

Multicultural digital media practices of the 1.5-generation Korean immigrants in Canada

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NOTE

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Abstract

Drawing on qualitative interviews conducted in Toronto, Canada, this study examines how the young adult children of Korean immigrants, also known as 1.5-generation immigrants, explore multicultural senses of belonging and identity through digital media practices. This study reveals that digital media may enhance young immigrants' capabilities to choose from different forms of cultural content, yet may be subject to structural forces, such as offline ethnic segregation. That is, young immigrants may enjoy digital media as a multicultural facilitator at one point, yet question its contribution to multicultural senses of identity at another point.

Keywords

Korean immigrants, children of immigrants, 1.5 generation, digital media, Canadian multiculturalism

Introduction

Low-cost digital media has increasingly been integrated into the process of transnational migration, in which immigrants have to negotiate multicultural lives. Given that digital media has increasingly enabled the user to access, choose and appropriate different forms of media content and platforms across national and local boundaries, it is important to explore how digital media is used and perceived as a multicultural tool, especially among individuals who experience transnational migration. In particular, for the children of immigrants who grow up in multiple cultural contexts, digital media can be an important means of, and a resource for, negotiating and making sense of their multicultural identities. In this regard, this study examines how young immigrants' identity formation is articulated with their mundane digital media practices in multicultural contexts and how digital media facilitates or restricts multicultural senses of belonging and identity. Moreover, it asks how digital media influences young immigrants' understanding of, and perspective on, their multicultural lives.

This study discusses how young people of Korean immigrant families may engage with, and think about, digital media as a tool of multicultural living in Toronto, Canada. While multiculturalism has been an elusive yet influential discourse in the development of immigration

and social policies in Canada, there has been insufficient discussion about how digital media may affect young immigrants' multicultural senses of belonging and identity. Among other multicultural and multiethnic countries established by settler colonialism and immigration, Canada offers an intriguing case as it has represented itself as a multicultural nation through public policies and representations. For example, several national events held to commemorate Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017 represented Canada as a "cultural mosaic," which emphasizes a harmonious and inclusive co-existence of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Despite its oppression of its aboriginal populations and immigrants of non-European origin (Thobani, 2007), the country has been characterized by its relatively high proportion of foreign-born inhabitants (20.6 percent as of 2011), especially compared to other Western countries founded by settler colonialism (Statistics Canada, 2016). Along with the significant number of foreign-born inhabitants, the Canadian government's adoption of multiculturalism as a national policy (1971) contributed to reinforcing the representation of Canada as a multicultural nation-state. As indicated in the Canadian Multicultural Act (1988), the official discourse of Canadian multiculturalism is designed "to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada" (Government of Canada, 2017).

Despite the pervasive discourse of multiculturalism in Canada, little research has been conducted on the role of digital media in shaping immigrants' multicultural senses of belonging and identity. In this regard, this study examines how the young adult children of Korean immigrants—also known as 1.5-generation immigrants—explore multicultural senses of belonging and identity through digital media practices. In so doing, this study will reveal how migration, media and identity intersect in transnational contexts.

Literature review

Despite the rapid penetration of low-cost digital media in migrants' everyday lives, studies of young immigrants in multicultural environments have been scarce until recently. However, several recent studies have explored how the children of immigrants who grow up, and are immersed, in multicultural contexts and digital media environments engage with media for cultural adaptation during post-immigration processes. The existing studies reveal different approaches to understanding the media's role in post-immigration cultural integration. The studies can be categorized into three approaches. While some studies may engage with more than one approach, the following categorization aims to suggest the three most identifiable orientations in the existing literature.

The first group of studies, which can be referred to as the "integration approach," has examined the media's potential to facilitate young immigrants' and their families' integration into the host society (Elias and Lemish, 2008; Katz, 2010; Marchi 2017; Park, 2009; Yoon, 2016). These studies, some of which aim to examine the existing "digital divide" between different ethnic groups and/or generations within an ethnic group, address the roles of media in facilitating immigrant youth's cultural integration into the host society. According to these studies, young immigrants access media to negotiate cultural transition in the new cultural environment of the host society by engaging tactically with different media forms (Elias and Lemish, 2008; Katz, 2010). Culturally, young immigrants can integrate into not only the host society but be also reconnected with their homeland. Indeed, a few empirical studies have revealed young immigrants' media-driven connection with their homeland (Park, 2009; Yoon, 2016). In particular, Park's (2009) study of second-generation Koreans finds that the children of

immigrants explore links to their ethnic roots through media during their late adolescence or early adulthood. This process—which Park (2009) refers to as “re-acculturation” (in comparison with “acculturation,” through which identification with the host society is sought)—implies that young immigrants’ integration into the host society and the homeland is constantly negotiated through different phases of immigrant life. Overall, the integration approach considers media an integral component of immigrant life but also treats media, to some extent, as an instrumental means by which ethnic minority youth can be further integrated (or even assimilated) into the host society and/or the homeland. This approach, however, insufficiently examines digital media’s technological or cultural biases and limitations.

The second group of studies, which can be called the “disintegration approach,” focuses on the ways in which young immigrants’ use of media and identity formation are restricted in the dominant power relations implicated in media environments (Kim, 2011; Leurs, 2015; Mainsah, 2011). These studies challenge the optimism implied in the integration approach, in which digital media is considered a potential tool for narrowing the digital divide, as they address the cultural biases of digital media, which are deeply interwoven with the existing offline power relations. This stream of studies examines the socio-cultural role of digital media by addressing the indivisible link between the offline and online worlds. In particular, several empirical studies reveal that the Internet is a highly racialized and gendered space in which immigrants or ethnic minority populations can remain marginalized (Leurs, 2015). According to this approach, digital space is an outcome of “the interplay of technological decisions and the preferences of the majority users,” and, thus, it revolves around the dominant user group’s norms and perspectives (Leurs, 2015: 251). Furthermore, digital media not only resonates with offline inequality, such as racial and gender divides, but also reinforces national boundaries and nationalism. As Kim (2011) notes, migrant media users engage with diasporic nationalism in their process of coping with their marginal positions in the host society. Thus, despite its transnational mobility, digital media might not necessarily facilitate immigrant youth’s cosmopolitan sensibilities (Kim, 2011). Indeed, digital media can intensify long-distance nationalism and reaffirm immigrants’ ethnic or national identities.

The third stream of studies, which can be called the “transformation approach,” suggests that digital media plays a facilitating role in the formation of new cultural identities among ethnic minority youth and the children of immigrants (Green and Kabir, 2012; Kim and Dorner, 2014; Parker and Song, 2009). According to these studies, the marginalization of the children of immigrants can be reduced or redirected, as young people are able to exercise different individual identities of their own choice and engage in the digital media space (Kim and Dorner, 2014: 290). For the previously isolated young people of immigrant families, the Internet is a platform through which they can be empowered (Parker and Song, 2009), become “global citizens with opinions on political activity at home and abroad” (Green and Kabir, 2012), and explore new ways of being that move beyond the limitations of racialized offline worlds (Kim and Dorner, 2014). Thus, digital space is considered a potential public sphere in which ongoing offline racialization and discrimination can be challenged or reflected on (Parker and Song, 2009). While partly acknowledging the Internet’s harmful potential to increase the segregation and exclusion of already marginalized populations, the transformation approach emphasizes digital media’s transformative role of enabling immigrant youth to engage transnationally with ongoing discussions of diasporic identities.

These three approaches offer insights into the ways in which the roles of digital media in young immigrants’ transnational lives can be understood. That is, given these approaches, digital

media may facilitate transcultural integration (i.e., the integration approach), precipitate ethnic segmentation (i.e., the disintegration approach), or forge new hybrid identities (i.e., transformation approach). However, despite their contributions to the literature, further theoretical and empirical studies are needed to analyze the cultural meanings of young immigrants' media practices in the increasingly multi-mediated and multicultural conditions of everyday life. Further efforts are required to theorize how digital media may affect multicultural identities among young people of immigrant families, along with further empirical studies of young immigrants in different contexts and phases of life. In this regard, the present study proposes an alternative conceptual framework that articulates the aforementioned three approaches—integration, disintegration and transformation—as overlapping processes that occur during the young foreign-born immigrants' transition to adult life in the host society. That is, young immigrants who have access to different linguistic and cultural resources of their homeland and the host country might be oriented toward integration, disintegration and/or transformation, and in so doing develop multicultural senses of belonging and identity. In addition to the proposed theoretical framework, the empirical data presented in this paper will be a timely addition to increasing case studies on digital media practices among immigrant youth.

Research methods

To explore young immigrants' use of digital media in the context of multicultural Canada, semi-structured interviews with 22 young adult children of Korean immigrant families were conducted in Toronto, which is the most multiethnic city in Canada (approximately 50 percent of Toronto's population is foreign-born) in the summer of 2015. While the participants resided in Toronto at the time of the interviews, they did not necessarily grow up in the urban areas of Toronto. As Korean immigrant families are often relocated for job or education purposes during their post-immigration periods, some participants grew up in neighborhoods that were less multiethnic than those in urban Toronto.

The participants were recruited by snowballing through the research assistant's personal contacts and their networks at universities and Korean Canadian churches. Overall, the participants had a high level of education. With the exception of one person, who entered the workforce immediately after graduating from high school, all the participants had a university degree (n=4) or were enrolled in a university (n=17) at the time of interviews. The participants, who were aged between 19 and 29, were born in Korea and immigrated to Canada with their families during their early childhood under the age of 12. The majority of the participants completed their formal education in Canada (i.e., elementary to university), as they left Korea before the age of six. The remainder (seven participants) immigrated to Canada during their elementary school years.

Table1. Profile of participants

| Variable | Number of participants |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Gender | |
| Male | 10 |
| Female | 12 |
| Number of years in Canada | |
| 0–9 | 0 |
| 10–15 | 11 |
| 16–20 | 8 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 21 or more | 3 |
| Level of education | |
| University degree | 4 |
| University degree (in progress) | 17 |
| Secondary school diploma | 1 |

The participants are categorically 1.5-generation immigrants (*iljeomose*), which refers to immigrants who arrived in Canada as children (Kim and Duff, 2012). They are seen as possessing “a second characteristic that makes them different from first- and second-generation” (Danico, 2004: 7). On the one hand, they are distinguished from their parents, who immigrated to Canada as adults (i.e., first-generation immigrants), and on the other, they are distinguished from second-generation immigrants. The term 1.5 generation does not mean that the research participants had Korean and Canadian identities in equal measure. As most participants immigrated at an early age, they did not have particular memories of, and direct familial ties with, their homeland. Thus, their connection with the homeland seemed to be rather symbolic, especially compared with that of first-generation immigrants. All participants spoke English and Korean (in spoken languages), except for a few people who were far more fluent in English than Korean.

In the individual interviews, which were conducted in English at coffee shops in Toronto, the participants, whose names are replaced with English pseudonyms in this article, were encouraged to discuss how they thought about their cultural identities and how digital media helps them negotiate and integrate into different cultures. The semi-structured interviews were designed to focus on the participants’ reflections on the meanings of their experiences. Partly applying Seidman’s (2013) framework of the three-interview series, each interview comprised three phases: 1) talking about the participant’s general life history of growing up as a child of immigrants, 2) describing “details of the participant’s present lived experience” (Seidman, 2013: 21) in regard to his or her use of different media forms in Canada and 3) reflecting on how the participant’s media practices can be understood as a process of identity negotiation.

Digital media as a multicultural tool

Living as the children of immigrants requires constant negotiation between different cultural identities. Most research participants described Canada as “a multicultural country” (especially in comparison to their ancestral homeland Korea). For most respondents, being “multicultural” seemed to mean the co-existence of different ethnic groups without a homogeneous sense of national identity. Moreover, multiculturalism seemed to be considered a freedom of choosing and switching between different cultural and ethnic options. Arthur, a 19-year-old man who immigrated at the age of four, stated: “I feel comfortable switching between cultures, especially with the Korean community here in Canada and [specifically] in Toronto. I think I would easily adapt to different environments.” Faye, a 24-year-old student, noted: “It [i.e., being Canadian] could be like a little bit more White, a little bit more Yellow or little bit more Brown or Black at different times, and depends on where you are.” This perspective seems to mirror the principle of Canadian (official) multiculturalism, which is often expressed as a “cultural mosaic”—especially in comparison to the United States’ assimilationist tendency metaphorically depicted as a cultural “melting pot” (Thobani, 2007).

Some interviewees described their cultural identities as a matter of individual freedom of choice, as they believed they were able to choose among different cultural attributes and values. The young people in the study by and large considered their multicultural identities as an asset that can be beneficial. In particular, they considered the ability to code-switch as a benefit of being multicultural residents in Canada. For example, Nathan, a 21-year-old student who immigrated at the age of five, stated, “I don’t feel the need to belong to Canadian society because . . . Isn’t it a globalized world? I guess it’s more beneficial, and it would be a more positive experience having a second identity.” Some interviewees pointed out their abilities to switch languages and cultural orientations easily. “I am more comfortable expressing my thoughts in English but expressing my feelings in Korean,” stated Jake, a 23-year-old student who immigrated at the age of three. Several interviewees spoke and thought in the mother tongue on particular occasions. According to a few interviewees, the mother tongue was effective for expressing emotions, while English was a tool for their public communication when studying or working.

The young people considered digital media an available cultural resource that allows them to negotiate cultural identities by conveniently switching cultural codes, such as languages. Digital media appeared to contribute to a virtual environment in which the users can access different types of cultural content and, thus, express their multicultural identities. Digital media was perceived by some interviewees as a multicultural tool that allows for different identity options not bounded to ethnic dimensions. By switching cultural codes using different digital media platforms, the young Korean Canadians seemed to express their identities in a nuanced way. They used different languages and media forms without any particular pressure to conform to a dominant code. The young people in the study tended to switch between different online media outlets, depending on their needs for different social networking and information. Nicholas, a 22-year-old student who immigrated at the age of eight, succinctly compared different media outlets and their uses: “Through Reddit, I can be connected with the world. KakaoTalk is to be able to talk with family overseas. Facebook is to keep connected with friends.” While omnivorously switching between several social networking tools that are popular among young Canadians, most young people in the study frequently accessed KakaoTalk, which is predominantly used by Koreans in Korea or overseas. This particular Korea-produced messaging/group chat application was considered a type of identity badge among the young Korean Canadians. In reference to KakaoTalk, Jake, a 23-year-old student, stated, “I like the name; it’s really cute. I like that it’s Korean made. I know for sure if I want to talk to Koreans, they mostly have it. It’s exclusive, but it’s mostly inclusive to Koreans. So, I like that.” In this manner, digital media platforms allowed the users to conveniently switch between different types of content, languages and identities. As the Internet was perceived by some interviewees as a neutral, transparent and personalized platform, the technology appeared to fit the liberal multicultural ethos of choosing an identity.

However, digital media does not always facilitate multicultural senses of identity by liberating immigrants from their inherent ethnic subject positions. While celebrating overall the multicultural context of Canada, some interviewees recollected their experiences of racialization and acknowledged the limitations of digital media as a multicultural tool. Cultural code-switching via digital media outlets might not always be available, as the process is subject to several structural factors, particularly those that affect the users’ offline social lives. For example, the young Korean Canadians’ nationality (as Canadian) restricted their access to some of their ancestral homeland’s media, while their ethnicity (as Korean) sometimes limited their

engagement with the host society's social media. Above all, the young Korean Canadians' access to the homeland media was interrupted due to their identity as Canadian citizens, which made them realize their legal and cultural citizenship. Several interviewees recalled the occasions on which their access to homeland online media was restricted. Ryder, a 22-year-old student who immigrated at the age of seven, recalled how his acquisition of Canadian citizenship, which was accompanied by the loss of Korean citizenship, affected his access to the homeland media.

I was really into Hamtori [an online club on the Korean portal site Naver] and read stories . . . any Korean websites at that time asked people to put [in their] *Jumindungrokunho* [resident registration number given to Korean citizens]. After 2005 [after I acquired my Canadian citizenship and gave up my Korean citizenship], it stopped working. So, I had to find a way to manipulate the system, like using my mom's friend's number.

As implied in this example, young immigrants' mediated access to the homeland (or the host society) can be restricted by the ways in which the Internet is nationally controlled and institutionalized; thus, the interviewees' engagement with the multicultural mediascape might not always be a result of their intentional choices.

Furthermore, ethnicity seemed to be a factor restricting the young Korean Canadians' social media use. The significance of ethnicity in the young people's social media networks revealed how the seemingly multicultural mediascape might be, in practice, ethnically fragmented. The young people's peer networks tended to be organized according to ethno-racial boundaries. Regardless of the age of immigration to Canada, most interviewees had a relatively small number of non-Asian friends. For most interviewees, non-Asian friends constituted only 1–10 percent of their close friends. In particular, their university entrance was often the significant moment in which peer networks were ethnically reorganized and young people were “re-aculturated” as Canadians of color (Park, 2009). Chase, a 27-year-old pastor who immigrated at the age of one, noted that “Up until high school, I very much belonged to the Canadian culture. But in university, I got more comfortable with the Korean community.” Highly ethnicized peer networks among Korean Canadian youth were also observed in the online context, such as on Facebook, where different levels of peer networks were organized and maintained. Vivian, who immigrated to Canada at the age of two, had a large number of Korean and Asian peers in her Facebook network. Among approximately 700 Facebook friends, she identified only 30 as “friends” whom she “can just message and say ‘hey’ and talk.” Her “real friends” (her term) were predominantly Korean Canadians or Korean international students; approximately 98 percent of her “real” friends on Facebook were non-White.

In this manner, the digital mediascape among the Korean Canadians revealed the ethno-specific nature of global media environments, which has been referred to as the “sphericule” or the fragmented public sphere (Cunningham, 2001). The ethnic segregation on the Internet echoes ongoing debates about the role of the Internet in social segregation and inequalities; in the literature, while cyberspace has been praised for its potential as a liberal space that enables users to move beyond various social divides (such as race and ethnicity), the Internet has also been viewed critically as a technology that is built on, and/or exacerbates, the ideology of color blindness (Nakamura, 2010). In this regard, the multicultural potential of digital media with which immigrant youth exercise multicultural competences is not devoid of any power relations (Leurs, 2015; Nakamura, 2010).

A few interviewees' accounts of their multilingual and multicultural literacy revealed ironies in their liberal views on ethnic options as choices. They felt comfortable using Korean on particular occasions. "I am more comfortable with English, but sometimes I prefer Korean when I realize that I am not 100 percent Canadian. (. . .) There is an odd feeling that I am the sore thumb of the group . . . that I don't belong to the group," stated Travis, a 24-year-old university student who immigrated at the age of 10. He also addressed how he felt about his frequent use of KakaoTalk, with which his White peers would not be familiar.

It's not like an active discrimination. It's just that everyone constantly reminds me of my ethnic background. It's visually evident, too. The majority are European. It doesn't matter if you are technically Canadian on paper. There is a difference in what you do as a hobby. They wouldn't know Cyworld or KakaoTalk.

This account implies that code-switching was also restricted by the ways in which the young Korean Canadians were perceived by the dominant cultural order online and offline. In this regard, it is noteworthy that several young Korean immigrants in the study had tried hard to "fit in" Canadian society at some point in their post-immigration period, and in so doing, realized and reaffirmed their difference, which will be further discussed in the next section.

Digital media for negotiating difference

As discussed in the literature review section, multicultural identity and media practices have been examined as the processes of integration (into the host society's cultural norms), disintegration (with the dominant culture, often followed by reconnection with the homeland), or transformation that moves beyond the binary between the host society's dominant culture and the ethnic culture of the homeland.

During the early post-immigration period, the young people attempted to become integrated into the host society. For several interviewees, digital media played a role in their integration into the host society. In particular, the Internet helped the young people and their families to find information and become connected with local people. Arthur, a 19-year-old man in the workforce who immigrated at the age of four, stated:

The Internet very much helped me mainly with finding things that Canadians do. "What is it that Canadians like to do?" So, my parents would find extracurricular activities or programs for my sister and me to be involved in. They liked translating things and trying to understand what Canadians like to do. (. . .) I didn't know how to use the Internet or what to look for. I think that now I would know what to look for. (. . .) Back then, I didn't know how to search . . . But now I do know. If I had known those things, I would have become more Canadian.

In addition to its significant role in searching for information about "what Canadians like to do," the Internet was used by the young immigrants to socialize with local peers and learn the English language.

Without chatting online, I wouldn't know colloquial terms because they don't really use them at school. In English class, they wouldn't go "LOL." I think chat-related Internet apps and stuff really made me make friends and be comfortable with them because I was able to use the same dialect they spoke. (Travis, 24-years-old, immigrated to Canada at age 10)

However, digital media might not always facilitate integration. The Internet could potentially block cultural integration into the host society, as it mirrors or reinforces the marginalization of young Korean Canadians by their dominant White peers. When asked if any media would have helped him adjust to Canada during the post-immigration period, Jake, a 23-year-old student who grew up in a predominantly White neighborhood, pointed out the negative roles of the Internet:

I guess one main way [in which media] could have helped me [adjust to Canadian society] was through the [use of] MSN messenger with friends. But there was a lot of bullying [on MSN messenger]. I knew everyone was talking to each other but not talking to me. Really, they were not going to talk to me. I tried constantly to fit in . . . but I felt left out.

In this case, the Internet was a tool that reaffirmed the cultural boundaries between the children of immigrants and their majority peers. Digital media did not always facilitate young immigrants' integration into the host society but could affirm their sense of incomplete integration. Stella, a 21-year-old student who immigrated at the age of nine, noted, "I felt a little bit different. I didn't know how to fit in to make myself feel better." The young people's integration into the host society was often accompanied by numerous challenges and was not necessarily completed at any point in their lives.

The sense of incomplete integration into the host society that was revealed among most young Korean Canadians in the study seemed to be influenced in part by their experiences of racialization. Some interviewees recalled the occasions on which they had to realize their subject positions as the racialized others in Canada. For example, Vivian, a 23-year-old student who migrated to Canada at the age of two, stated that she still felt as if she was "only 40 percent Canadian." She recalled her childhood experiences: "There weren't a lot of Asians in my town, so whenever I walked by, some mean White people would make eye jokes. I was very shocked and asked my mom, 'Are we that different?' (. . .) I thought, 'White people don't really like Asians.'" Due in part to her experiences of racism, Vivian later attempted to explore her link to her homeland and ethnic community. Her experience of racialization implies that immigrants' identities may be defined by, and subject to, the dominant racial order in the host society, especially during their early post-immigration years. Several interviewees recollected the inferior feelings they had in their post-immigration childhood, during which they felt obliged to learn particular ways of life. Victor, a 25-year-old man in the workforce who immigrated at the age of nine, commented on his inferior feelings during his childhood and adolescence due to the color of his skin: "I always had an inferiority complex growing up because I wasn't Canadian. (. . .). I think there is an inferiority complex because I am physically a minority." Similarly, several young people in the study recollected that during their childhood, they felt "embarrassed" or even inferior and had to learn how to behave "properly," as required by the dominant cultural framework.

The young people's sense of incomplete integration into the host society, in turn, might facilitate their interest in ethnic culture and the homeland media; this has been referred to as an "inward path of integration" (Elias and Lemish, 2008) or "re-acculturation" (Park, 2009). While a few interviewees lost their interest in Korean culture during the post-immigration period, many other interviewees gradually reaffirmed their ethnic roots during their adolescence in Canada and, thus, consciously sought ways in which they could become connected with their ancestral homeland and other Korean Canadians. For the interviewees whose integration into the host

society remained incomplete, reconnection with the homeland and other Korean Canadians was an available option in their multicultural senses of belonging and identity. As most interviewees left Korea at an early stage of their lives, their reconnection with their ancestral homeland was mediated and imagined rather than tangibly experienced. While many interviewees had extended family members in Korea, they had not regularly visited Korea since their departure. They did not necessarily feel at home in Korea even if they went back there. Vivian, the aforementioned 23-year-old student, lamented, “I feel like if I go there, I wouldn’t fit in. I would hate to see myself having to spend all the money [to go to Korea] that I wouldn’t fit in. I don’t really wanna go to Korea.” As the young people in the study grew up with their first-generation immigrant parents, most of whom spoke only Korean at home and watched Korean TV, their linguistic and cultural links with Korea were undeniable. However, their connection with the ancestral home is not a corporeal and tangible one, but rather an imagined one. For some interviewees who regularly watched Korean TV programs on the Internet, Korean TV viewing helped them understand and learn about Korea. The Korean TV programs available on online streaming sites and some Korea-produced social media platforms were tools that enabled the 1.5-generation Koreans to maintain their ties with the homeland and diasporic Korean communities.

For the interviewees who sought Korean media content to be reconnected with their ancestral homeland, Korean TV viewing appeared to be an important part of their daily routines and, more importantly, their cultural identities. Connor, a 21-year-old student who immigrated at the age of six, commented on his weekly ritual of viewing Korean TV online: “It’s a big part of my identity, and it’s something that I hold dear. I usually don’t watch TV because I think it’s a time waster most times. [However,] once a week, I feel like, ‘Yo, I have to do that [watching Korean TV].’” Moreover, when asked, “What if you were not able to use the Internet freely in your early years in Canada?”, Peyton, a 21-year-old student who immigrated at the age of five, noted:

I would have been “Whitewashed,” which is kind of like my sister, *maknae* [i.e., youngest child in Korean]. Even though she often accesses the Internet, she doesn’t really hang out with Korean friends as much. At school, they [i.e., students of Korean descent] were like more “Whitewashed.” They don’t like Korean dramas and stuff. They are different.

A sense of belonging to the homeland was facilitated not only by TV (or Post-TV)¹ but also by interactive digital media forms produced in Korea, such as online games. In particular, the young Korean Canadians often used Korea-produced online games and social media to connect with diasporic Koreans. Vivian recalled the excitement that she experienced when she played Korean online games with anonymous Korean speakers: “It was cool how I could connect with Korean people and play games with them although I wasn’t close enough with them to talk.” Travis, who uses the Korea-made messaging app KakaoTalk to socialize with other Korean

¹ What the young Korean Canadians referred to as “Korean TV” during their interviews tended to mean the remediated form of Korean TV programs available on streaming sites—what Strangelove (2015) refers to as “post-TV.” Young 1.5-generation Koreans’ consumption of Korean TV seemed similar to the typical post-TV generation audience’s viewing patterns, which are highly “distracted” (via multiple outlets), mobile and networked (Strangelove, 2015: 124–144). Post-TV experiences with Korean TV did not seem to contrast completely with conventional TV viewing experiences but might rather be the remediation and renegotiation of TV viewing.

Canadians, described how KakaoTalk was different from other messaging apps or text messaging via mobile phones.

KakaoTalk was only to communicate with my Korean friends somewhere, like in Vancouver or Korea . . . By using KakaoTalk instead of texting, you can make group chats; I like that. For me, KakaoTalk automatically syncs with my phone. It's easier to find people, too. (. . .) Because there is a group chat, it allows you to make mutual-friends contacts. If you were just texting people (i.e., without using KakaoTalk), you would never come across other people. But if you create a group chat and the person happens to be there . . . there's more reasons to be there. That's how you make friends, too. It's just like a mini social hub. (Travis, a 24-year-old)

In this manner, the process of reconnection with the homeland and diasporic communities involved digital media practices through different media forms, such as social media, mobile apps, and TV streaming sites.

The young immigrants' reconnection with the homeland was not regressive retreat to the essentialized culture of the homeland. While Korean TV viewing was a component of ordinary Internet use and a way of reaffirming the link to the homeland among many young people in the study, this mundane media practice may not necessarily signify the Korean Canadians' pursuit of authentic ethnic identity.

[By viewing the Korean TV drama,] I understand how Korea is changing these days. For example, the dramas that I watched five years ago were so different from the dramas that are coming out these days. It shows changes in Korean culture. Not just style or fashion but the way people think, and what Koreans value, and feminism as well. It changes a lot. A long time ago, girls were weak, and needed someone to save them. But these days, the main-character girls are strong and professional and have their own careers. So, I could learn how Korean culture is changing.

This account by Vivian, the aforementioned 23-year-old student, implies that the young Korean Canadians' connection with the homeland via media might not simply reproduce a nostalgic imagination of the homeland as a fixed entity but rather generates up-to-date mediation of the homeland (Elias and Lemish, 2008; Robins and Aksoy, 2005). Vivian's case also resonates with Milikowski's (2000) study of Turkish TV viewing among Turkish-Dutch youth, in which young immigrants' exposure to homeland media contributed to de-mythifying the essentialized imagination of the homeland. Elias and Lemish (2008) also found that the children of immigrants enjoyed their homeland media content, especially when the content was more "global" and appealing to global youth audiences rather than projecting the "authentic" culture of the homeland.

Several young immigrants' attempts to explore de-essentialized understanding of the homeland can be considered potential processes for transformation. These transformative processes may not overtly present the emergence of hybrid identities that overcome the framework of choosing identities between the dominant culture and the homeland culture. However, it can be suggested that young immigrants engage with different ways of negotiating their in-between identities and in so doing explore transformative moments. Furthermore, the young immigrant's media practices reveal the limitations of digital media as a virtual multicultural space. Overall, for the young Korean immigrants in the study, digital media was a

multicultural tool with which they negotiated the phases and moments of integration, disintegration and transformation during their post-immigration period.

The digital utopian discourse has considered digital media as a tool for reducing inequalities and allowing the coexistence of different ethnic groups, which might resonate with the liberal ideology of multiculturalism. This discourse was also observed among some young people in the study, as they considered the Internet as a convenient tool for engaging with different cultures. However, some interviewees seemed to be aware of the restriction of digital media, and thus, to question the digital utopian perspective that celebrates the potential of digital media for liberal multiculturalism. For example, Blake, a 26-year-old teacher who immigrated at the age of four, stated, “The Internet just complicates things. It always throws ideas at you. It makes you question [things] at all times. It kind of helps you to crop your identity. On the flip side of the coin, it’s a bit confining [and] wastes mental resources.” Although the interviewees did not provide sufficiently articulate comments on why the Internet was “confining,” a few interviewees were, to some extent, aware of the restrictive nature of digital media in regard to enhancing their multicultural capabilities. They seemed to be critical of the myth of liberal multiculturalism by realizing the ongoing structure of systematic inequalities. This awareness of the restrictive roles of digital media may imply that choosing between different codes may not be a result of individual agency but may rather be conditioned by structural forces. In this manner, some young immigrants may enjoy digital media as a multicultural facilitator at one point, yet question its contribution to multicultural senses of identity at another point.

Conclusion

The children of immigrants, specifically the 1.5 generation, are inherently situated in a position that forces them to negotiate different cultural identities. Their cultural capabilities may allow them to access and adopt different cultural resources more easily than their peers in the dominant ethno-racial group (White) or their parents who are first-generation immigrants (Colombo and Rebughini, 2012). Moreover, digital media allows young immigrants to explore multicultural senses of belonging and identity. Among the various technological affordances of digital media, the increasing convergence of different communication platforms and the immediate remediation of TV media on the Internet seem to particularly contribute to the 1.5 generation’s negotiation of in-between identities. While it is increasingly important to understand how the multicultural identities of 1.5-generation youth are articulated with the emerging digital mediascape, the literature has hardly addressed how young immigrants adopt new digital media in the process of negotiating their identities between different cultures.

The young people in the study appeared to consider and appropriate digital media as a tool for facilitating multicultural senses of identities. In contrast with their parents, most of whom spoke Korean at home and preferred to watch Korean TV without substantial exposure to English language media, the 1.5-generation youth were able to choose between, or to consume both, Korean and English media content. However, being the 1.5 generation is not simply an opportunity to access different cultural and media resources. As illustrated in this study, some 1.5-generation Korean youth vacillate between the uncertain positions of multiple identities, while feeling *incompletely* Canadian at certain points of their lives.

The young immigrants’ digital media practices revealed how multicultural senses of belonging and identity may be affected by structural forces and their offline contexts. Digital media may constitute a virtual space that is not separated from offline power relations and social networks (boyd, 2014). Digital media may enhance media users’ capabilities to choose from

different forms of cultural content yet may reveal the other side of the multicultural mediascape—in particular, ethnic segmentation. While the children of immigrants consider Canada to be multicultural, the country's seemingly multicultural media environments may imply incomplete integration and disintegration for young immigrants despite their linguistic and cultural capabilities.

This study suggests that young immigrants' digital media practices concern their identity in the making. Their digital media practices and identity work may vacillate between integration (into the dominant cultural norms of the host society) and disintegration (with the host society), and signal possibilities of transformative media practices through which hybrid identities may emerge. That is, young immigrants may engage with digital media as a tool not only for switching codes or reconnection with the home, but also for realizing "new ethnicities" and new identities that fundamentally question the existing power relations and structural restrictions (Parker and Song, 2009). Given the present study's findings, it seems important to develop further a conceptual framework that articulates integration, disintegration, and transformation processes of young immigrants' digital media practices. In doing so, the children of immigrants and their multicultural senses of belonging can be better examined.

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