

Korean nationalism riding the Korean Wave: celebrities and acting blackface in the Korean media

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INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses media representations of South Korean (Korean hereafter) nationalism in the media, as many blogs and websites have hosted debates on the ways in which Korean 'idols' and celebrities have expressed allegedly discriminatory views regarding African-Americans and have 'act[ed] black'.¹ There have been expressions of explicitly and implicitly racist or overly ethnocentric attitudes towards the Other by popular media identities such as *Girls' Generation* and other idols, including 'acting black'. In fact, there have been many incidents whereby Korean *nouveau riche* nationalism (Han, 2012) has been expressed in some cases knowingly and in others unknowingly.

Koreans have at least a thirty-year history of negatively depicting Black Americans in the media without consideration for or even substantial awareness of the negative consequences.² Indeed, there may not have been any concerted malice in this. In the 1980s, Korean comedians regularly performed skits utilising Rasta wigs and with darkened faces. At the time, such performances did not attract any particular criticism. Most Koreans considered 'blackface' to be just another innocent form of comedy which held no ill will towards any ethnic group.³ However, in recent years K-Pop stars' discriminatory performances, including those with blackface, have drawn criticism from around the world. This is because K-Pop stars and celebrities have actively manifested Korean nationalism and mimicked African-Americans. What are the major popular discourses around the phenomena of both *nouveau riche* nationalism in the Korean entertainment industry, self-critiquing among Koreans themselves and by international criticisms? And what has brought the Koreans' negative depiction of African-Americans to the surface?

Racism, ethnocentrism and nationalism are distinctly different concepts. Racism often refers to discrimination against people with particular physical characteristics which are used to justify discriminatory ideas or deeds. An extreme form of racism may contend that there are different species in humankind. In this respect, the term 'race' is considered linguistically and politically problematic. Ethnocentrism accompanies a high degree of pride in the heritages of a particular ethnic group to the extent that other ethnic groups are looked down upon and considered inferior. Nationalism results from the pride of what makes up a nation state – history, culture, economy, politics, a set of values and international influence – yet, these concepts are closely linked to each other. For example, modern or symbolic racism is commonly an expression of nationalism (Due, 2011: 41). When 'we-feeling' of an

¹ See Kochhar-lindgren (2007) for 'performing blackness' on other national contexts.

² 'Three decades of blackface in Korea', *Gusts of popular feeling*, 5 March 2012, <http://populargusts.blogspot.com.au/>

³ http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/03/117_106611.html

in-group or ethnocentrism is heightened, it could turn out to be an expression of dislike of the out-group. When pride of a nation is expressed to a heightened degree it could develop to be a form of nationalism. When a vulnerable nation goes through difficult times, 'we-feeling' and national pride can help its people to endure. However, when they are exerted towards a vulnerable group, the effects could be detrimental.

Ethnocentric tendency has been prevalent throughout the world in the past and present and it is not new in Korean society. However, the level of ethnocentrism has gone beyond an 'acceptable' level and it has become explicit and more prevalent in recent years. Also the behaviour of ridiculing 'blackface' has quickly come under criticism in the context of internationalised media supported by new information and communication technologies such as *YouTube* and the Internet within Korea and beyond. Two key research questions of this paper are as follows.

Research questions:

- (1) What have been Korean and international netizens' responses (online opinions) and debates about 'acting black' in the Korean media? This question involves analysis of media representations – 'the actual and the empirical' - as will be illustrated shortly.
- (2) Why has racial discrimination surfaced and been expressed overtly through the media in recent years? In other words, what have been the underlying factors enabling the explicit expression of discrimination against Others? This question involves exploring 'the real' or 'the mechanism'.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Zacharias and Arthurs (2007) provide us with good starting points as they discuss both related insights as well as counterpoints to shed light on the cases of racial discrimination in Korea. The issue here is the way in which transnational politics of race is played out in the context of a global media (Zacharias & Arthurs, 2007). The incident they examined occurred in January 2007 when Jade Goody, a celebrity of *Big Brother*, and two other *Big Brother* inmates in the U.K. were "accused of racial bullying of Shilpa Shetty, Bollywood film star and winner of the 2007 show" (Zacharias & Arthurs, 2007, p.455). The British public distanced themselves from Goody and discarded her as "the stranger-enemy" and the real foreigner, which is Britain's reclaiming of its identity and security as a multicultural nation (Bose, 2007, p.465). This may be an indication that there are many Jade Goodys in Britain, knowingly or unknowingly. However, when a Jade Goody is singled out for her undesirable behaviour, many other Jade Goodys will distance themselves from her. I argue that this is in part what is happening to Korean society and this is what the Korean public is learning to practise in regards to the developmental stage of multiculturalism in Korea. This is because Koreans generally think that they are ethnically homogeneous and they understand multiculturalism differently from many other parts of the world (Kim, 2011). For example, when an incident of discrimination is reported in the media some Koreans might condemn the verbal and non-verbal conduct, but many of those Koreans may be unsure as to how the foreigners should be included politically, culturally and economically.

Priya Virmani (2007, p.468) notes that, through the Shilpa-Jade episode, the younger generation of British Indians construct the image of India as "beautiful, glamorous, dignified,

and morally pristine". Whilst the British public distanced themselves from the behaviour of Goody and her allies, the Indian diaspora in Britain closely identified with Shilpa, the elegant, beautiful and newly affluent, representing contemporary India. When a foreigner demonstrates an exemplary achievement or white persons or especially a celebrity figure in a popular TV program such as *Minyeodeului Suda*, Korean audiences are happy to identify with them. Even when a Korean-Afroamerican football player's life story, including his pious attitude toward his Korean mother and his love for Korea, were mediated, many Koreans emotionally and deeply identified with him. However, the media's overly critical reports about crimes involving Southeast Asian workers or temporary residents from developing countries tend to encourage and reaffirm the Korean public's negative perceptions of others. Moreover, there are K-Pop celebrities who will stimulate the negative perceptions for the sake of their own fame and entertainment. Which group of foreigners or ethnic populations the Korean public treat favourably or unfavourably seems selective.

Hegde (2007, p.457) argues that "the intersections of race and gender" cannot be unpacked without discussing the political and material reality of racism. Gies (2007, p.462) laments that punishing "celebrities who make racist remarks on a reality show to a barrage of insults and verbal abuse" is no more than a fiddle with the surface of structural inequalities that the contemporary society suffers from. In other words, Hegde (2007) and Gies (2007) argue that empiricism, dealing with what appears to be the case on the surface of the social phenomena without adequate consideration of political, economic and cultural contexts, is unable to explain satisfactorily a social phenomenon. This perspective has much in common with critical realist perspectives (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 1989; Carter, 2000). In this paper I am employing the concepts of ethnocentrism, nouveau-riche nationalism and pure-blood nationalism from a critical realist perspective as a way to address the abovementioned research questions. After presenting the research findings, I will return to further elaborate and discuss the findings on the basis of the key concepts.

METHODS

Following audiences' criticisms of two comedians' mimicking Michol, a cartoon figure of a popular TV comic, in an MBC TV show in January 2012, *allkpop* (www.allkpop.com), a K-pop loving site, hosted netizens' debate on the allegedly inappropriate performance, generating over two thousand comments within a few weeks (219,9 comments as of 10 Jan 2013).⁴ I have analysed 300 comments towards the closure of the debate. Jezebel (jezebel.com), owned by Gawker Media, is a blog catering to women's interests, under the tagline 'Celebrity, Sex, Fashion for women'. The blog generated 167 comments debating on Lee Gikwang of K-Pop group BEAST/B2ST eating some watermelon and acting black by Yuri, a member of Girls' Generation.⁵ Using NVivo9, I have coded and analysed the comments following the principles of grounded theory – open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

FINDINGS

⁴ http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/03/11/2012031100344.html;
<http://blog.naver.com/PostView.nhn?blogId=kjm5910&logNo=100154175070&parentCategoryNo=154&viewDate=¤tPage=1&listtype=0&from=postList>

⁵ <http://ohnotheydidnt.livejournal.com/66971666.html#ixzz1ntRXrQF2>

There were a few major incidents that sparked arguments against discriminatory performances in the Korean media. In 2003, Bubble Sisters, composed of four vocal female singers, made a debut. The team members did not regard themselves as beautiful as other singing groups and decided to create their own “strengths”: as vocal as some excellent African-American singers, and “ugly as African-Americans”.⁶ All the members had their hair and make-up done as African-Americans for performances. Indeed, they thought that their blackface was their selling point.⁷

The following sections are the abridged findings from the analysis of the online debates over the expression of discriminatory perspectives or acting black in the Korean media. Firstly addressed is the analysis of the netizens’ debate on the ways in which Korean celebrities mimicked the African-Americans. There are broadly two camps of the debate: (1) Acting black or blackface is simply racist and wrong; (2) Koreans are culturally unaware due to historically insufficient exposure to diverse ethnic groups. Secondly, following the analysis of netizens’ debate, I continue to explore “the real” dimension, i.e., the mechanism that produces “the empirical and actual” with reference to “acting black” in the Korean media from a realist viewpoint (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 1989; Carter, 2000).

1. Simply racist and wrong!

1.1 More than unawareness and ignorance

Those who point to Koreans’ bluntly racist attitudes maintain that the discriminatory culture has little to do with whether Koreans are culturally unaware of the problem of racial discrimination, but they choose to be deliberately discriminatory even though they are culturally aware. They expect that Koreans should know better, but rather choose to perpetuate racism (obsidian05). They argue that disrespect and being inconsiderate are at the centre of the problem. There appears to be an apparent expectation, in the globalised world with cultural flows and movement of people, that Koreans ought to be aware of inter-ethnic relations.

I don't think you can just chalk it up to unawareness in Korea ... A lot of K-Pop stars have lived in the U.S. and have been scouted here (particularly in L.A.). Not all, but a good number of K-Pop groups have at least one member who has grown up in or spent a lot of their life in the United States (Megganna, 1 Mar 2012).

K-Pop seems to maintain a large number of African-American fans. Some of them spoke or noted in the social media including YouTube that K-Pop is a modification of African-American hip hop. Although they enjoy K-Pop, they find some K-Pop performances disturbing: “Folks have been cherry picking our culture and classifying us as subhuman for decades now. Sometimes in the same breath” (introverted_innovato). The netizens argued that blackface or acting black is simply racist and not acceptable at all.

It was based on a cartoon that per se is racist and what came out was a racist joke painting their face black, huge lips and babbling... it was like watching one of those old white and black movies where

⁶ http://www.ilovepiano.com/Main_news/main_view.asp?m_id=597&flag=1&page=5&titleno=402

⁷ <http://forums.soompi.com/discussion/375453/wtf-is-up-with-k-pop-and-blackface>

black characters behaved like monkeys, unable to speak properly and looked like monsters (cristaryl giovanelli).

The netizens blamed Koreans for being ignorant, insensitive and disrespectful. This ignorance is not about 'not being aware', but more about being inconsiderate towards the others. It is suggested that, at times, the script writers and managers seem prescriptive of the celebrities' performances in order to maintain their fame in the competitive media environment, which leads to the production of awkward performances.

I would say it's writers of variety shows ... who often try to caricature other cultures ... unfortunately. It's more ignorant than malicious, IMO [in my opinion], but that's not an excuse (Hellzeeba).

1.2 Racism can't be excused by any means

Other netizens acknowledged Korean people's lack of cultural awareness, but argued that discriminatory performances cannot be excused and that there is simply no justification to replicate someone else's discriminatory performances. It was argued that someone else's not being caught after drink-driving cannot justify my own confrontation with police after drink-driving (Crono Lawlipop).

If some idiots make racial jokes, that doesn't mean others can. The point is that there is a line which has been crossed. There is a history to blackface and it's highly disrespectful. The same thing with making fun of Asian eyes (hellokaylie Lawlipop).

Despite particular socio-cultural contexts of the Korean society that the netizens would like to consider, they were not willing to concede to any discriminatory behaviour.

Perhaps black-face is seen differently in Korea, but in America, it's no laughing matter. No one should have to be accustomed to racism. I bare the same feelings when it comes to films like *White Chicks* – just because it's "funny" doesn't mean it isn't wrong or offensive (Shekinah Mulkey).

There is also a suggestion that everyone has to be vigilant and understanding in regard to managing their interactions with others. One's inability to understand the nature of the problem of blackface and a particular social context whereby discrimination of the black person is poorly understood are not acceptable either.

If you don't see anything wrong with it, then you really don't understand. And just because you can't understand why some black people and people of African descent are upset doesn't mean that this situation isn't any less wrong (Alohaducky).

There are occasional self-reflections on the quality of Korean language used in popular media such as TV and radio. One is about the use of discriminatory language. For example, many discriminatory comments were found to be problematic in the coverage of 2004 Olympics: "She has dark skin, but her rhythmic dance is beautiful in her own right".⁸ It is likely that most audiences in Korea would go past without a second thought. This may indicate that there is a strong culture of discrimination in the Korean society as such culture is commonly expressed through the mass media. An African-American shares his/her experiences of travelling to Asia as follows and it may be difficult to regard the experience as an isolated case:

As a Black person who lived in and travelled in Asia for two years, I can say Asia is EXTREMELY racist ... I would never recommend going to Korea, Taiwan or mainland China to any person of color (Loveapple).

1.3 Racial pride is embedded in the Korean culture, that is wrong and they should know

⁸ Kim, Jeong-Seop. 2004. *Kyounghyang Sinmun*. 3 Sept.

better

A blogger was offended by the common Korean notion that a black person cannot be beautiful: “I do take offense with the idea that being black disqualifies someone from being attractive – ‘Pretty for a black girl’ is pretty damning” (drewtaylormoore). Such culture may even pass down to the next generation through socialisation or lack of education on embracing the Others through school curriculum: “I met a black woman who is a teacher in Korea. She said she has been licked by students who thought she was made of chocolate” (lemonade727). It is difficult to denounce some foreigners’ lived experiences in Korea as follows:

I lived in Korea for five years ... If you go to the Samsung-run amusement park, you'll see this reinforced in the displays: their version of 'It's A Small World' features 'Africa' as a country populated by menacing, wide-eyed jungle dolls, and the sole African feature in the international displays involves a limbo artist and a man in a gorilla suit (surlyduck1).

A Canadian netizen shared his lived experiences in Korea for three years, which demonstrates a close link between ethnocentrism and racism. This also shows that when ethnocentrism or nationalism is expressed with a high degree of exclusivity, it turns out to be racially discriminatory.

I'm a white Canadian who's been living in Korea for three years and I'm still shocked by the racist shit ... against black people, but also Filipinos, Caucasians and basically anyone who isn't Korean. K-Pop stars in blackface are totally offensive to North Americans, but Koreans will still giggle it all away (Kittentits).

2. Largely cultural unawareness due to homogeneity

2.1 Cultural unawareness due to homogeneity

Similar to those who were less than forgiving the discriminatory performances in the Korean media, the views on the other camp also acknowledged the problems of discriminatory performances in the Korean media. However, they were willing to consider and empathise with Koreans’ cultural unawareness, the homogeneity of Koreans and their culture. In this context, some netizens argued that ‘acting black’ should not blindly be seen as discriminatory performance.

We can't even make white college students in the U.S. understand that it's not ok to do blackface or do their 'black person imitation', how do you explain this to an entire country full of people who will maybe run into one black person ever and IF they're lucky have a short conversation with them? (Caralain).

The following experience of an African-American touring to Korea serves as a strong case for the consideration.

RACISM WHYYYY? I love k-pop (Yaaay 2NE1!), I'm Black, and I have been to Korea. Thankfully, while I was there for two months last year I never experienced any racism. The only annoying attention I got was 'look at the foreigners!' (I was traveling with two white people and three other Asians who were clearly not Korean) ... (musicalfashioninja).

2.2 African-Americans are unfair and overreact to Koreans’ cultural unawareness

The netizen ComeOn focuses on what has been performed in the TV show. The exploration of socio-economic contexts of such performance may reveal more about the intentions of

such performances. Complaints were noted that African-Americans are unfairly over-reacting against blackface. The point is meant to be forgiving, or less critical of, Koreans.

The sad thing is black people make fun of Asians all the time. ... To be perfectly honest, people (at least in the U.S.) are most racist to Asians. ... Black people get offended way too easily when they see these kinds of things just because of their history. ... if a white person makes fun of a black person, you get death threats and get fired (fthismotherf[...].er).

Netizens defended blackface in the Korean media, saying that Korean celebrities have picked up the ideas about the 'problematic' performances from African-American skits.

A lot of them grew up listening to TLC, Snoop, Dre, etc. As a result African-American performers often perform in Korea/Asia. ... Those shows feature celebs and they do a lot of skits. It's kind of like a talk show with skits where they make fun of group members and other people (PierceTheVin).

These views provide a possible origin for why Korean celebrities act black. However, they could not justify acting black. Others also wanted to defend Koreans' acting black because Koreans have not been exposed enough to black persons or people from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, therefore they argue that blackface in the Korean media should not be seen as racism.

I teach in Korea, and have had young children try to touch my blue eyes because they thought they were fake. My students think it's funny whenever I show them a picture of a black person because they just don't see them very often in their lives (deedub).

These 'generous' netizens were again happy to allow Koreans time to learn from their mistakes over a period of time, simply blaming cultural ignorance and being sheltered.

I suspect that this will improve over time, but I do urge many people to withhold judgment of all Koreans or Asians over this stuff – there's a lot of room to grow over there, but growth is happening (Ari Schwartz).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thus far I have presented the findings from the representations of a large amount of data made of the debates on acting black in the Korean media. The netizens who are prepared to engage in this serious matter were generally concerned with popular discourses on the topic, that is the immediately observable factors, which cover the actual and empirical domains of social reality. However, some discussions, though limited, were well informed and are indicative of what the underlying socio-cultural and economic factors might be. In this section I interpret some of their viewpoints further in the broader Korean historical and societal context from a critical realist perspective.

Netizens have shared their critical observations of Koreans in terms of their prevalent ethnic prejudice. Korean prejudice seems encouraged as Koreans learn from the school curriculum, and further strengthened through socialisation from generation to generation (Park, 2002). Historical contexts facing the lives of Koreans since the start of Japanese colonialism are as follows. The harsh treatment by Japanese of Koreans created a strong animosity against the Japanese. The Korean War fought around ideological differences also caused unnecessary but real hostility among the people of Korea with the same ancestors. Koreans'

encountering with African-American soldiers has also formed negative perceptions of them. These negative encounters with the Others in the last several decades appear to have further insulated Koreans' understanding of the Others.⁹ To Koreans, the Others are not necessarily the ones who live in harmony, but a threat to be concerned about. Korean ethnocentrism, which was already strongly based on their wrongly informed pure-blood nationalism (Frankl, 2008; Kim, 2011: xiv; Yi, 2008), could not but develop a particularly rigid form of ethnic prejudice. In this process, the impact of mass media which is closely knitted to the loves of Koreans cannot be underestimated. For example, ethnic prejudice is embedded in the everyday life of Koreans, and some discriminatory remarks in the media generally go past eyes and ears of even educated Korean audiences.

In regards to the wrongly informed their pure-blood nationalism, which has further persuaded Koreans that they are mono-racial and mono-cultural, is again due to the historical pathways that Koreans have gone through at least for the last century. In that period, they had little exposure to potential inter-racial marriages or immigrants settling into the country except Japanese colonialists (Kim, 2011: 14). Also, the fact that a large number of inter-racial marriages took place some several centuries ago has remained unknown to the Korean public, especially in the last several decades. Koreans' prejudice based on pure-blood nationalism and perceived mono-cultural traditions, and cultural ignorance and insulated perspectives, mattered little and caused no particular concerns nationally and internationally since they had relatively little interactions with the Others. In fact, following the end of Japanese colonialism in 1945, only a small number of Koreans travelled overseas and a small number of foreigners travelled to Korea. It has been since the 1990s that South Korea and its people have been exposed to their interactions with the Others within and outside Korea. In the period of Korean economic affluence since the 1990s, Korean racial prejudice has clearly surfaced. Koreans have become self-aware and the Others have noticed Koreans' discriminatory performances in dealing with non-Korean ethnic populations. Koreans expressed their prejudice during their trips to Southeast Asia and China, which has frequently been reported in the Korean media.¹⁰ Koreans' mistreatment of temporary workers from developing countries in South Korea has been a common topic of current affairs in Korea. Those who are 'mistreated' verbally and non-verbally, and directly and indirectly, have started to point out Korean prejudice – the internet blogs being one platform.

Moving into the 1990s and 21st century, the Korean media reported numerous incidents of Koreans' discriminating against the Others within and outside the Korean state. In the 2000s, the whole nation was constantly reminded of the need to globalise whatever Korea does under the catch phrase of *seggyehwa* (globalisation), initiated by President Kim Young-Sam (Heo & Park, 2010). The social climate was such that the significant majority of Koreans would be aware of the need to overcome their narrowly based ethnic prejudice when

⁹ There are differing views as to whether or not Koreans were inclusive of or exclusive of foreigners. Shin (2006) argues that Koreans embraced foreigners prior to the late 19th or early 20th century. Others argue that Korean exclusionism in part results from the Mongolian invasion of Korea in the 13th century and Japan's invasion of Korea in the 16th century (Kim, 2011: xiv).

¹⁰ Park, Sang-Ki. 1990. 'Jeon segye nubineun "bukqwaihan hangukin": hwanlak chugu, gwasobi-deung chutae burineun haeoi yeohaengja galsurok neureo' (Disrespectful Koreans travelling all over the world: an increasing number of them seeking pleasure and spending spree), *Sisa Jeoneol* 4 October, <http://www.sisapress.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=35301>

dealing with the Others. Under such political regimes assisted by economic wealth, travelling overseas has become much more accessible than ever before. According to Korean government statistics, over ten million South Koreans travelled overseas per annum between 2005 and 2012. Six to ten million foreigners also entered Korea per annum for the same period.¹¹ About seven per cent of the four-year university students spent six to twelve months overseas, learning English to increase their employment prospect after graduation during the second half of the 2000s. About five per cent of middle and high school students also spent their vacation periods overseas, studying English. These travelling opportunities have led Koreans to encounter the Others and formulate or modify their perceptions of them (Ryu, n.d.).

A useful question to pose here is that whether Korean ethnic nationalism is about tribalism or nationalism, as alluded to by Kim (2011: 70). John Naisbitt (1994: 19-20) offers the following definitions:

Nationalism, which flourished from the 18th century until the end of World War II, is a belief that one's national-state is more important than international principles or individual considerations. World War II put an end to the nationalism of Italy and Germany and greatly diluted the forces of nationalism in the West. Tribalism is the belief in fidelity to one's own kind, defined by ethnicity, language, culture, religion, or in this late 20th century, profession. And this belief is flourishing.

I wish to point out that nationalism is different from tribalism, but that they are necessarily in a continuum. That is, tribalism can develop and turn out to be a form of nationalism. Thus, an extreme form of tribalism is no different from nationalism. Nonetheless, if Korean ethnic nationalism as manifested in the Korean media is closer to tribalism, this is to say that Koreans are largely culturally unaware of potential concerns and issues arising from interethnic interactions. However, I find it difficult to see Korean ethnic nationalism as a form of tribalism.

In the last several decades, there was no time when Koreans displayed their discriminatory attitudes towards Others. What, then, is the most significant change that occurred in the last few decades that has possibly brought about changes in their treatment of Others, especially those from developing countries? It is economic success that has accompanied a range of socio-cultural and political changes that provided the platforms through which Koreans exerted their discriminations towards the Others – *nouveau-riche* nationalism (Han 2012). Also neo-liberalism and extreme competition are coupled with economic success, in that those who are not successful deserve humiliation. Mass media and entertainment programs make some exemplary platforms to represent such cultures.

Music and comic performances and TV entertainment reach audiences well beyond the national border since the 1990s. A large number of foreigners come to visit or work in Korea and they have become an integral part of everyday life of Koreans, who study, work and commute together with them. KBS 2TV ran a weekly global talk show (*Minyeodeului Suda*) with a dozen foreign women from 2006 to 2010. The talks were centred on their Korean cultural experiences and the cultures of their homelands. Portrayals and discussions of the Others have become part of media performances and reportages in Korea. Korean

¹¹ http://www.tour.go.kr/stat/st_bound_lst.asp

celebrities such as singers and comedians are not particularly different from ordinary Koreans in terms of how they perceive, or treat, the Others. They make a sample of the majority of Koreans in this respect, except that their words and actions are readily exposed to national and global audiences. The Korean public exerted its discriminatory attitudes towards the Others as soon as the latter arrived in Korean society – universities and workplaces – since the 1990s. K-Pop or the Korean popular culture as represented in the media naturally represents the contemporary Koreans in their everyday life to a significant degree. Although Koreans live in the global world, whether their media content or their interactions with Others are globalised enough continues to be questioned.¹²

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¹² 'K-Pop, hallyu injongchabyeol munje-e jikmyeonhada – darakbang japdonghani' (K-Pop facing the issue of racial discrimination – miscellaneous stories in the upper room), 11 March 2012, <http://theloft.tistory.com/entry/K-Pop-%ED%95%9C%EB%A5%98-%EC%9D%B8%EC%A2%85%EC%B0%A8%EB%B3%84-%EB%AC%B8%EC%A0%9C%EC%97%90-%EC%A7%81%EB%A9%B4%ED%95%98%EB%8B%A4>, Accessed 23 Dec 2012.

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