaspora identifications as intrinsically oppressive, but rather to highlight that “this very identification with an imagined ‘where you’re from’ is also often a sign of, and surrender to, a condition of actual marginalization in the place ‘where you’re at’” (p. 12). In other words, being fixated on keywords like “homeland” or “return” or continuing to make the distinction between “where you’re from” and “where you’re at” does not benefit the process of trying to understand the lived experiences of diasporic identities. Similarly, Tambiah (2002) mentions that “both voluntary migrants and displaced refugees who make transnational passages and are relocated in other countries may be labeled as forming diaspora communities, and the dynamics and patterns of their involvement in transnational experiences and interactions” (p. 164) should be the focus of diaspora research.

Likewise, Bhatia and Ram (2009) “call for a shift from conceptualizing acculturation and immigrant identity as an individual process

to a more broad, contextual, and political phenomenon” (p. 141) and bring in the concept of diaspora to study immigrant identities. Wofford (2016) further explains that “it was only in the latter part of the twentieth century that diaspora was expanded as a theoretical frame to describe not only communities dispersed through violence, as with the Jewish and African diasporas, but also communities, cultures, individuals, and even art objects spread globally under the conditions of late capitalism” (p. 74).

Hua (2005) also demonstrates an understanding that “diaspora is one of the most debated terms today, particularly within scholarly discussions on migration, displacement, identity, community, global movements, and cultural politics (p. 191). This paper is in line with scholars like Hua who disrupt traditional notions regarding diaspora and believe that “diasporic theory can help to explain the movements of modernity and postmodernity, from the late colonial period to the era of decolonization and into the twenty-first century” (Hua, 2005, p. 193). This paper also takes in the ideas of scholars like Reis who further argue that “diasporization and globalization can thus be considered as coeval processes, with globalization having the most impact on the contemporary phase” (Reis, 2004, p. 47).

These scholars, who talk about diaspora in the age of globalization, late capitalism, and neoliberalism, help us understand that the concept of diaspora—despite its origins coming from more fixated notions of displacement, migration, and dispersion that result from explicit and violent outside forces like war—is still relevant. Just like Ang’s (1993) idea that “we need to emphasize the irreducible specificity of diverse and heterogeneous diasporic identifications” (p. 14), in the age when people, commodities, data, information, and ideologies travel on a transnational scale, we need to acknowledge that there is a spectrum of diasporic identifications. Thus, despite the seemingly voluntary nature of these transnational movements, the conditions

of globalization create a hyperconnected environment where these movements and flows are not genuinely voluntary.

Although *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols do not seem to show a visible desire to return to their homeland or not showing any form of resistance, I believe that they undergo the colonial experience of displacement, suffering, and forced adaptation for literal and metaphorical survival as an idol. *Oe-gug-in* K-pop idols are expected to perform paradoxical and complex tasks that exploit their foreignness and are directly linked to survival. These tasks include and are not limited to: Economically and politically benefitting the Korean government and the Korean music industry, displaying their foreignness—which is their unique “charm” or characteristic compared to Korean idols—as a spectacle, displaying Koreanness, emphasizing their desire for assimilation and acceptance to Korean audiences, while at the same time also targeting the tastes and needs of global markets and audiences that do not relate to Koreanness.

Avtar Brah (1997) points out that the migrations of the 21st century “are taking place in all directions” and that “some regions previously thought of as areas of emigration are now considered as areas of immigration” (p. 175). The K-pop industry has created a new division of labor in the entertainment sector, thanks to the increase in the number of global audiences that enjoy K-pop. K-pop corporations are recruiting “trainees” from all over the world, and this new kind of labor is what lures young children and teens to be part of a K-pop diaspora and voluntarily but not truly voluntarily migrate to Korea. Moving to Korea and training to become an idol at a young age is currently the only way for non-Koreans to become a K-pop idol. This “entertainment labor” that the K-pop industry requires forces children and teens to give up everything else in their lives and contracts them as “trainees” placed under the care of entertainment corporations. These trainees, in turn, must

practice for years without the guarantee of a debut. Such unbalanced power relations, displacement, and the expectation to perform a fixed set of tasks, behaviors, and identities as a K-pop idol show the colonial and exploitative experiences that *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols have to go through even before their career truly starts.

This long stream of colonial experiences mixed with the long history of the Korean media promoting pop culture nationalism and utilizing foreigners as a spectacle is what makes *oe-gug-in* idols subjects of the K-pop diaspora. This not-truly-voluntary migration mixed with the Korean media's systematic oppression towards *oe-gug-ins* is what *oe-gug-in* idols share with other strands of diasporas in the world. I further take from Brah (1997) and his suggestion that "the concept of diaspora should be understood in terms of historically contingent 'genealogies'... as an ensemble of investigative technologies that historicise trajectories of different diasporas, and analyze their relationality across fields of social relations, subjectivity and identity" (p. 177). I believe that this is the context that *oe-gug-in* idols should be placed within.

Utilizing the diaspora idea to understand *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols will also be helpful in trying to answer some broader questions regarding media-related diasporas: How does the media create displacements of people and colonize or exploit displaced bodies? How do the audiences react to or interact with such displacements and displaced bodies? Can the displaced bodies be properly represented or heard? Investigating the similarities these idols share with other strands of diasporas will help us locate what types and sources of power affect the production and interpretation of contemporary media-related diasporas. Thus, I argue that the diaspora idea is an efficient framework to help examine different colonial subjects and their colonial experiences created in the transnational media environment of today.

Diaspora is not a bygone or irrelevant idea. It is an efficient framework for understanding

the multiple identities and positions that specific groups of people who are marginalized, oppressed, and displaced by the media have. For example, one of the goals of this paper is to uncover the misunderstandings, totalization, and marginalization that *oe-gug-in* idols are often subject to by utilizing the diaspora idea. However, this is not to say that theories of diaspora can explain every identity that is global, hybrid, polysemic, or multi-positional. Clifford (1994) also argues that "it is important to resist the tendency of diasporic identities to slide into equivalence with disaggregated, positional, performed identities in general" (p. 324).

Thus, I finally take from Lisa Lowe's emphases of heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity to properly analyze *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols as subjects of diaspora. I take from her focus on heterogeneity to "indicate the existence of differences and differential relationships within a bounded category" (Lowe, 1996, p. 67) of being grouped as an *oe-gug-in* in Korea. I take from her attention on hybridity to argue that inserting *oe-gug-in* members in a K-pop idol group by the Korean popular music industry is a byproduct of "the histories of uneven and unsynthetic power relations" (p. 67). Lastly, I take from her notion of multiplicity to assert that even though *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols are considered to have constructed a single cultural identity, "subjects located within social relations are determined by several different axes of power" (p. 67) and they possess the grounds to be analyzed as having multitudes of meanings that are never fixed.

Textual Analysis of *Oe-gug-in* Female K-pop Idols in *Knowing Brothers*

This paper focuses on a Korean television program called *Knowing Brothers* (아는 형님) by the Korean broadcasting network JTBC and more specifically a video uploaded on the program's official YouTube channel. This video (JTBC Voyage, 2023) is a compilation of the

guest appearances of famous *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols who are female. By conducting a close textual analysis of this video, this paper argues that *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols are subjects of a K-pop diaspora and analyzes the colonial experiences that *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols undergo in a Korean television program. With an emphasis on gender and race, this paper examines how “othered” or “foreign” identities in K-pop are exploited as a spectacle by the Korean media. By looking at this specifically curated video, this paper aims to provide a spotlight on *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols who reside in the margins of the research on the Hallyu phenomenon.

The show *Knowing Bros* is set in a high school classroom where the cast members are acting as “the bros” who know everything about this school. All the cast members are male celebrities who are established MCs (master of ceremonies; emcee), singers, athletes, and comedians in Korea. Their ages are between the late thirties and fifties. Each week, guest celebrities come to class posing as students visiting from another school. The cast members ask frank questions and pick on the guests to answer these questions honestly or comically. These interactions look almost as if the cast members are bullies. However, the show positions them as rowdy “bros” who look tough on the outside but are actually warm-hearted. In other words, the whole premise of the show is to comically bully the guests to talk and provide entertainment. The interesting point is that every week, we can easily witness the “bros” sometimes backing down or sometimes being constantly intimidating depending on the personality, status, or age of the different guest celebrities. Thus, this compilation video could be an effective example to showcase how K-pop idols, especially female idols who are *oe-gug-ins* are framed and interpreted by the Korean media.

This compilation video is the curated bits and pieces of the famous *oe-gug-in* female idols that appeared on *Knowing Brothers* from many different episodes across different years.

The reason behind using the word “curated” to describe the compilation video is that the broadcasting company JTBC itself compiled the bits and pieces into a convenient edited collection to be uploaded on the program’s official YouTube channel to be efficiently consumed by audiences. The fact that this compilation video even exists shows providing entertainment by promoting nationalism is a common practice of the Korean media. This also shows how utilizing foreignness to promote nationalism is a subtle but effective method that makes both parties in the production side of Korean cultural products—both the media industries and the government—happy by bringing in a good number of views and mostly positive reactions from the amused audiences.

This video features four female K-pop idol groups. LE SSERAFIM, IVE, (G)I-DLE, and BLACKPINK. LE SSERAFIM has two Korean members, two Japanese members, and one Korean-American member. IVE has 5 Korean members and one Japanese member. (G)I-DLE has two Korean members, one Chinese member, one Taiwanese member, and one Thai member. BLACKPINK has two Korean members, one Korean-New Zealander member, and one Thai member. These groups are all called *da-guk-jeok* (다국적) idol groups by the Korean media, which means that they are “multinational” idol groups where the members have different nationalities. The video also positions them as a multinational idol group and highlights the foreignness they bear.

The title of the video and the thumbnail image emphasize how the program aims to highlight the female idols’ foreignness as a source of entertainment. The title of the video is “인사 안하면 기분 나빠! 최소 편집자보다 한국어 잘함ㅋㅋ 여자아이돌 외국멤버 보다보니 어느새 K-패치 완성★” which translates to “I get mad when I don’t get a respectful bow’ These idols speak better Korean than the editor lol. K-Patch completed while watching these *oe-gug*-female idol members★” The sentence written

Figure 1. *Compilation Video of Oe-gug-in Female Idols in Knowing Bros*



Note. This is a thumbnail image of the compilation video of *oe-gug-in* female idols that appeared on *Knowing Bros*. The title of the video written in Korean and the abbreviated title written in pink and yellow on the image indicate how Korean media frame and interpret *oe-gug-in* female idols.

in pink and yellow on the thumbnail image of the video (see Figure 1) is “K-여돌 외국 멤버 찐 한국인 모먼트 50분” which translates to “K-Female Idol *Oe-gug-in* Members’ Real Korean Moment 50 Minutes.” The logo placed at the top right corner of the frame as the video plays is “한국인 특징 흡수한 K-여돌 50분” which translates to “K-Female Idols Who Absorbed the Characteristics of Koreans 50 Minutes.” All three sentences used to describe the contents of the video and give hints to the audiences about what to expect from it imply that the foreignness of the *oe-gug-in* idols in this group is what creates the spectacle.

This paper analyzes that the program situates *oe-gug-in* female idols in three different positions that highlight, extract, and exploit their foreignness. These three positions, in turn, create three different sources of humor and entertainment.

First of all, the program infantilizes the *oe-gug-in* female idols, which belittles their voices as young and naive. This, in turn, positions them as subalterns, in the words of Gayatri Spivak, and creates unequal interpersonal relationships and unbalanced social relations between them and the program’s cast members who are established celebrities with longer careers. This unequal social dynamic creates humor as the cast coerces and intimidates the idols based on age, rank, and status, and further silences them. Secondly, the program exoticizes and fetishizes the culture or country that the idols are from. The connotations of exoticization and fetishization can be seen in the content of the questions that the cast asks the idols, which becomes the source of entertainment to the audiences. Lastly, the program ultimately positions the idols as “the other” as opposed to “Korean” K-pop idols. Both the cast and

the audiences expect the idols to react to the exoticizing and fetishizing questions in a way that displays their gratitude towards the Koreanness they gained over the years. The idols' reactions center around the desire to be accepted into the borders of Koreanness, and this is what becomes a source of pleasure for audiences.

Foreignness as Spectacle

Infantilization and Silencing

The first method utilized by the Korean media to create spectacle through exploiting the foreignness of *oe-gug-ins* is infantilizing the female *oe-gug-in* idols. In the video, we can repeatedly see cases where the *oe-gug-in* female idols are intimidated into accepting the situation or context created for them by the cast members. Similar forms of coercion into acceptance, intimidation into understanding, and bullying into tolerance happen repeatedly to all four groups. During this intimidation process, infantilization happens as the cast members belittle the idols' voices as young and naive, and create contexts or discourses for them to blindly follow and agree on. This kind of infantilization builds a clear hierarchical relationship and uneven social relations between the idols and the cast members of the program. This framing justifies the cast members coercing these idols to listen to them, answer their questions, and do what they are asking. Although these idols are actively speaking and are forced to speak continuously, what they are speaking are answers created for them or expected from them by others. Infantilization, thus, ultimately silences them. The helplessness of the idols as they are unable to speak or defend for themselves creates humor, and this humor helps audiences identify with the cast members as they find entertainment in making fun of the idols together.

In (00:33) we see LE SSERAFIM's Japanese member Sakura being asked by the comedian Hodong Kang to choose which clique she wants to be part of. The cast members put her

in a position to choose between the two most famous comedians in Korea, and the choice is already made because it is either Kang or his rival comedian Jaeseok Yoo. Sakura never had a choice here and her job is to choose to be in the Kang-line instead of the Yoo-line. Similar forms of coercion and acceptance, intimidation and understanding, bullying and tolerance based on higher age and social rank can be seen repeatedly. From (37:25) we see (G)I-DLE's Thai member Minnie talking about the group's concert in Bangkok. All of a sudden, one cast member shouts and asks why she has not invited them to the Bangkok concert. Minnie is taken aback but replies that she will invite them despite accusations of not being truthful about the invite. From (44:53), BLACKPINK's Thai member Lisa is talking about her favorite K-drama and her favorite actor Gong Yoo. The cast members ask why she likes Gong Yoo so much and accuse her of liking Gong Yoo better than all seven of them. They tell her to think of a situation where she has to bring one person out of the seven cast members to Thailand with her. Again, she has no choice but to choose between the seven despite addressing her favorite actor. Her preference does not matter and is easily neglected.

The cast members and the idols already have an unequal relationship due to the framing of the program that the cast members are the "bros" who know everything and the guests are just visiting students. The cast members' established status in Korea and older age easily allows them to be coercive bullies without liability. The fact that they are older established males interacting with younger women with shorter careers easily strengthens this unbalanced social relationship, and the fact that these young women are *oe-gug-ins* easily feeds back into the imbalance. In other words, the foreignness and the gender of these idols are further utilized as tools to reinforce this inequality.

Exoticization and Fetishization Leading to Othering

The second and last technique of the Korean media creating spectacle by utilizing female *oe-gug-in* idols' foreignness can be found in the content of the questions asked to them and how they react or are expected to react to these questions when answering them. Since the questions are being asked under the premise that these idols are "foreigners" and aim to highlight their foreignness to use as a source of entertainment, the humor that consecutively arises from the reactions and answers of the idols are grounded in both the idols' lack of familiarity and high levels of familiarity with Korean culture and society.

In (14:12) we see Kazuha, another Japanese member in LE SSERAFIM, being asked what was the most interesting thing about Korea. From (20:05) we see Rei, the Japanese member in IVE, being asked when she came to Korea and what is the most difficult part about the Korean language. In (37:37) and (44:03) we see repeated compliments on BLACKPINK Lisa's Korean skills. We also see the cast members asking how she learned to speak Korean so well and asking her for study tips. Asking *oe-gug-in* idols about what they like about Korea, how they learned the Korean language, and other questions that center around their reception of Korea and Koreanness seems almost obsessive. We can also see that the idols get rewarded with compliments if they show familiarity with Korea or Koreanness. From (09:50) LE SSERAFIM's Sakura is praised by the cast members for being able to eat some intense, or "difficult" in the words of the cast, Korean seafood cuisines like *nak-ji tang-tang-e* (raw small octopus with sesame oil) and *gae-bul* (spoon worm sashimi). From (38:54), we see the cast praising BLACKPINK's Lisa that she is almost like a Korean, as the subtitles flash "언어 구사하는 이미 한국인," which translates to "Her language level already makes her a Korean." In turn, Lisa expresses thanks to the cast for approving her Korean speaking skills.

As the program focuses on emphasizing the superiority or positive aspects of Koreanness when interacting with these idols, at the same time, they exoticize and fetishize the countries that the *oe-gug-in* idols are from. In (18:20) we see the cast asking IVE's Rei about her hometown Nagoya in Japan and making fun of Japanese, by speaking in broken Japanese or a comedic mixture of Korean and Japanese. From (37:00) we see the cast asking (G)I-DLE's Minnie if Thai people really do eat food like Tom Yam soup at home. Asking what kind of food Thai people eat at home and being surprised that Thai food like mango rice which is also consumed in Korea is actually an everyday meal in Thai shows how Thai people and food are viewed as exotic and foreign in Korea. From (38:24) we see the cast trying to boast to BLACKPINK's Lisa that they have close relations with Thai, in order to become close with Lisa. However, their efforts in intimacy are shown in forms of speaking to Lisa by mimicking Thai language or speaking in broken English with a Thai accent.

From this example, we can see that exoticization and fetishization happens in two ways by the Korean media. The program naturalizes the idea that *oe-gug-in* idols must adapt to Korea and have proficiency in performing Koreanness. However, at the same time, it highlights the foreignness and exoticness of the country or culture that the idols are from, drawing an invisible line. This brings up the last technique of Korean media utilizing foreignness as a spectacle. By naturalizing the idea that Koreanness is the best and highlighting any foreignness it can sense, the program ultimately positions the *oe-gug-in* female idols as "the other" as opposed to "Korean" K-pop idols.

The repeated exoticization and fetishization ultimately alienate the *oe-gug-in* idols and further marginalize the *oe-gug-in* idols who are females. Clifford (1994) points out that "diasporic experiences are always gendered. But there is a tendency for theoretical accounts of diasporas and diaspora cultures to hide this fact, to talk of

travel and displacement in unmarked ways, thus normalizing male experiences” (p. 313). In other words, it should be acknowledged that there exists a hierarchy among subjects of diaspora that both the native culture and the diaspora culture try to hide, neglect, or ignore. During this process, women of color are usually subject to double marginalization because of their gender and race. In other words, their foreignness becomes easier to exploit because of patriarchal or social norms expected towards women. Likewise, *oe-gug-in* female K-pop idols in Korea are marginalized twice in terms of race and gender as well as being disrespected or devalued for their young age and short career. This kind of marginalization, neglect, and othering performed by the Korean media denies the female *oe-gug-in* idols a chance of assimilation or adaptation into the borders of Koreanness. It also further hinders these idols from being viewed as something more than a “foreigner” in real life.

The othering of *oe-gug-in* idols and especially *oe-gug-in* idols who are female in Korean context allows us to detect the Korean media’s tendency to apply a “border system’ that regulates which bodies have access to which types of power and permanence inside the nation” (Rivera & Marciniak, 2014, p. 8). Following the national project of boosting Koreanness, the Korean media have a long tradition of consuming *oe-gug-ins* and their foreignness as spectacle, with television programs that date back 20 years like “미녀들의 수다” (2006-2010), which literally translates to “Gossip with the Beauties,” “비정상회담” (Non Summit, 2014-2017), which translates to “Abnormal Summit,” *어서와~ 한국은 처음이지?* (2017-), which means “Welcome~ Is it your first time in Korea?” and more recently a K-pop *oe-gug-in* show called “유학소녀” (2019), which translates to “Study Abroad Girls.” All of these shows highlight the foreignness of *oe-gug-ins* living in Korea, and their foreignness becomes the essential source in creating entertainment as well as creating a sense of Korea’s cultural and racial

superiority. The compilation video by Knowing Brothers is a part of this long tradition as well.

As Korean media repeatedly consumes *oe-gug-ins* in similar formats, structures, and with similar intentions, a question arises. We can easily see the media praising *oe-gug-ins* for being “almost” Korean. However, “how long does it take [them] to become ‘indigenous’?” (Clifford, 1994, p. 309) or in other words, “Can they really be Korean?” The answer is that they cannot.

With this answer, another question arises: Can *oe-gug-ins* have an authentic or more autonomous position in the Korean media environment? Higbee (2013), when addressing the Maghrebi-French cinema, which are films made in France by immigrant filmmakers from Northwest Africa, argues that these films are not simply diasporic media but texts that aim for the mainstream. He points out that “the mainstream is the terrain in which Maghrebi-French and North African emigre filmmakers can most directly challenge the political and socio-cultural influence of the dominant societal norm” (p. 59). However, it seems like there is little possibility for *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols to aim for the mainstream, let alone assert that their identity be addressed accordingly, as they are already viewed as residing in the mainstream music scene.

This is partly because K-pop itself is currently on the task to win more presence in the Western-English-dominated global pop culture terrain. *Oe-gug-in* idols and their foreignness are exploited as a clockwork piece in the larger machinery under the collective goal of K-pop aiming for the mainstream: the global pop music market. These idols currently seem to have no visible means to independently produce meanings according to their will, no visible communities of solidarity, or any sort of collective presence that could result in resistance, independence, or any sort of autonomy. It seems like they are accepting the single cultural identity given to them by the Korean media with the goals of assimilation, adaptation, and entering the borders of Koreanness. Thanks to decades’

worth of grouping all non-Koreans under a single identity as a “foreigner” and considering them as people of color, the otherness of foreigners becomes internalized in the minds of not only the audiences but also in the minds of *oe-gug-in* celebrities working in Korea. This two-way internalization denies the female *oe-gug-in* idols a chance of assimilation or adaptation into the borders of being one of us and also further hinders these idols from being viewed as something more than a “foreigner.” Again, that is why viewing *oe-gug-in* female idols as subjects of a K-pop diaspora is sensitizing. It helps us acknowledge that the experience they go through and the responsibilities they are bestowed upon are colonizing and oppressive. It also nudges us to identify that there are multitudes of meanings other than the single cultural identity of “foreigners” constructed for and given to them by the Korean media.

Conclusion

To sum up, this paper argues that *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols are subjects of a K-pop diaspora by examining the colonial experiences that *oe-gug-in* female K-pop idols undergo in Korean media. This paper looks at the television program *Knowing Brothers* and the compilation video of the *oe-gug-in* female idols that appeared on the program to show that Korean media utilize three subtle strategies of discrimination that position Koreanness as the superior identity or an ideal that should be reached and consequently frame *oe-gug-ins* as having a singular cultural identity of a “foreigner.” This paper emphasizes that *oe-gug-in* idols who are female go through double or triple marginalization based on their race, gender, age, career length, status or rank by examining the social relationships shown on the screen with other Korean celebrities on *Knowing Brothers*, the questions being asked to them by these Korean celebrities, and the idols’ answers or reactions to the said questions.

Moreover, the obsession with these idols’ foreignness seen in the program helps show the contradictory identity politics in Korean media and how *oe-gug-in* idols are victims of such identity politics. That is, *oe-gug-in* idols must display foreignness but at the same time are responsible for displaying proficiency in Koreanness. To successfully achieve this contradictory status, Korean media manufacture the foreignness of *oe-gug-ins* into a spectacle that generates humor, entertainment, and a sense of racial and cultural superiority to Korean audiences. This colonizing and exploitative manufacturing process imposes a certain set of tasks, identities, and behaviors onto *oe-gug-in* idols that prioritize Koreanness over other characteristics, ideologies, or beliefs. As a result, female idols are infantilized, silenced, exoticized, and fetishized.

All of this feeds back into the loop of K-pop being a national project that celebrates Koreanness, which, in turn, strengthens the continuous cycle that reinforces the ideology that having a Korean nationality or identifying with Korea is a necessity that provides the authenticity of being a K-pop idol. Additionally, the hard workings of the Korean media continue to naturalize the idea that there is an “us” and “them” dichotomy where foreigners can never be one of us. However, this is not to say that the Korean media and the K-pop industry have no agency and are blind acolytes of the Korean government. In fact, what makes the idea of the K-pop diaspora controversial is the view that Korean cultural products have been pioneering the global market dominated by Western cultural products, showing potential for non-Western culture to become influential and provide a healthy alternative to global audiences. What is ironic is that Korean culture can also be subject to the same kind of infantilization, fetishization, and othering through what Lee and Cho (2021) describe as transnational cultural intermediaries performing banal Orientalism, an example of which is

Western YouTubers living in Korea creating videos that translate Korea to the rest of the world in stereotypical and problematic ways.

In short, the colonizing and exploitative aspects of K-pop should not be underestimated despite Korea's peripheral status in the overall Western-centered world. Additionally, the lived experiences of *oe-gug-in* idols should not be extrapolated solely from their media representations and portrayals. *Oe-gug-in* idols should not be viewed as simple victims. The agency of these idols should not be neglected nor should the wide range and diversity of their lived experiences be undervalued. The goal of this paper is to acknowledge *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols as subjects of a K-pop diaspora to reveal the exploitative and colonizing aspects of K-pop, as well as pinpoint the double and triple layers of marginalization that female idols of color are subject to by the Korean media based on race and gender. Thus, this paper utilizes the diaspora framework in the hopes of challenging the dominant idea that the cultural identity of *oe-gug-in* idols is singular and fixed as a "foreigner," and suggesting that their identity is complex, never fixed, and always changing. In other words, utilizing the diaspora framework would make it possible for us to reveal the structure as well as the faults of the K-pop diaspora and gain a deeper understanding of how the cultural identities of K-pop idols are constructed by the producers of Korean pop culture, be it the media industry, the government, or the larger ideological systems that these broader structures operate within. Furthermore, critically examining the connections that the K-pop diaspora shares with other media-related diasporas could help uncover the obscure networks of power that create such displacements in the contemporary digital media environment.

Blunt (2007) mentions how "particular landscapes play a central part in mobilizing diasporic identities and attachments" (p. 690). For *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols, it is the contemporary Korean media landscape mixed with Korea's ethno-nationalist chauvinism in the age of

globalization that makes them become a part of the K-pop diaspora and mobilizes them to have a polysemic cultural identity, or, in other words, construct diasporic identities where meaning is never complete and always in production.

This study suggests that the way that *oe-gug-in* female idols and their foreignness are emphasized in Korean media shows how K-pop still remains a national project no matter how little Korea or Koreanness matters to global audiences who are freely interacting with K-pop. This paper further argues that the Korean media are gatekeepers of this national project that try to keep out *oe-gug-in* idols and other "foreign" identities while celebrating Koreanness. However, there is still much more left to investigate. One limitation of this paper is that since the textual analysis was conducted on a 48-minute video that compiled the bits and pieces of *oe-gug-in* female idols' appearances on the program, it was difficult to conduct a more detailed scene-by-scene or word-by-word textual analysis on more *oe-gug-in* female idols across multiple episodes or multiple seasons. Thus, future studies might benefit from conducting a comparative analysis with other Korean television programs featuring more *oe-gug-in* idols.

Moreover, future studies on the K-pop diaspora could explore audiences' relationships with Korean K-pop idols and compare them with the relationships they have with *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols. Gender could be further explored, such as looking into male *oe-gug-in* idols or comparing male and female *oe-gug-in* idols to reveal the specific ways in which gender plays a role while Korean media manufacture foreignness into a spectacle. Lastly, *oe-gug-in* celebrities other than K-pop idols, like actors or influencers that are famous in Korea could be investigated to reveal deeper histories regarding race in Korean media. In other words, the actual lived experiences of different *oe-gug-in* idols should be explored through interviews or oral histories to examine how pop culture nationalism affects them in real life and the

formation of their identity in their own words. This could help navigate the different goals, motivations, and desires associated with the larger Hallyu phenomenon.

In short, future research on the K-pop diaspora should aim to show that understanding *oe-gug-in* K-pop idols would help us understand the dark side of K-pop. If Korea or Koreanness is not the most significant element that affects how global audiences interact and build relationships with, and grow to like or dislike K-pop, there is all the more reason to challenge, resist, and confront the paradox of K-pop: refusing to transcend the single element that remains local and national—the nationality of the idols—while aiming for the global and the transnational.

REFERENCES

- Ahn, J. H. (2018). *Mixed-race politics and neoliberal multiculturalism in South Korean media*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ahn, J. H. (2023). K-pop without Koreans: Racial imagination and boundary making in K-pop. *International Journal of Communication*, 17, 92–111.
<https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/18461>
- Ahn, J. H., & Lin, T. W. (2019). The politics of apology: The ‘Tzuyu scandal’ and transnational dynamics of K-pop. *The International Communication Gazette*, 81(2), 158–175.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048518802947>
- Ang, I. (1993). To be or not to be Chinese: Diaspora, culture, and postmodern ethnicity. *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, 21(1), 1–17.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24491642>
- Bhatia, S., & Ram, A. (2009). Theorizing identity in transnational and diaspora cultures: A critical approach to acculturation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33(2), 140–149.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.12.004>
- Blunt, A. (2007). Cultural geographies of migration: Mobility, transnationality and diaspora. *Progress in Human Geography*, 31(5), 684–694.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132507078945>
- Brah, A. (1997). Diaspora, border and transnational identities. In *Cartography of diaspora: Contesting identities* (pp. 175–207). Routledge.
- Cho, M. (2022). BTS for BLM: K-pop, race, and transcultural fandom. *Celebrity Studies*, 13(2), 270–279.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2022.2063974>
- Clifford, J. (1994). Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology*, 9(3), 302–338.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/can.1994.9.3.02a00040>
- Fedorenko, O. (2017). Korean-wave celebrities between global capital and regional nationalisms. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 18(4), 498–517.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2017.1388070>
- Gilroy, P. (1994). *Diaspora. Paragraph*, 17(3), 207–212.
<https://doi.org/10.3366/para.1994.17.3.207>
- Hall, S., Gilroy, P., & Gilmore, R. W. (2021). Cultural identity and diaspora. In *Selected writings on race and difference* (pp. 257–271). Duke University Press.
- Han, G.-S. (2015). K-pop nationalism: Celebrities and acting blackface in the Korean media. *Continuum*, 29(1), 2–16.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2014.968522>
- Higbee, W. (2013). The (Maghrebi-)French connection: Diaspora goes mainstream. In *Post-Beur Cinema* (pp. 26–60).
<https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748640041.003.0002>
- Hong, S., Park, D., & Park, S. (2017). Knowledge network analysis on Hallyu research. *Korean Journal of Journalism & Communication Studies*, 61(6), 318–353.

- <https://doi.org/10.20879/kjcs.2017.61.6.010>
Hua, A. (2005). Diaspora and cultural memory. In V. Agnew (Ed.), *Diaspora, memory, and identity: A search for home* (pp. 191–208). University of Toronto Press.
<https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442673878-012>
- JTBC Voyage. (2023, June 23). (50분) “인사 안하면 기분 나빠” 최소 편집자보다 한국어 잘 함 ㅋㅋ 여자아이돌 외국팬 보다보니 어느새 K-패치 완성★ | 아는형님 | JTBC 230429 방송 외. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsxKv_6SkKI&t=2311s
- Karim, K. H. (2006). Mapping diasporic mediascapes. In *The media of diaspora* (pp. 1–17). Routledge.
- Kim, B. (2015). Past, present and future of Hallyu (Korean wave). *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 5(5), 154–160.
- Kim, S. (2012). Racism in the global era: Analysis of Korean media discourse around migrants, 1990–2009. *Discourse & Society*, 23(6), 657–678.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926512455381>
- Kim, Y. (2022). Soft power and cultural nationalism: Globalization of the Korean wave. In Y. Kim (Ed.), *Media in Asia: Global, digital, gendered, and mobile* (pp. 93–106). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003130628-7>
- Koo, J. M., & Koo, H. M. (2022). K-pop from local to global: A study on cultural nationalism in Korean pop culture. *The Columbia Journal of Asia*, 1(1), 175–187.
<https://doi.org/10.52214/cjavi11.9355>
- Lee, J., & Abidin, C. (2022). Oegugin influencers and pop nationalism through government campaigns: Regulating foreign-nationals in the South Korean YouTube ecology. *Policy and Internet*, 14(4), 541–557.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.319>
- Lee, M., & Cho, Y. (2021). Banal orientalism on YouTube: *Eat Your Kimchi* as a new cultural intermediary and its representation of South Korea. *Asian Communication Research*, 18(2), 69–88.
<https://doi.org/10.20879/acr.2021.18.2.69>
- Lowe, L. (1996). Heterogeneity, hybridity, multiplicity: Asian American differences. In *Immigrant acts: On Asian American cultural politics* (pp. 60–83). Duke University Press.
- Lyan, I. (2019). Welcome to Korea Day: From diasporic to Hallyu fan-nationalism. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 3764–3780.
<https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/11153>
- Mavroudi, E. (2007). Diaspora as process: (De) constructing boundaries. *Geography Compass*, 1(3), 467–479.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2007.00033.x>
- Oh, I., & Lee, H.-J. (2014). K-pop in Korea: How the pop music industry is changing a post-developmental society. *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, 3(1), 72–93.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/ach.2014.0007>
- Reis, M. (2004). Theorizing diaspora: Perspectives on “classical” and “contemporary” diaspora. *International Migration*, 42(2), 41–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0020-7985.2004.00280.x>
- Rivera, A., & Marciniak, K. (2014). Border disorder. In K. Marciniak & I. Tyler (Eds.), *Immigrant protest: Politics, aesthetics, and everyday dissent* (pp. 1–17). State University of New York Press.
- Ryu, Y., & Kang, J. (2024). Racism without race in South Korea: Linguistic racism within a curriculum embracing language diversity. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2024.2416630>
- Shin, G.-W. (2013). Racist South Korea? Diverse but not tolerant of diversity. In R. Kowner & W. Demel (Eds.), *Race and racism in modern East Asia: Western and eastern constructions* (pp.

369–390). Brill.

https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004237414_016

Sohn, S. (2009). Ten years of Hallyu, the ‘Korean Wave’—What we have learned about it. *Media & Society*, 17(4), 122–153.

Tabar, P. (2020). Transnational is not diasporic: A Bourdieusian approach to the study of modern diaspora. *Journal of Sociology*, 56(3), 455–471.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783319853026>

Tambiah, S. J. (2002). Transnational movements, diaspora, and multiple modernities. In S. N. Eisenstadt (Ed.), *Multiple modernities* (pp. 163–194). Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315124872>

Wofford, T. (2016). *Whose diaspora?* *Art Journal*, 75(1), 74–79.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43967654>

Yoon, K. (2023). K-pop trans/nationalism. In A. K. Sahoo (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of Asian transnationalism* (pp. 394–405). Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003152149-36>