



**Reflexive Cultural Proximity: The Case of Young Vietnamese Korean-Media Audiences in the Czech Republic**

Journal:	<i>Journal of Intercultural Studies</i>
Manuscript ID	CJIS-2018-0100.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Vietnamese migrants, Czech Republic, cultural proximity, Korean media, transnational media consumption, diasporic contexts

SCHOLARONE™  
Manuscripts

## Abstract

Based on in-depth interviews with Vietnamese young adults in the Czech Republic who consume Korean media products on a regular basis, this study investigates how their diasporic contexts are reflected in the consumption of Korean media products. While participants quickly spotted cultural proximity as the reason for their preferences, the in-depth analysis further revealed that cultural proximity was particularly identified (a) when they devised a concept of the Asian family from the dialectic relationship among their family experiences, the represented family culture in Korean media, and the observed Czech family culture; (b) when they found their diasporic identity in the image of hardworking immigrants; and (c) when they highlighted their cultural tastes and valued their human capital in contrast to those of Czech people and other kinds of Vietnamese migrants. This study demonstrates that cultural proximity is reflexively defined in a dynamic between diasporic communities and transnational media

Keywords: Vietnamese migrants, Czech Republic, cultural proximity, Korean media, transnational media consumption, diasporic contexts

## **Reflexive Cultural Proximity: The Case of Young Vietnamese Korean-Media Audiences in the Czech Republic**

### **Introduction**

In 2012 when I started teaching at a university in the Czech Republic (hereafter, CR), I came across an interesting news story about a K-pop (Korean pop music) World Festival held in Korea. A Czech girl band won the grand prize with its performance, which copied a famous K-pop girl band, Girls' Generation. It was the picture of the girl band that caught my attention, though, because five members out of eight looked not Czech but Asian. The news

1  
2  
3 story made me aware that Vietnamese performers account for a large segment of Korean  
4 popular culture fandom in the CR. And a simple question, why?, popped up, which was  
5 followed by a few common-sense questions: Is the popularity of Korean media in the CR  
6 because of the popularity of Korean media in their home country, Vietnam? Is it because they  
7 find commonalities with Korean media? or Is it because globally mobile people are naturally  
8 more into transnational media products? I learned in casual conversations with Vietnamese  
9 people that the answer to these questions is mostly yes Korean media has been popular for  
10 years in Vietnam. The cultural distance between Vietnam and Korea is much smaller than that  
11 between Vietnam and the CR. Transnational people like the Vietnamese in the CR and me  
12 tend to be more exposed to various cultures. Thus, the answer must be yes. However, the  
13 questions and answer were firmly grounded in so-called methodological nationalism that does  
14 not account for various cultural variations and individual contexts. Thus, my questions led me  
15 to plan a research project focusing more on the transnational dynamics of migrants' lives,  
16 cultural flows, media representations, and so on.

17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
This study focuses specifically on young Vietnamese migrants who routinely consume  
Korean media by posing a broad question: How are their diasporic contexts reflected in their  
consumption of Korean media? In order to fully understand their life experiences and cultural  
orientations, this study delves specifically into how the young migrants place themselves in  
diasporic contexts in the CR and how their life experiences directly and indirectly shape their  
preferences for Korean media. Cultural proximity is a theoretical concept that may explain  
their daily consumption of Korean media.

Addressing the limits of a cultural-proximity thesis that often posits culture as a static  
and essential unit, this article demonstrates how migrant audiences identify cultural proximity  
with Korean media by subjectively reflecting on their own diasporic experiences in the CR.  
The empirical findings highlight the importance of reflexivity in understanding cultural

1  
2  
3 proximity because reflexivity may provide a context-based understanding of transnational  
4 media practices in a diasporic community.  
5  
6

## 7 **Literature Review**

### 9 ***Vietnamese in the CR***

10  
11  
12 The official number of Vietnamese in the CR reached 58,025 in 2016 (Czech  
13 Statistical Office 2017). Czechoslovakia was one of the popular destinations for Vietnamese  
14 occupational trainees under the economic cooperation among Soviet bloc countries.  
15  
16 (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2015). After a short period post-1989, during which the number of  
17 Vietnamese dropped, the size of the Vietnamese community dramatically expanded from  
18 3,500 in 1992 (Drbohlav et al. 2009). Vietnamese are currently the third-largest group of  
19 foreigners with long-term residence permits, following Ukraine and Slovak nationals  
20  
21 (Kušniráková 2014).  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29

30  
31 Since Vietnamese are generally classified as economic migrants, there have been  
32 many studies focusing specifically on economic motives and labour relations (e.g.,  
33 Hüwelmeier 2015). In addition, since most studies have been reported in the Czech language,  
34  
35 Vietnamese are a relatively less known population of international migration. Recently, they  
36  
37 have been examined by multiple studies aiming to evaluate multiculturalism and integration  
38  
39 policy in the CR as a country facing a transition from an emigration country to a country of  
40  
41 immigration (e.g., Drbohlav and Džúrová 2007). However, the migrants' everyday  
42  
43 experiences have been less represented in academia compared to multiple criminological  
44  
45 studies on this population (e.g., Nožina and Kraus 2016).  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50

51  
52 Intercultural studies have recently focused on the sociocultural experiences of  
53  
54 Vietnamese in the CR. One study investigated the history of the racialization of Vietnamese  
55  
56 and cultural adaptation in comparison with other minority groups (Alamgir 2013). A  
57  
58 sociological study highlighted distinctive kinship relations in Vietnamese families who have  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 hired Czech nannies; the nannies supplement the role of parents who are absent due to  
4  
5 extensive economic activity (Souralová 2014). Also, multiple studies have been conducted on  
6  
7 the language practices of the study population (e.g., Sherman and Homoláč 2017)  
8  
9

10 Vietnamese are also known for a higher number of children (30%) and women (43%)  
11  
12 compared to other groups of migrants in the CR (Drbohlav et al. 2009). The number of  
13  
14 children and youth in the Vietnamese immigrant population has increased and accounts for  
15  
16 40% of the Vietnamese population (Kušniráková 2014). Despite the large number of  
17  
18 children, detailed demographic information such as birthplace and educational level is very  
19  
20 limited. A recent study that focuses specifically on the identity construction of young  
21  
22 Vietnamese migrants illustrates how identity hovers between one that reflects their family  
23  
24 traditions and another that reflects the majority community in the CR (Svobodová and Janská  
25  
26 2016). In response to the increasing interest in the diasporic identity of Vietnamese in the CR,  
27  
28 this study pays a close attention to their transnational life and cultural experiences.  
29  
30  
31

### 32 *Migrants' Transnational Media Practices*

33

34  
35 Migrants' transnational communication practices have been increasingly studied as  
36  
37 advanced communication technologies have been adopted in everyday life and global  
38  
39 mobility has increased in recent decades. Previous studies have demonstrated how new media  
40  
41 from satellites to the Internet have changed the life experiences of international migrants;  
42  
43 aided by various communication technologies, migrants (re)build human and social networks  
44  
45 across borders by keeping ties with people like family members and peers in their countries of  
46  
47 origin (e.g., Chib, Malik, Aricat, and Kadir 2014). Transnational communication is also an  
48  
49 important means of engaging in domestic politics in their home countries (Aricat 2015).  
50  
51 While some studies highlight the importance of transnational media consumption in  
52  
53 maintaining native identity (e.g., Kama and Malka 2013), others demonstrate how migrants'  
54  
55 transnational practices reciprocally shape members of the receiving society and their identity  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 (e.g., Ehrkamp 2005). Transnational media consumption is also practiced by migrants to cope  
4  
5 with daily stress in their new home (e. g., Kim 2016).  
6

7  
8 The above-mentioned studies focus on transnational practices between migrants' old  
9  
10 and new home. As the distribution of cultural products widens along with rapid technological  
11  
12 advancements, however, migrants have often crossed multiple borders to find culturally  
13  
14 relevant media products. Using data across Europe, Christiansen (2004) demonstrates that  
15  
16 migrants tend to seek more news than does the majority population by accessing not only  
17  
18 news media of their country of origin but also international news media in English, such as  
19  
20 BBC World, which is available on satellite television. An earlier study presents the cultural  
21  
22 negotiation of Vietnamese youths in Australia, who consume media products from Hong  
23  
24 Kong by using video recorders (Cunningham and Nguyen 2001). Similarly, Korean American  
25  
26 youths access Japanese as well as Korean television series not only because they prefer media  
27  
28 products with which they are familiar but also because they want to compensate themselves  
29  
30 for limited cultural representation in U.S. television products (Park 2004). Kartosen and Tan  
31  
32 (2013) investigate a broader population of young Asian migrants in the Netherlands who  
33  
34 extensively consume nonhomeland Asian media products mainly from China, Japan, and  
35  
36 Korea.  
37  
38  
39  
40

#### 41 42 ***Global Korean Media*** 43

44 Since the late 1990s, when several Korean television dramas gained popularity with  
45  
46 Chinese audiences, the increasing popularity of Korean media in Asia has been noted by both  
47  
48 academia and the public (Shim 2006). Since then, multiple Korean blockbuster films and  
49  
50 systematically commodified pop singers have successfully infiltrated Asian cultural markets  
51  
52 (Shim 2006). The popularity of Korean media products has also stimulated developments in  
53  
54 related industries such as tourism and consumer-goods markets in Asia (Ryoo 2009).  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Originally coined by Chinese news media in the late 1990s, the term “Korean Wave” has been  
4  
5 widely used to describe the international success of Korean media (Kim 2013).  
6  
7

8 While the early phase of Korean media’s success in Asia was initiated through more  
9  
10 traditional practices of media marketing, such as the export of media products, the diffusion  
11  
12 of Korean media products beyond Asia in recent years has been propelled by integrating  
13  
14 media products into consumers’ activities on Web 2.0, which is called “Korean Wave 2.0”  
15  
16 (e.g., Jin 2012). The huge success of certain media products on social media such as  
17  
18 YouTube has attracted giant media corporations to invest their resources in social media  
19  
20 (Hess and Waller 2011). The strategic new media promotion has been backed by the  
21  
22 voluntary distribution of Korean media products by audiences, widening the scope of  
23  
24 consumption and distribution of Korean media products in the world (Jung and Shim 2013).  
25  
26 Audiences for Korean media have become more active in sharing their opinions and feelings  
27  
28 about Korean media with their peers via social media (Jin 2018).  
29  
30  
31  
32

33 Propelled by extended dissemination, Korean media have gradually gained popularity  
34  
35 with non-Asian audiences (e.g., Lee 2018;; Meza and Park 2015). Once established through  
36  
37 an increased market share in the Asian-culture industry, Korean media corporations promoted  
38  
39 their products to reach beyond Asia. Studies on the non-Asian reception of Korean media  
40  
41 have also focused on Asian diasporic audiences in the West. Asian immigrant audiences in  
42  
43 Austria, who are marginalised in Western society, have constructed an East Asian imagined  
44  
45 community by consuming culturally familiar media products from Korea (Sung 2013). In the  
46  
47 United States, Asian migrants nurture a pan ethnic identity while constructing a coeval  
48  
49 territory of East Asia (Ju and Lee 2015). As diasporic Asians, K-pop fans in Canada embrace  
50  
51 cultural products by reflexively interpreting the meaning of cultural products as a means of  
52  
53 exercising their diasporic identity (Yoon 2017).  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 The extended transnationalization of Korean media in an advanced technological  
4 context, the Western reception of Korean media, and the transnational imagined communities  
5 of Asian migrants consuming Korean media may define the current study population, young  
6 Vietnamese in the CR who extensively consume Korean media products. Guided by these  
7 previous studies, the current study focuses mainly on how the migrant audiences reflect their  
8 diasporic contexts in their transnational media consumption.  
9

### 17 ***Transnational Media Consumption: Reflexively Identifying Cultural Proximity***

19 The success of Korean media in the globalised media market has become additional  
20 evidence for the emergence of new transnational media flow decentralizing the global media  
21 market (e.g., Thussu 2007). Especially in Asia, rapid economic growth, the  
22 transnationalization of the media industry, the large size of the regional market based on its  
23 high density of population, and advanced communication technologies have been important  
24 contextual bases of the emergence of intra-regional flow (Iwabuchi 2002). Media industries in  
25 East Asia have successfully localised their media products in the course of transnationalization  
26 in their regional markets (Iwabuchi 2008).  
27

37 The cultural proximity thesis has been usefully employed to explain decentralised  
38 media flow. Exemplifying the regional media flow in Latin America, the thesis posits that  
39 media consumers tend to prefer media products from culturally adjacent regions (Straubhaar,  
40 1991). The notion has been useful in explaining migrants' consumption of media products  
41 from their countries of origin. La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) further developed the notion  
42 of cultural proximity by presenting the existence of multilayered proximity; first, cultural  
43 proximity varies across locals within a country, and second, people often identify their  
44 cultural proximity with certain genres dominated by advanced media industries, such as U.S.  
45 cartoons. In studies on the transnational dissemination of Korean media products, cultural  
46 proximity has been widely applied to explain their popularity not only in East and South East  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 Asia (e.g., Yoo, Jo, and Jung 2014) but also in distant countries like Turkey (Oh and Chae  
4  
5 2013). These studies centre on international audiences' shared cultural values and traditions,  
6  
7 such as family values reflected through Korean cultural products. Similarly, social proximity  
8  
9 is a common variable explaining the popularity of Korean media products in different East  
10  
11 Asian countries (Yang 2012).  
12  
13

14  
15 However, the notion of cultural proximity has also been criticised, mainly because it  
16  
17 sees culture as a static unit that can be observable and predictable (Kraidy 2002). Viewing  
18  
19 culture as a static unit in which the essence of a culture is unchangeable hinders  
20  
21 understanding of the variation in reception (Kim 2009). On the other hand, recent studies have  
22  
23 particularly focused on migrants' media consumption, highlighting diasporic identities  
24  
25 reflexively positioned between the migrants' past experiences in home cultures and their  
26  
27 experiences across the border (e.g., Georgiou 2012). In her study on Arab women in the  
28  
29 United Kingdom who consume soap operas on Arabic television, Georgiou (2012)  
30  
31 demonstrates that while the migrant women appropriate Arabic soap operas as a means to  
32  
33 connect them with their region of origin, some of them reflect their gender identity as Arab  
34  
35 women in London in the course of distancing themselves from the cultural logics underlying  
36  
37 the television shows. Similarly, cultural proximity does not lie in national or ethnic origin but  
38  
39 is presented through an individual's reflexive contexts. Audiences tend to individually  
40  
41 identify proximity in certain media texts (Yamato 2014). Iwabuchi (2001, 58) claims that  
42  
43 cultural proximity could only be "subjectively identified and experienced by the audience" in  
44  
45 his study on the dissemination of Japanese pop culture in Taiwan. Taiwanese audiences do  
46  
47 not find an intrinsically similar culture in Japanese cultural products but identify cultural  
48  
49 proximity by recognizing the same temporality in Japanese contemporary culture.  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54

55  
56 Studies on the reception of Korean media in Asian societies have also found cultural  
57  
58 proximity between the audiences' contexts reflected in their consumption and the Korean  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 context placed in the products. Positing the recent popularity of Korean cultural products in  
4 East Asia as a descendent of previous Asian pop culture once led by Hong Kong and Japanese  
5 media industries, Cho (2011) suggests Asian audiences find a coeval relationship with the  
6 represented Korean sociocultural context in Korean media. Asian fans of Korean media  
7 products feel the contemporariness of the modern and urban styles of Korean media products,  
8 which project their shared capitalist-consumerist orientations. Also, Ainslie (2016) shows that  
9 Thai fans of Korean television programs use foreign cultural products as a means to assess  
10 and critique their own positions in diverse Thai sociocultural contexts. Kim (2005) describes a  
11 coeval relationship between the characteristics of contemporary Korean society represented in  
12 Korean media and everyday experiences and identities in contemporary Taiwanese society.  
13 Recently, Yoon (2017) elaborates cultural proximity by introducing a new concept called  
14 “cultural affinity.” In his study, Asian K-pop fans in Canada exercise their identity as Asian  
15 migrants by appropriating the represented images of youthful and successful individuals in  
16 Korean media.

17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Along with the findings of previous studies on young migrant audiences who consume Korean media products, an understanding of reflexive cultural proximity guides the current study to focus particularly on the contextual reflection on Korean media consumption by diasporic young Vietnamese migrants in the CR. Previous studies have focused on various identities, such as gender, ethnic, and cosmopolitan identities, that migrant audiences possibly reflect in their transnational media consumption. The present study also aims to demonstrate that cultural proximity to their own and Korean culture represented in Korean media is reflexively identified by the young diasporic audiences in the CR. The findings are expected to support the claim that reflexivity contributes to the theoretical richness of the cultural-proximity thesis.

## Methodology

As part of a larger research project on transnational media practices in the Vietnamese diasporic community of the CR, the current study focused particularly on young adults who consumed Korean media products. Before starting the study, the investigator learned that young Vietnamese in the CR were the first group of people who explicated their cultural preference for Korean media products. Vietnamese migrant children were mostly born in Vietnam and moved to the CR in their early years; they were relatively well educated; many of them could speak multiple languages, including Vietnamese, Czech, and English. Investigating the contextual connection between participants' life experiences and their media practices, the current study focused narrowly on this relatively homogenous population in the Vietnamese diasporic community of the CR.

This study was based on qualitative data from 12 in-depth interviews conducted in two major Czech cities, Prague and Brno. Following the basic principle of purposive sampling, this study specifically selected participants who were suitable for the research focus. The youngest participant was 18 years old, while the oldest was 26. Since it was not difficult to find fluent English speakers in this population, all interviews were conducted in English. With the exception of two participants who attended English-based private colleges in the CR, all participants were either students at or graduates of Czech national universities. Likewise, the economic status of their families was generally homogeneous. Despite the occupational diversity of their parents, most participants identified their families as middle class. In this study, however, gender was not equally represented because it was known that Korean media fans in the Vietnamese community were predominantly female, and thus female participants could be recruited much more easily. Although two male participants joined the research initially, their interview data were excluded from this study because of the weak intensity of their Korean media consumption. Planning a larger future research project

1  
2  
3 covering a wider scope of participants, the investigator ruled out other young Vietnamese  
4 migrants who either were born or arrived in the CR only recently because these two  
5 populations were far less representative of the young-adult generation of the Vietnamese  
6 diasporic community. Thus, all study participants were born in Vietnam and moved to the CR  
7 at young ages ranging from 5 to 8.  
8  
9

10  
11  
12  
13  
14 The first four participants were recruited through a Czech informant who was involved  
15 in diverse international communities in Prague, including Vietnamese and Korean  
16 communities. Snowball sampling was used to recruit the rest of the participants with the help  
17 of earlier participants. Although the researcher conducted a total of 17 interviews, five  
18 interviews were excluded from this study due to lack of relevance, such as weak intensity of  
19 Korean media consumption or multiple relocations for family reasons. The semistructured  
20 interview was composed of two broad themes, life experiences and media consumption. The  
21 investigator transcribed interviews verbatim for data analysis and coded the data by  
22 repeatedly reading the transcription. By comparing interviews, the investigator found  
23 similarities and differences in the data, which eventually led to identifying significant  
24 common themes. During the process of data analysis, each participant was assigned a number.  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

## 40 Findings

### 41 *Why Korean Media?*

42  
43  
44 Although most households of the study participants subscribed to satellite television, it  
45 was a technology for their parents, who used it for watching Vietnamese news and shows both  
46 at home and in the workplace. On the other hand, the youngsters were loyal Internet users.  
47 Like many other Internet users, they used a variety of online services primarily for practical  
48 purposes. When it came to entertainment, however, they almost exclusively consumed Korean  
49 media available on the Internet.  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Many participants started consuming Korean television shows regularly in their early  
4 years. While some of them started watching dramas with their mother or sibling, others first  
5 learned about Korean media from their Vietnamese friends in the CR. Participants often used  
6 abstract adjectives such as *funny*, *interesting*, and *entertaining* to explain the reason they  
7 consistently consume Korean media. Cultural proximity was also frequently cited by  
8 participants as the reason for their cultural preference for Korean media. Asked more about  
9 cultural proximity, however, many participants initially responded that “Korean culture is  
10 similar to Vietnamese culture,” which was based on the commonsensical understanding of  
11 culture as national culture. Aiming to know how to interpret the cultural proximity between  
12 the young Vietnamese in the CR and Korean media texts, this study inquired further about  
13 their life experiences as diasporic children and transnational Korean media consumption.  
14 Based on the answers, this study found that cultural proximity between participants and  
15 Korean media texts was reflexively identified (a) when they devised the concept of the Asian  
16 family from the dialectic relationship among their family experiences, family practices  
17 portrayed in Korean dramas, and Czech family culture; (b) when they found their diasporic  
18 identity in the image of hardworking immigrants; and (c) when they highlighted their cultural  
19 tastes and valued their human capital in contrast to those of Czech people and other kinds of  
20 Vietnamese migrants.

### 21 ***Dialectically Identified Meaning of Family***

22 “When I first saw *Full House* (a drama series) more than 10 years ago, I liked the  
23 stars on the show. The two main stars were good looking. . . I liked the warm-hearted  
24 story. People in the show had kind hearts like family members.” (Participant 1)

25 *Family* was a frequently mentioned word when participants stressed familiarity with  
26 Korean television shows. As family is one of the most salient themes of Korean television  
27 dramas (Kang and Kim 2011), much literature on Korean drama consumption points out  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 family values as evidence of cultural proximity between Asian (diasporic) audiences and  
4 Korean cultural texts (e.g., Sung 2013). Likewise, participants of this study found cultural  
5 similarities in the structure of Korean family practices, which are often depicted in Korean  
6 dramas. Particularly, some participants specifically pointed out that the authority-submission  
7 relationship between parents and children was commonly seen in many Korean dramas as  
8 well as in their own families. As immigrants, their parents often stress that conventional  
9 family values be strictly kept in their diasporic life, such as the importance of family meal  
10 time, family language practices, and discipline in child education.  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20

21 “In Korean drama, there are many scenes of family dinner. It’s an important scene to  
22 understand family relationship. . . . It’s similar to my family. Dinner time is my mom’s  
23 nagging time (laugh).” (Participant 5)  
24  
25  
26  
27

28 Participants also defined the conservative family culture in their close, yet  
29 subordinate, relationship with their parents. More importantly, conservative family values are  
30 reflected in their diasporic context. For many participants, family was a diaspora separated  
31 from everyday Czech society. Even if they were well integrated into Czech society and  
32 culture, their parents believe family should be maintained in conventional Vietnamese ways  
33 because it was one of the most distinctive cultures accounting for their identity. When  
34 contrasted to Czech family culture, their found common ground with Korean family culture  
35 depicted in Korean dramas. This was typically reflected in a term, “Asian family culture,”  
36 used by participant 12.  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 “I know my Czech friends also have family gathering often. Family is important for  
49 Czech people. But, it’s not like Asian family. My parents are stricter than Czech  
50 parents and they are crazy about our education. I don’t think Czech parents are like  
51 that” (Participant 12).  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 In sum, their families' cultural proximity to Korean families represented in television  
4 products was formulated in the transnational dynamic of their lives: (a) their parents  
5 conservatively maintained family practices that originated across the border; (b) family  
6 culture was one important cultural element that distinguished them from Czech culture; and  
7  
8 (c) they found a seemingly similar family culture in television dramas produced in another  
9  
10 Asian country. Family is the fundamental place for the migrant children not only to  
11  
12 experience Vietnamese-ness but also to differentiate themselves from their mainstream  
13  
14 counterparts. The cultural proximity of their own and Korean families was not found in the  
15  
16 essence of the two cultures but identified in their reflexive interpretation of family cultures  
17  
18 experienced in the CR.  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

### 26 **Hardworking People**

27  
28 "I've seen many Korean dramas about people working hard. It's a kind of cliché.  
29

30 Everyone in Korean dramas work hard. It's a typical image of Korean people to  
31  
32 me . . . Vietnamese people work very hard. It is a kind of our thing." (Participant 2)  
33  
34

35 As many academic studies emphasise work ethic as a common traditional value that  
36  
37 facilitates rapid economic development in Asia (i.e., Chan 1996), participants of this study  
38  
39 often identified their fellow Vietnamese and themselves as hardworking migrants while  
40  
41 stereotypically associating Korean people with the image of hardworking people in the media.  
42  
43 Responding to the stereotype, Korean media has been keen on embedding traditional cultural  
44  
45 values like work ethic in their products as part of their industrial strategy (Choi 2010). Some  
46  
47 participants preferred a story about people who made every effort to succeed, calling it a  
48  
49 typical genre of Korean dramas. The young migrant audiences sympathised not only with  
50  
51 fictitious characters in media products but also with Korean celebrities who devoted  
52  
53 themselves to excelling in their areas. Well informed about the Korean media industry, they  
54  
55 knew that Korean actors and singers had spent many years to train, as planned by their  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 management companies. Participant 3, who was a loyal fan of many K-pop bands said that  
4 she liked not only their music but also their behind-the-scenes stories portraying the long  
5 hours of practice and multiple hardships necessary to be stars.  
6  
7  
8

9  
10 While appreciating stories about hardworking people from Korea, participants were  
11 proud of the image of Vietnamese people as hardworking migrants. Although they agreed that  
12 the work ethic originated in traditional Vietnamese cultural values, they specifically  
13 constructed the image of hardworking people from their daily context in the diasporic  
14 community. Most participants shared a similar view of their diligent parents as the main  
15 reason for their current stable life. Their hardworking parents spent excessive hours at their  
16 workplaces, such as small grocery stores called *potraviny*<sup>1</sup> in Czech or large Vietnamese  
17 wholesale complexes located in major Czech cities like Prague and Brno.  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27

28 “Vietnamese people are known as hardworking people. I agree. Our older generations  
29 like my parents have worked so hard. Vietnamese’s stores always open first and close  
30 last.” (Participant 3)  
31  
32  
33  
34

35 A strong work ethic was also practiced by the young migrants, who displayed their  
36 belief in the norm as a necessary condition for their diasporic life. Some participants  
37 summarised their school life with the image of a hard-studying student, regarding their  
38 educational achievement as a reward for their sacrificial parents. It was important to them to  
39 point out that they were willing to embrace the stereotypical image of hardworking migrants.  
40 Participant 7, who shared her experience at her school, where teachers and classmates  
41 stereotypically expected her to outperform, said the image helped her devote herself to  
42 schoolwork. For her, a strong work ethic was not only an inherited value from her family and  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55

---

56 <sup>1</sup> *Potraviny* is a very important contextual cue in understanding the Vietnamese diasporic community in CR.  
57 Backed by large wholesale networks of Vietnamese, Vietnamese run small grocery stores on every corner of  
58 Czech cities. Stores carry a variety of groceries and open early and stay open late to attract local customers who  
59 casually shop for a small amount of groceries. Participants also said that Vietnamese in the CR are typically  
60 represented as people working at a *potraviny*.



1  
2  
3 community but also a role she played as a young migrant from a stereotyped diasporic  
4  
5 community.  
6

7  
8         Raised in a hardworking family and motivated to be diligent, participants were  
9  
10 familiar with the stories about hardworking people in Korean media. Cultural proximity was  
11  
12 identified through the familiarity. By consuming the image of Korea and the represented  
13  
14 image of hardworking Koreans in the media, they could confirm the willingly embraced  
15  
16 image of hardworking migrants. Going one step further, some of them even shaped their  
17  
18 future by consuming the images of fictitious characters. Those who liked Korean television  
19  
20 shows dramatizing a variety of professionals yearned to live like the characters who made  
21  
22 every effort to achieve their life goals. Another component of reflexive cultural proximity was  
23  
24 found in the lifestyles of the fictitious, hardworking professionals.  
25  
26

### 27 28 *Keeping Pace with Trends* 29

30  
31         As previous studies have explained, Asian (migrant) audiences can feel the  
32  
33 contemporariness in the up-to-date styles of Korean media products (e.g., Yoon 2017). This  
34  
35 study's participants were also loyal audiences of the so-called Korean trendy dramas  
36  
37 characterised by stories about urban professionals surrounded by contemporary lifestyle  
38  
39 amenities. Participant 2 revealed her cultural tastes by romanticizing about the image of the  
40  
41 technologically advanced society and hypermodern urban spaces frequently represented in  
42  
43 Korean television shows.  
44  
45

46  
47         “It's funny to see every person on Korean dramas lives in a luxurious flat. They wear  
48  
49 expensive suits and drive expensive cars. I know it's just a drama. But, I am interested  
50  
51 in them. I want to visit Seoul to see this kind of scenes. Especially, I want to go to  
52  
53 Gangnam and Hongdae. I heard people are very stylish in these areas” (Participant 2).  
54  
55

56  
57         In the meantime, consuming Korean media is a cultural practice differentiating the  
58  
59 young Vietnamese migrants not only from Czech people but also from other kinds of  
60

1  
2  
3 Vietnamese migrants, such as their parents' generation and recent migrants. They tended to  
4 regard Czech people as slow to adopt new cultures and insensitive to trends. Many  
5  
6 participants bluntly said Czech people looked outdated. They contrasted Czech society with  
7  
8 the young Vietnamese community as old versus young people. This attitude was partly  
9  
10 affected by their earlier experiences in small Czech towns. More than half the participants  
11  
12 were raised in small towns because of their parents' businesses. They often compared their  
13  
14 life in small towns with their life in Prague or Brno.  
15  
16  
17

18  
19 "I lived in a small village near Ostrava. It's a never changing town. People are so  
20  
21 conservative and do the same things all the time. They don't know anything about new  
22  
23 culture. Now I am happy with my life in Prague. There are more young people and  
24  
25 foreigners. In Prague I have many friends who are interested in Korean media. I  
26  
27 haven't seen anyone (who is interested in Korean media) in the village." (Participant  
28  
29  
30 7)  
31  
32

33 They identified themselves as people who were sensitive to cultural trends and had tastes  
34  
35 commensurate with urban life by employing the analogy comparing young Vietnamese versus  
36  
37 old Czech people with urban centres like Prague versus small Czech towns. Meanwhile, they  
38  
39 regarded Korean media culture as a new, trendy one. Distinguishing themselves from the old,  
40  
41 outdated image of the Czech village, they highlighted their cultural taste for the urban, trendy  
42  
43 lifestyle found in Korean media products. The cultural proximity between their cultural tastes  
44  
45 and the represented images of Korean young professionals' lifestyles kept them aloof from  
46  
47 the stagnant Czech culture as they defined it. Moreover, the distancing strategy was also  
48  
49 carried out in their diasporic community.  
50  
51  
52

53 While belonging to the Vietnamese diasporic community, they were more tuned in to  
54  
55 the upcoming trends of media, culture, and lifestyle than were other Vietnamese. Benefitting  
56  
57 from stable living conditions, the 1.5 generation of Vietnamese migrants could gain  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 multilanguage skills and maintain a relaxed lifestyle, which allowed them to use a wide range  
4 of media sources. On the other hand, the older generation or recently migrated young  
5 Vietnamese were known to have very limited options in their media consumption. Those who  
6 worked all day in their small shops continued to use Vietnamese satellite television, often as  
7 background noise. They also relied on Web services based in Vietnam and narrow compatriot  
8 networks on social media. Their limited language skills as well as long hours of work  
9 hindered the older generation and the new migrants from diversifying their media choices.

10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19 Many parents of this study's participants also watched Korean television shows on a  
20 regular basis. However, the patterns of Korean media consumption of the two generations had  
21 deviated from each other over time. While the young audiences stayed updated on Korean  
22 media and cultural trends by surfing the information ocean, their parents were likely to be  
23 tenacious in their practice of watching seemingly old-fashioned Korean television shows that  
24 were available on Vietnamese satellite and Web services in the Vietnamese language.

25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33 "Recently, I only watch Korean dramas with English subtitles. They are more  
34 available and much quicker (to obtain) than those with Vietnamese subtitles. They are  
35 supposed to be distributed by Korean Americans. . . . I get information about Korean  
36 media, culture, and celebrities from many websites in English." (Participant 6)

37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42 The migrants who were competent in English could access all available media  
43 sources, which allowed them to keep pace with Korean media trends. Taking advantage of  
44 their perceived higher human capital, they took a step closer to the cultural tastes of their  
45 contemporary Korean audiences while taking a step back from other Vietnamese who had  
46 experienced different life trajectories. In other words, cultural proximity to cultural trends in  
47 Korean media was identified in the distance lying between their own and other Vietnamese's  
48 media practices, which was possibly explained by different life experiences.

49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 In sum, the trendy media consumers recognised that Korean media represented Korean  
4 society's value of stressing the pursuit of human capital by portraying a variety of professions  
5 that lead the society. The young audiences, who positioned themselves as educated,  
6 modernised, trendy, and urban young migrants, reflexively identified cultural proximity to a  
7 Korean media culture that represents fast-changing urban lifestyles. Korean dramas featuring  
8 young professionals were regarded as a subgenre the migrant children were especially fond  
9 of. By reflecting on their self-defined cosmopolitan identity, they also found their values in a  
10 certain subgenre of Korean media (Pastina and Straubhaar 2005).  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20

### 21 **Discussion and Concluding Remarks**

22  
23 This study examines how young Vietnamese in the CR reflect their diasporic life  
24 experiences in the way they define the cultural proximity of their lives to Korean culture  
25 represented in the media. While they have been educated in the Czech educational system and  
26 have built various communities with Czech people, they have also been strongly pushed to  
27 maintain Vietnamese cultural practices in their families. The image of hardworking people  
28 earned through their parents' migratory lives is also actively embraced by the migrant  
29 children. They value the work ethic as the main driving force making it possible for them to  
30 settle in the CR successfully. However, they also differentiate themselves from their parents,  
31 whose community is quite limited within the Vietnamese diaspora. Benefitting from  
32 education and global experiences, the migrant children stress their urban and cosmopolitan  
33 cultural tastes to distinguish themselves from other Vietnamese migrants as well as from  
34 Czech people. These diasporic experiences are reflected when they define the cultural  
35 proximity of their life experiences to Korean culture portrayed in Korean media.  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52

53 First, grounded in the context of Vietnamese migrant families in the CR continuing  
54 Vietnamese family practices as a way of maintaining (or nurturing) Vietnamese identity, the  
55 migrant children feel closer to the represented Korean family in Korean media. Instead of  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 identifying with the essential similarities of Vietnamese and Korean family cultures, they  
4 particularly reflect their diasporic family experiences in defining cultural proximity to Korean  
5 family culture. Raised by selfless, yet strict, parents who believe Vietnamese language and  
6 family practices are important values for maintaining their Vietnamese-ness, the migrant  
7 children appropriate their experience of being part of Vietnamese migrant families as a main  
8 means to contrast with Czech culture. In sum, they place their family experiences in a  
9 diasporic context while identifying the cultural proximity of their families to Korean families  
10 represented in Korean media.  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20

21 Second, the image of hardworking migrants overlaps with the diligent Korean young  
22 professionals represented in Korean media. Vietnamese migrants have stressed work ethic as  
23 the primary means of survival in a new country of settlement. Having witnessed their  
24 hardworking parents, the migrant children agree that their academic performance is the best  
25 reward for their parents who have made so many sacrifices for them. In doing so, they  
26 appropriate the image of hardworking migrants as part of their own identity. The reflexive  
27 proximity of the image of hardworking migrants to the typified image of young professionals  
28 in Korean media is grounded in this unique context of the migrant children, who embrace the  
29 nurtured as well as the stereotyped image  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41

42 Last, the young, educated, and cosmopolitan migrants highly value the advanced  
43 lifestyle of successful young professionals, which is one of the most common motifs of  
44 Korean media products. In finding cultural proximity to the cosmopolitan lifestyle stereotyped  
45 in Korean media, the young Vietnamese differentiate themselves not only from local Czech  
46 people but also from the elders in their own diasporic community. Their preference for the  
47 lifestyle portrayed in Korean media, a lifestyle that is contrasted with the seemingly stagnant  
48 lifestyle of their local Czech and diasporic communities, plays an important role in displaying  
49 their cultural tastes. The migrant children have been educated in major Czech cities and have  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 acquired multilanguage skills, which allow them to be more accessible to cultural products  
4  
5 overseas than others are. By placing themselves in a cosmopolitan context, they feel close to  
6  
7 the young cosmopolitan professional lifestyle depicted in Korean media.  
8  
9

10 This study's findings confirm that young Asian diasporic audiences of Korean media  
11  
12 tend to be attracted to the self-developed, successful young individuals portrayed in Korean  
13  
14 media (Yoon 2017). In addition, the present study demonstrates why the diasporic context of  
15  
16 the migrant youth should be taken into account in understanding their way of identifying their  
17  
18 cultural proximity to the represented Korean culture. Georgiou (2012) illuminates in her  
19  
20 research that Arab audiences in the United Kingdom reflect multiple yet interrelated  
21  
22 identities, and the present study's participants also reflect multiple yet interrelated identities  
23  
24 as migrant youth: hardworking Vietnamese students, urban professionals, and multilingual  
25  
26 cosmopolitans. By reflecting on their life experiences and their identities, the migrant youth  
27  
28 find cultural proximity to the lifestyles and everyday practices represented in Korean media  
29  
30 products. Their reflexivity in the course of finding cultural proximity to Korean media  
31  
32 products seems to show how they place themselves in a broader global context as well in as  
33  
34 the diasporic context in the CR. When the migrant youth are labelled "Vietnamese" in the  
35  
36 CR, the geocultural distance between Vietnam and Korea is conveniently employed to explain  
37  
38 their cultural preferences for Korean media. This study demonstrates that, to the contrary,  
39  
40 cultural proximity is reflexively defined in a dynamic between diasporic communities and  
41  
42 transnational media. In other words, the young Vietnamese migrants' diasporic experiences  
43  
44 and their cosmopolitan orientations are intermingled in searching for a preferable culture in  
45  
46 Korean media. Their ethnicity is not the only mediator bridging the young migrants and  
47  
48 Korean media. Having benefited from their stable economic conditions and educational  
49  
50 opportunities, the migrant youth also reflect their urban elite taste in defining cultural  
51  
52 similarities in Korean media. This case of reflexive cultural proximity supports the claim that  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 cultural proximity is only subjectively identified by audiences who are firmly grounded in  
4 their own life experiences (Iwabuchi 2001). Thus, this study coins *reflexive cultural proximity*  
5  
6 to add the theoretical dynamics of cultural proximity to the context of a complicated  
7  
8 transnational world.  
9  
10

11  
12 However, reflexivity also reveals a limitation of this study. Participants represent only  
13  
14 a relatively homogeneous group of Vietnamese. Their perceived higher human capital  
15  
16 explains their distinctive living context. Thus, the findings limitedly explain cultural  
17  
18 proximity as identified by this specific group of people rather than by the general Vietnamese  
19  
20 population in the CR. In other words, the findings cannot take into account diverse identities  
21  
22 that possibly exist in the diasporic community. However, this study directed me very clearly  
23  
24 to the next steps for my research: studies on media practices of other Vietnamese populations,  
25  
26 such as elderly people, recent migrants with limited language skills, and migrants separated  
27  
28 from or assimilated to Czech society, would further expand the understanding of transnational  
29  
30 media, diasporic community, cultural proximity, and human capital.  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

## References

- Ainslie, M. J. 2016. "K-dramas across Thailand: Constructions of Koreanness and Thainess by contemporary Thai consumers." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 14(7): 1–15.
- Alamgir, A. K. 2013. "Race is elsewhere: state-socialist ideology and the racialisation of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia." *Race and Class* 54(4): 67–85.
- Aricat, R. G. 2015. "Mobile/social media use for political purposes among migrant laborers in Singapore." *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 12(1): 18–36.
- Chan, A. 1996. "Confucianism and development in East Asia." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 26(1): 28–45.
- Chib, A., Malik, S., Aricat, R. G., and Kadir, S. Z. 2014. "Migrant mothering and mobile phones: Negotiations of transnational identity." *Mobile Media and Communication* 2(1): 73–93.
- Cho, Y. 2011. Desperately seeking East Asia amidst the popularity of South Korean pop culture in Asia. *Cultural studies* 25(3): 383–404.
- Choi, J. 2010. Of the East Asian cultural sphere: Theorizing cultural regionalization. *China Review* 10(2): 109–136.
- Christiansen, C. C. 2004. "News media consumption among immigrants in Europe: The relevance of diaspora." *Ethnicities* 4(2): 185–207.
- Cunningham, S. and Nguyen, T. 2001. "Popular media of Vietnamese Diaspora." In *Floating lives: The Media and Asian Diasporas*, edited by S. Cunningham, and J. Sinclair, 91–135. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Czech Statistical Office. 2017. "Foriegners in the Czech Republic." *Czech Statistical Office*, Accessed 18 September 2018



<https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/45709982/29002717.pdf/770a1c14-6ea7-4c47-831e-3936e3ca1ab3?version=1.2>

- Drbohlav, D., Lachmanová-Medová, L., Čermák, Z., Janská, E., Čermáková, D., and Džúrová, D. 2009. "The Czech Republic: on its way from emigration to immigration country." *IDEA Working Papers* 11. [http://adapt.it/adapt-indice-a-z/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/idea\\_the\\_czech\\_republic\\_2009.pdf](http://adapt.it/adapt-indice-a-z/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/idea_the_czech_republic_2009.pdf)
- Drbohlav, D., and Džúrová, D. 2007. "Where Are They Going?: Immigrant Inclusion in the Czech Republic" *International Migration* 45(2): 69–95
- Ehrkamp, P. 2005. Placing identities: Transnational practices and local attachments of Turkish immigrants in Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies* 31(2): 345–364.
- Georgiou, M. 2012. "Watching soap opera in the diaspora: cultural proximity or critical proximity?." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35(5): 868–887.
- Hess, K., and Waller, L. 2011. "Blockbusters for the YouTube generation: a new product of convergence culture." *Refractory: a journal of entertainment media* 19: 1–12.
- Hüwelmeier, G. 2015. "Mobile entrepreneurs: Transnational Vietnamese in the Czech Republic." In *Rethinking Ethnography in Central Europe*, Edited by H. Cervinkova, M. Buchowski, and Z. Uherek, 59–73. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Iwabuchi, K. 2001. "Becoming "culturally proximate": the a/scent of Japanese idol dramas in Taiwan." In *Asian Media Productions*, Edited by B. Moeran, 54–74. Richmond, UK: Curzon
- Iwabuchi, K. 2002. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Iwabuchi, K. 2008. "Cultures of empire: Transnational media flows and cultural (dis)connections in East Asia." In *Global Communications: Toward a Tanscultural*

- 1  
2  
3 *Political Economy*, Edited by Y. Zhao, and P. Chakravartty, 143–161. Lanham, MD:  
4  
5 Rowman and Littlefield.  
6  
7  
8 Jin, D. Y. 2012. “Hallyu 2.0: The new Korean wave in the creative industry.” *International*  
9  
10 *Institute Journal*, 2(1): 3–6.  
11  
12 Jin, D. Y. 2018. “An Analysis of the Korean Wave as transnational popular culture: North  
13  
14 American youth engage through social media as TV becomes obsolete.” *International*  
15  
16 *Journal of Communication*, 12: 404–422.  
17  
18  
19 Ju, H., and Lee, S. 2015. “The Korean Wave and Asian Americans: the ethnic meanings of  
20  
21 transnational Korean pop culture in the USA.” *Continuum*, 29(3): 323–338.  
22  
23  
24 Jung, S., and Shim, D. 2013. “Social distribution: K-pop fan practices in Indonesia and the  
25  
26 ‘Gangnam Style’ phenomenon.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17(5): 485–  
27  
28 501.  
29  
30  
31 Kama, A., and Malka, V. 2013. “Identity prosthesis: Roles of homeland media in sustaining  
32  
33 native identity.” *Howard Journal of Communications*, 24(4): 370–388.  
34  
35  
36 Kang, M., and Kim, S. 2011. “Are our families still Confucian? Representations of family in  
37  
38 East Asian television dramas.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(3): 307–  
39  
40 321.  
41  
42  
43 Kartosen, R., and Tan, E. 2013. “Articulating Asianness: young Asian Dutch and non-  
44  
45 homeland Asian popular media.” *International Communication Gazette*, 75(7): 653–  
46  
47 671.  
48  
49  
50 Kim, H. M. 2005. Korean TV dramas in Taiwan: With an emphasis on the localization  
51  
52 process. *Korea Journal*, 45(4): 183–205.  
53  
54  
55 Kim, S. 2009. “Interpreting transnational cultural practices: Social discourses on a Korean  
56  
57 drama in Japan, Hong Kong, and China.” *Cultural Studies*, 23(5-6): 736–755.  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Kim, T. S. 2016. "Transnational communication practices of unaccompanied young Korean  
4 students in the United States." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 25(2): 148–167.  
5  
6  
7 Kim, Y. 2006. "The rising East Asian 'wave'." In *Media on the move: Global flow and*  
8  
9  
10 *contra-flow*, Edited by D. K. Thussu, 121–135. London: Routledge.  
11  
12 Kim, Youna, ed. 2013. *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global*. London: Routledge.  
13  
14 Kraidy, M. M. 2002. "Hybridity in cultural globalization." *Communication Theory*, 12(3):  
15  
16 316–339.  
17  
18 Kušniráková, T. 2014. *Vietnamci v Česku a ve světě- migrační a adaptační tendence*  
19  
20 [Vietnamese in the Czech Republic and in the world - migratory and adaptive  
21  
22 tendencies]. Prague, Czech Republic: Slon.  
23  
24  
25 La Pastina, A. C., and Straubhaar, J. D. 2005. "Multiple proximities between television genres  
26  
27 and audiences the schism between telenovelas' global distribution and local  
28  
29 consumption." *Gazette*, 67(3): 271–288.  
30  
31  
32 Lee, H. 2018. "A 'real' fantasy: hybridity, Korean drama, and pop cosmopolitans." *Media,*  
33  
34 *Culture and Society*, 40(3): 365–380.  
35  
36  
37 Meza, X. V., and Park, H. W. 2015. "Globalization of cultural products: a webometric  
38  
39 analysis of Kpop in Spanish-speaking countries." *Quality and Quantity*, 49(4): 1345–  
40  
41 1360.  
42  
43  
44 Nožina, M., and Kraus, F. 2016. "Bosses, Soldiers and Rice Grains. Vietnamese Criminal  
45  
46 Networks and Criminal Activities in the Czech Republic." *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68(3),  
47  
48 508–528.  
49  
50  
51 Park, J. S. 2004. "Korean American youths' consumption of Korean and Japanese TV dramas  
52  
53 and its implications." In *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of*  
54  
55 *Japanese TV Dramas*, Edited by K. Iwabuchi, 275–300. Hong Kong: Hong Kong  
56  
57 University Press.  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Oh, C., and Chae, Y. 2013. "Constructing culturally proximate spaces through social network  
4 services: The case of 'Hallyu' (Korean Wave) in Turkey." *Uluslararası İlişkiler /*  
5  
6 *International Relations*, 10(38): 77–99.  
7  
8  
9
- 10 Ryoo, W. 2009. Globalization, or the logic of cultural hybridization: The case of the Korean  
11 wave. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 19(2): 137–151.  
12  
13
- 14 Sherman, T., and Homoláč, J. 2017. "'The older I got, it wasn't a problem for me anymore':  
15 Language brokering as a managed activity and a narrated experience among young  
16 Vietnamese immigrants in the Czech Republic." *Multilingua*, 36(1): 1–29.  
17  
18  
19
- 20 Shim, D. 2006. Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia. *Media, culture and*  
21 *society*, 28(1): 25–44.  
22  
23  
24
- 25 Suralová, A. 2014. "The Czech nanny as a "door to majority" for children of Vietnamese  
26 immigrants in the Czech Republic." *Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny*, 3(40):  
27 171–186.  
28  
29  
30  
31
- 32 Straubhaar, J. D. 1991. "Beyond media imperialism: Assymetrical interdependence and  
33 cultural proximity." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 8(1): 39–59.  
34  
35  
36
- 37 Straubhaar, J. D. 2003. "Choosing national TV: Cultural capital, language, and cultural  
38 proximity in Brazil." In *The Impact of International Television: A Paradigm Shift*,  
39 Edited by M. G. Elasmr, 77–110. London: Routledge.  
40  
41  
42  
43
- 44 Sung, S. Y. L. 2013. "Digitization and online cultures of the Korean Wave." In *The Korean*  
45 *Wave: Korean Media Go Global*, Edited by Y. Kim, 135–147. London, UK:  
46 Routledge.  
47  
48  
49  
50
- 51 Svobodová, A., and Janská, E. (2016). "Identity Development Among Youth of Vietnamese  
52 Descent in the Czech Republic." In *Contested Childhoods: Growing Up in Migrancy*,  
53 Edited by M. L. Seeberg, and M. E., Gozdzia, 121–137. Berlin, Germany: Springer.  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Szymańska-Matusiewicz, G. 2015. "The Vietnamese communities in Central and Eastern  
4  
5 Europe as part of the global Vietnamese diaspora," *Central and Eastern European*  
6  
7 *Migration Review*, 4(1): 5-10.  
8  
9
- 10 Thussu, D.K. (2000) *International Communication: Continuity and Change*. London: Arnold.  
11  
12 Thussu, D. K. (2007). "Mapping global media flow and contra-flow." In *Media on the Move:*  
13  
14 *Global Flow and Contra-flow*, Edited by D. K. Thussu, 11–32. London: Routledge.  
15  
16
- 17 Vacková, J., Velemínský Sr, M., Brabcová, I., and Záleská, V. 2014. "Subjective social status  
18  
19 in select Ukrainians, Vietnamese, and Mongolians living in the Czech Republic."  
20  
21 *Neuro Endocrinology Letters*, 35(Suppl 1): 90–101.  
22  
23
- 24 Yamato, E. 2014. "Cultural proximity and reflexivity in interpreting transnational media texts:  
25  
26 the case of Malaysians consuming Japanese popular culture." *The Qualitative Report*,  
27  
28 *19*(47): 1-20.  
29  
30
- 31 Yang, J. 2012. "The Korean wave (hallyu) in East Asia: A comparison of Chinese, Japanese  
32  
33 and Taiwan." *Development and Society*, 41(1): 103–147.  
34  
35
- 36 Yoo, J. W., Jo, S., and Jung, J. 2014. "The effects of television viewing, cultural proximity,  
37  
38 and ethnocentrism on country image." *Social Behavior and Personality: an*  
39  
40 *international journal*, 42(1): 89–96.  
41  
42
- 43 Yoon, K. 2017. "Korean Wave| Cultural Translation of K-Pop Among Asian Canadian Fans."  
44  
45 *International Journal of Communication*, 11: 2350–2366.  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

## Abstract

Based on in-depth interviews with Vietnamese young adults in the Czech Republic who consume Korean media products on a regular basis, this study investigates how their diasporic contexts are reflected in the consumption of Korean media products. While participants quickly spotted cultural proximity as the reason for their preferences, the in-depth analysis further revealed that cultural proximity was particularly identified (a) when they devised a concept of the Asian family from the dialectic relationship among their family experiences, the represented family culture in Korean media, and the observed Czech family culture; (b) when they found their diasporic identity in the image of hardworking immigrants; and (c) when they highlighted their cultural tastes and valued their human capital in contrast to those of Czech people and other kinds of Vietnamese migrants.

Keywords: Vietnamese migrants, Czech Republic, cultural proximity, Korean media, transnational media consumption, diasporic contexts

## Young Migrant Vietnamese in the Czech Republic Reflect Diasporic Contexts in Their Identification of Cultural Proximity with Korean Media

### Introduction

In 2012 when I started teaching at a university in the Czech Republic (hereafter, CR), I came across an interesting news story about a K-pop (Korean pop music) World Festival held in Korea. A Czech girl band won the grand prize with its performance, which copied a famous K-pop girl band, Girls' Generation. It was the picture of the girl band that caught my attention, though, because five members out of eight looked not Czech but Asian. The news story made me aware that Vietnamese performers account for a large segment of Korean popular culture fandom in the CR. And a simple question, why?, popped up, which was

1  
2  
3 followed by a few common-sense questions: Is the popularity of Korean media in the CR  
4 because of the popularity of Korean media in their home country, Vietnam? Is it because they  
5 find commonalities with Korean media? or Is it because globally mobile people are naturally  
6 more into transnational media products? I learned in casual conversations with Vietnamese  
7 people that the answer to these questions is mostly yes Korean media has been popular for  
8 years in Vietnam. The cultural distance between Vietnam and Korea is much smaller than that  
9 between Vietnam and the CR. Transnational people like the Vietnamese in the CR and me  
10 tend to be more exposed to various cultures. Thus, the answer must be yes. However, the  
11 questions and answer were firmly grounded in so-called methodological nationalism that does  
12 not account for various cultural variations and individual contexts. Thus, my questions led me  
13 to plan a research project focusing more on the transnational dynamics of migrants' lives,  
14 cultural flows, media representations, and so on.

15  
16  
17 This study focuses specifically on young Vietnamese migrants who routinely consume  
18 Korean media products by posing a broad question: How are their diasporic contexts reflected  
19 in the consumption of Korean media products? In order to fully understand their life  
20 experiences and cultural orientations, this study delves specifically into how the young  
21 migrants place themselves in diasporic contexts in the CR and how their life experiences  
22 directly and indirectly shape their preferences for Korean media products. Cultural proximity  
23 is a possible theoretical concept that may explain their daily consumption of Korean media.  
24 However, this study looks further into where and how the proximity between the young  
25 migrants and Korean media texts is identified.

## 26 27 28 **Literature Review**

### 29 30 31 ***Vietnamese in the CR***

32  
33 According to the Czech Statistical Office, the official number of Vietnamese in the CR  
34 reached 58,025 in 2016 (Czech Statistical Office 2017). Along with the Soviet Union and East  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Germany, Czechoslovakia was one of the popular destinations for Vietnamese occupational  
4 trainees under the economic cooperation among Soviet bloc countries. (Szymańska-  
5 Matusiewicz, 2015). After a short period post-1989, during which the number of Vietnamese  
6 dropped, the size of the Vietnamese community dramatically expanded from 3,500 in 1992  
7 (Drbohlav et al. 2009). Vietnamese are currently the third-largest group of foreigners with  
8 long-term residence permits in the CR, following Ukraine and Slovak nationals (Kušniráková  
9 2014).

10  
11  
12 Since Vietnamese are generally classified as economic migrants like other non-EU  
13 migrants from former Soviet states and Mongolia, there have been many studies focusing  
14 specifically on economic motives and labour relations (e.g., Hüwelmeier 2015). In addition,  
15 since most studies have been reported in the Czech language, Vietnamese in the CR are a  
16 relatively less known population of international migration. Recently, Vietnamese have been  
17 one of the main immigrant populations examined by multiple studies aiming to evaluate  
18 multiculturalism and integration policy in the CR as a country facing a transition from an  
19 emigration country to a country of immigration (e.g., Drbohlav and Džúrová 2007). However,  
20 the migrants' everyday experiences have been less represented in academia compared to  
21 multiple criminological studies on this population (e.g., Nožina and Kraus 2016).

22  
23  
24 Intercultural studies have recently focused on the sociocultural experiences of  
25 Vietnamese in the CR. One study investigated the history of the racialization of Vietnamese  
26 and cultural adaptation in comparison with other minority groups (Alamgir 2013). A  
27 sociological study highlighted distinctive kinship relations in Vietnamese families who have  
28 hired Czech nannies; the nannies supplement the role of parents who are absent due to  
29 extensive economic activity (Souralová 2014). Also, multiple studies have been conducted on  
30 the language practices of the study population (e.g., Sherman and Homoláč 2017)



1  
2  
3 Vietnamese are also known for a higher number of children (30%) and women (43%)  
4 compared to other groups of migrants in the CR (Drbohlav et al. 2009). The number of  
5 children and youth (up to 26 years of age) in the Vietnamese immigrant population has  
6 increased and accounts for 40% of the Vietnamese population in the CR (Kušniráková 2014).  
7  
8 Despite the large number of children and young adults, detailed demographic information  
9 such as birthplace and educational level is very limited. A recent study that focuses  
10 specifically on the identity construction of young Vietnamese migrants illustrates the fluid  
11 nature of identity construction; identity hovers between one that reflects their family traditions  
12 and another that reflects the majority community in the CR (Svobodová and Janská 2016).  
13  
14 Also, a comparative study highlights the ambivalent identity of Vietnamese in the CR (Cheng  
15 and Hu 2015). In response to the increasing interest in the diasporic identity of Vietnamese in  
16 the CR, this study pays a close attention to their transnational life and cultural experiences.

### 30 ***Migrants' Transnational Media Practices***

31  
32  
33 Migrants' transnational communication practices have been increasingly studied as  
34 advanced communication technologies have been widely adopted in everyday life and global  
35 mobility has increased sharply in recent decades. Previous studies from a variety of  
36 disciplines, including migrant studies and intercultural communication, have demonstrated  
37 how new media from satellites to the Internet have changed the life experiences of  
38 international migrants; aided by various communication technologies, migrants (re)build  
39 human and social networks across borders by keeping ties with people like family members  
40 and peers in their countries of origin (e.g., Chib, Malik, Aricat, and Kadir 2014).  
41  
42 Transnational communication is also an important means of engaging in domestic politics in  
43 their home countries (Aricat 2015). While some studies highlight the importance of  
44 transnational media consumption in maintaining native identity (e.g., Kama and Malka 2013),  
45 others demonstrate how migrants' transnational practices reciprocally shape members of the  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 receiving society and their identity (e.g., Ehrkamp 2005). Transnational media  
4  
5 communication is also an important means for migrants to cope with daily stress in their new  
6  
7 home by entertaining themselves (e. g., Kim 2016).  
8  
9

10 The above-mentioned studies focus on transnational practices between migrants'  
11  
12 country of origin and their new home. As the distribution of cultural products widens along  
13  
14 with rapid technological advancements, however, migrants have often crossed multiple  
15  
16 borders to find culturally relevant media products. Using data across different European  
17  
18 countries, Christiansen (2004) demonstrates that migrants tend to seek more news than does  
19  
20 the majority population by accessing not only news media of their country of origin but also  
21  
22 international news media in English, such as BBC World, which is available on satellite  
23  
24 television. An earlier study presents the cultural negotiation of Vietnamese youths in  
25  
26 Australia, who consume media products from Hong Kong by using earlier forms of electronic  
27  
28 media like video recorders (Cunningham and Nguyen 2001). Similarly, Korean American  
29  
30 youths access Japanese as well as Korean television series not only because they prefer media  
31  
32 products with which they are familiar but also because they want to compensate themselves  
33  
34 for limited cultural representation in U.S. television products (Park 2004). Kartosen and Tan  
35  
36 (2013) investigate a broader population of young Asian migrants in the Netherlands who  
37  
38 extensively consume nonhomeland Asian media products, and they discuss the construction  
39  
40 of Asian ethnic-cultural identity through the consumption of media products mainly from  
41  
42 China, Japan, and Korea.  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

### 49 ***Global Korean Media***

50  
51 Since the late 1990s when a couple of Korean television dramas (K-dramas) gained  
52  
53 popularity with Chinese audiences, the increasing popularity of Korean media products in  
54  
55 Asia has been noted by both academia and the public (Shim 2006). The cultural phenomenon  
56  
57 came to be called the "Korean Wave," with a series of successful Korean television dramas  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 gaining popularity in China starting in the mid-1990s. Since then, multiple Korean  
4  
5 blockbuster films and systematically commodified pop singers (K-pop) have successfully  
6  
7 penetrated Asian cultural markets (Shim 2006). In particular, the continuous success of  
8  
9 television dramas such as *Winter Sonata* in various countries, including Japan and Vietnam,  
10  
11 in the early 2000s stimulated developments in related industries such as tourism and  
12  
13 consumer-goods markets in Asia (Ryoo 2009). The popularity of Korean media products,  
14  
15 followed by the increasing market share of Korean businesses in the Asian market, has led to  
16  
17 the formation of a brand-like image of the country (e.g., Sung 2015). Originally coined by  
18  
19 Chinese news media in the late 1990s, the term “Korean Wave” has been widely used to  
20  
21 describe the international success of Korean media (Kim 2013).  
22  
23  
24  
25

26 The role of advanced communication technologies should not be underestimated in the  
27  
28 later phase of Korean media’s success. While the early phase of Korean media’s success in  
29  
30 Asia was initiated through more traditional practices of media marketing, such as the export  
31  
32 of media products, the diffusion of Korean media products beyond Asia in recent years has  
33  
34 been propelled by integrating media products into consumers’ activities on Web 2.0, which is  
35  
36 called “Korean Wave 2.0” (e.g., Jin 2012). The huge success of certain media products on  
37  
38 social media such as YouTube has attracted giant media corporations to invest their resources  
39  
40 in social media (Hess and Waller 2011). The worldwide success of Psy’s “Gangnam Style”  
41  
42 demonstrates how Korean media corporations elaborately adopt social media in promoting  
43  
44 their products overseas (Edwards 2012). The strategic new media promotion has been backed  
45  
46 by the voluntary distribution of Korean media products by audiences, widening the scope of  
47  
48 consumption and distribution of Korean media products in the world (Jung and Shim 2013).  
49  
50 Audiences for Korean media have become more active in sharing their opinions and feelings  
51  
52 about Korean media with their peers via social media (Jin 2018).  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Propelled by extended dissemination, Korean media products have gradually gained  
4 popularity with non-Asian audiences (e.g., Jin 2018; Lee 2018; Marinescu and Balica 2013;  
5 Meza and Park 2015). Once established through an increased market share in the Asian-  
6 culture industry, Korean media corporations aggressively promoted their products to reach  
7 beyond Asia. Studies on the non-Asian reception of Korean media products have also focused  
8 on Asian diasporic audiences in the West, which consume Korean media and form  
9 transnational fan communities. Asian immigrant audiences in Austria, who are marginalised  
10 in Western society, have constructed an East Asian imagined community by consuming  
11 culturally familiar media products from Korea (Sung 2013). In the United States, young Asian  
12 migrants nurture a pan ethnic identity while constructing a coeval territory of East Asia across  
13 borders (Ju and Lee 2015). Asian Canadians, who are mainly networked via social media,  
14 consume advanced and stylish Western tastes and/or their own ethnic traditions from Korean  
15 media texts (Yoon and Jin 2016). As diasporic Asians, Korean pop-music fans in Canada  
16 embrace cultural products by reflexively interpreting the meaning of cultural products as a  
17 means of exercising their diasporic identity (Yoon 2017).

18  
19 The extended transnationalization of Korean media in an advanced technological  
20 context, the Western reception of Korean media, and the transnational imagined communities  
21 of Asian migrants consuming Korean media may define the current study population,  
22 Vietnamese young adults in the CR who extensively consume Korean media products.  
23 Guided by these previous studies, the current study focuses mainly on how the migrant  
24 audiences reflect their diasporic contexts in their transnational media consumption.

### 25 ***Transnational Media Consumption: Reflexively Identifying Cultural Proximity***

26 The success of Korean media in the globalised media market has become additional  
27 evidence for the emergence of new transnational media flow decentralizing the global media  
28 market (e.g., Thussu 2007). The emergence of regional or counter media flow refutes the  
29  
30

1  
2  
3 dominant discourse of cultural imperialism that has highlighted a global media market  
4 monopolised by U.S. media (Thussu 2000). Especially in Asia, rapid economic growth, the  
5 transnationalization of the media industry, the large size of the regional market based on its  
6 high density of population, and advanced communication technologies have been important  
7 contextual bases of the emergence of intra-regional flow (Iwabuchi 2002). Media industries in  
8 East Asia have successfully localised their media products in the course of transnationalization  
9 in their regional markets (Iwabuchi 2008).

10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19 The cultural proximity thesis has been usefully employed to explain decentralised  
20 media flow. Exemplifying the regional media flow in Latin America, the thesis posits that  
21 media consumers tend to prefer media products from culturally adjacent regions (Straubhaar,  
22 1991). With the rapid transnationalization of media industries, the notion has been useful in  
23 explaining migrants' consumption of media products from their countries of origin. La  
24 Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) further developed the notion of cultural proximity by  
25 presenting the existence of multilayered proximity; first, cultural proximity varies across  
26 locals within a country, and second, people often identify their cultural proximity with certain  
27 genres dominated by advanced media industries, such as U.S. cartoons. In studies on the  
28 transnational dissemination of Korean media products, cultural proximity has been widely  
29 applied to explain their popularity not only in East and South East Asia (e.g., Yoo, Jo, and  
30 Jung 2014) but also in distant countries like Turkey (Oh and Chae 2013). These studies  
31 centre on international audiences' shared cultural values and traditions, such as family values  
32 reflected through Korean cultural products. Similarly, social proximity is a common variable  
33 explaining the popularity of Korean media products in different East Asian countries (Yang  
34 2012).

35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56 However, the notion of cultural proximity has also been criticised mainly because it  
57 sees culture as a static unit that can be observable and predictable (Kraidy 2002). Viewing  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 culture as a static unit in which the essence of a culture is unchangeable hinders  
4  
5 understanding of the variation during reception (Kim 2009). On the other hand, the notion of  
6  
7 reflexive (critical) proximity particularly focuses on migrants' media consumption,  
8  
9 highlighting reflexive diasporic identities positioned between their past experiences in home  
10  
11 cultures and migrant experiences across the border (Georgiou 2012). As Arab women in the  
12  
13 United Kingdom consume soap operas on Arabic television, they reflect multiple identities as  
14  
15 Arabs, Arab women, Muslims, immigrants, Londoners, and more. While the migrant women  
16  
17 appropriate Arabic soap operas as a means to connect them with their region of origin, some  
18  
19 of them reflect their gender identity as Arab women in London in the course of distancing  
20  
21 distance themselves from the cultural logic underlying the television shows (Georgiou 2012).  
22  
23 Similarly, cultural proximity does not lie in national or ethnic origin but is presented through  
24  
25 an individual's reflexive contexts. Audiences tend to individually identify proximity in certain  
26  
27 media texts (Yamato 2014). Iwabuchi (2001, 58) claims that cultural proximity could only be  
28  
29 "subjectively identified and experienced by the audience" in his study on the dissemination of  
30  
31 Japanese pop culture in Taiwan. Taiwanese audiences do not find an intrinsically similar  
32  
33 culture in Japanese cultural products but identify cultural proximity by recognizing the same  
34  
35 temporality in Japanese contemporary culture.  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41

42 Studies on the reception of Korean media products in Asian societies have also found  
43  
44 cultural proximity between the audiences' contexts reflected in their consumption and the  
45  
46 Korean context placed in the products. Positing the recent popularity of Korean cultural  
47  
48 products in East Asia as a descendent of previous Asian pop culture once led by Hong Kong  
49  
50 and Japanese media industries, Cho (2011) suggests Asian audiences find a coeval  
51  
52 relationship with the represented Korean sociocultural context in Korean media products.  
53  
54 Asian fans of Korean media products feel the contemporariness of the modern and urban  
55  
56 styles of Korean media products, which project their shared capitalist-consumerist  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 orientations. Also, Ainslie (2016) shows that Thai fans of Korean television programs use  
4 foreign cultural products as a means to assess and critique their own positions in diverse Thai  
5 sociocultural contexts. The study demonstrates how urban audiences and rural-ethnic  
6 audiences find cultural proximity differently in Korean media texts. In an earlier study on the  
7 Taiwanese consumption of Korean media, Kim (2005) describes a coeval relationship  
8 between the characteristics of contemporary Korean society represented in Korean media  
9 products and everyday experiences and identities in contemporary Taiwanese society.  
10 Recently, Yoon (2017) elaborates cultural proximity by introducing a new concept called  
11 “cultural affinity.” In his study, Asian K-pop fans in Canada exercise their identity as Asian  
12 migrants by appropriating the represented images of youthful and successful individuals in  
13 Korean media products. Along with previous studies on young migrant audiences consuming  
14 Korean media products, an understanding of reflexive cultural proximity guides the current  
15 study to focus particularly on the contextual reflection of Korean media consumption by  
16 diasporic Vietnamese young migrants in the CR.

### Methodology

17  
18  
19 As part of a larger research project on transnational media practices in the Vietnamese  
20 diasporic community of the CR, the current study focused particularly on young adults who  
21 actively consumed Korean media products by taking advantage of their language skills and  
22 technological literacies. Before starting the study, the investigator learned that young adult  
23 Vietnamese in the CR were the first group of people who explicated their cultural preference  
24 for Korean media products. They shared some aspects of demographical background with the  
25 investigator; they were mostly born in Vietnam and moved to the CR in their early years; they  
26 were relatively well educated; many of them could speak multiple languages, including  
27 Vietnamese, Czech, and English. Investigating the contextual connection between  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 participants' life experiences and their media practices, the current study focused narrowly on  
4  
5 this relatively homogenous population in the Vietnamese diasporic community of the CR.  
6  
7

8         This study was based on qualitative data from 12 in-depth interviews conducted in  
9  
10 two major Czech cities, Prague and Brno. Following the basic principle of purposive  
11  
12 sampling, this study specifically selected participants who were suitable for the research  
13  
14 focus. The youngest participant was 18 years old, while the oldest was 26. Since it was not  
15  
16 difficult to find fluent English speakers in this population, all interviews were conducted in  
17  
18 English. With the exception of two participants who attended English-based private colleges  
19  
20 in the CR, all participants were either students at or graduates of Czech national universities.  
21  
22 Likewise, the economic status of their families was generally homogeneous. Despite the  
23  
24 occupational diversity of their parents, most participants identified their families as middle  
25  
26 class. In this study, however, gender was not equally represented because it was known that  
27  
28 Korean media fans in the Vietnamese community were predominantly female, and thus  
29  
30 female participants could be recruited much more easily. Although two male participants  
31  
32 joined the research initially, their interview data were excluded from this study because of the  
33  
34 weak intensity of their Korean media consumption. Planning a larger future research project  
35  
36 covering a wider scope of participants, the investigator ruled out other young Vietnamese  
37  
38 migrants who either were born or arrived in the CR only recently because these two  
39  
40 populations were far less representative of the young-adult generation of the Vietnamese  
41  
42 diasporic community. Thus, all study participants were born in Vietnam and moved to the CR  
43  
44 at young ages ranging from 5 to 8.  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49

50  
51         The first four participants were recruited through a Czech informant who was involved  
52  
53 in diverse international communities in Prague, including Vietnamese and Korean  
54  
55 communities. Snowball sampling was used to recruit the rest of the participants with the help  
56  
57 of earlier participants. Although the researcher conducted a total of 17 interviews, five  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 interviews were excluded from this study due to lack of relevance, such as weak intensity of  
4  
5 Korean media consumption or multiple relocations for family reasons. The semistructured  
6  
7 interview was composed of two broad themes, life experiences and media consumption. An  
8  
9 interview typically lasted at least two hours because the investigator often asked many  
10  
11 subquestions to encourage participants to share detailed experiences. The investigator  
12  
13 transcribed interviews verbatim for data analysis and coded the data by repeatedly reading the  
14  
15 transcription. By comparing interviews, the investigator found similarities and differences in  
16  
17 the data, which eventually led to identifying significant common themes. During the process  
18  
19 of data analysis, each participant was assigned a number.  
20  
21  
22

## 23 Findings

### 24 *Why Korean Media?*

25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

There was a common oxymoron in the interviews. Many participants said, “I like Korean TV,” but they did not watch television. Rather, they consumed media products mostly on the Internet by using either their computer or mobile phone. Although most households of the study participants subscribed to satellite television, it was a technology for their parents, who used it for watching Vietnamese news and shows both at home and in the workplace. On the other hand, the youngsters were loyal Internet users. Like many other Internet users, they used a variety of online services primarily for practical purposes. When it came to entertainment, however, they almost exclusively consumed Korean media products available on the Internet.

Many participants started consuming Korean television shows on a daily basis in their early years. While some of them started watching dramas with their mother or sibling, others first learned about Korean television shows from their Vietnamese friends in the CR. Participants often used abstract adjectives such as *funny*, *interesting*, and *entertaining* to explain the reason they consistently consume Korean media products. Cultural proximity was

1  
2  
3 also frequently cited by participants as the reason for their cultural preference for Korean  
4  
5 media. Asked more about cultural proximity, however, many participants initially responded  
6  
7 that “Korean culture is similar to Vietnamese culture,” which was based on the  
8  
9 commonsensical understanding of culture as national culture. Aiming to know how to  
10  
11 interpret the cultural proximity between the young Vietnamese migrants in the CR and  
12  
13 Korean media texts, this study inquired further about their life experiences as diasporic  
14  
15 children in the CR and transnational Korean media consumption. Based on the answers, this  
16  
17 study found that cultural proximity between participants and Korean media texts was  
18  
19 identified (a) when they devised the concept of the Asian family from the dialectic  
20  
21 relationship among their family experiences, family practices portrayed in Korean dramas,  
22  
23 and Czech family culture; (b) when they found their diasporic identity in the image of  
24  
25 hardworking immigrants; and (c) when they highlighted their cultural tastes and valued their  
26  
27 human capital in contrast to those of Czech people and other kinds of Vietnamese migrants.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32

### 33 ***Dialectically Identified Meaning of Family***

34  
35 “When I first saw *Full House* (a drama series) more than 10 years ago, I liked the  
36  
37 stars on the show. The two main stars were good looking. . . I liked the warm-hearted  
38  
39 story. People in the show had kind hearts like family members.” (Participant 1)

40  
41  
42 *Family* was a frequently mentioned word when participants stressed familiarity with  
43  
44 Korean television shows. As family is one of the most salient themes of Korean television  
45  
46 dramas (Kang and Kim 2011), much literature on Korean drama consumption points out  
47  
48 family values as evidence of cultural proximity between Asian (diasporic) audiences and  
49  
50 Korean cultural texts (e.g., Leung 2008; Sung 2013). Likewise, participants of this study  
51  
52 found cultural similarities in the structure of Korean families, family communication styles,  
53  
54 and the decision-making process in a household, which are often depicted in Korean dramas.  
55  
56  
57  
58 Particularly, some participants specifically pointed out that the authority-submission  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 relationship between parents and children was commonly seen in many Korean dramas as  
4 well as in their own families. As immigrants, their parents often stress that conventional  
5 family values be strictly kept in their diasporic life, such as the importance of family meal  
6 time, family language practices, and discipline in child education.  
7  
8  
9

10  
11  
12 “In Korean drama, there are many scenes of family dinner. It’s an important scene to  
13 understand family relationship. . . . It’s similar to my family. Dinner time is my mom’s  
14 nagging time (laugh).” (Participant 5)  
15  
16  
17

18  
19 Participants also defined the conservative family culture in their close, yet  
20 subordinate, relationship with their parents. More important, conservative family values are  
21 reflected in their diasporic context. For many participants, family was a diaspora separated  
22 from everyday Czech society. Even if they were well integrated into Czech society and  
23 culture, their parents believe family should be maintained in conventional Vietnamese ways  
24 because it was one of the most distinctive cultures accounting for their identity. When  
25 contrasted to Czech family culture, their own found common ground with Korean family  
26 culture depicted in Korean dramas. This was typically reflected in a term, “Asian family  
27 culture,” used by participant 12.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

39  
40 “I know my Czech friends also have family gathering often. Family is important for  
41 Czech people. But, it’s not like Asian family. My parents are stricter than Czech  
42 parents and they are crazy about our education. I don’t think Czech parents are like  
43 that” (Participant 12).  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

49 In sum, their families’ cultural proximity to Korean families represented in television  
50 products was formulated in the transnational dynamic of their lives: (a) their parents  
51 conservatively maintained family practices that originated across the border; (b) family  
52 culture was one important cultural element that distinguished them from Czech culture; and  
53 (c) they found a seemingly similar family culture in television dramas produced in another  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Asian country. Family is the fundamental place for the migrant children not only to  
4  
5 experience Vietnamese-ness but also to differentiate themselves from their mainstream  
6  
7 counterparts. The cultural proximity of their own and Korean families was not found in the  
8  
9 essence of the two cultures but identified in their subjective interpretation of family cultures  
10  
11 experienced in the CR.  
12  
13

### 14 **Hardworking People**

15  
16  
17 “I’ve seen many Korean dramas about people working hard. It’s a kind of cliché.  
18  
19 Everyone in Korean dramas work hard. It’s a typical image of Korean people to  
20  
21 me . . . Vietnamese people work very hard. It is a kind of our thing.” (Participant 2)  
22  
23

24 As many academic studies emphasise work ethic as a common traditional value that  
25  
26 facilitates rapid economic development in Asia (i.e., Chan 1996), participants of this study  
27  
28 often identified their fellow Vietnamese and themselves as hardworking migrants while  
29  
30 stereotypically associating Korean people with the image of hardworking people in the media.  
31  
32 Responding to the stereotype, Korean media has been keen on embedding traditional cultural  
33  
34 values like work ethic in their products as part of their industrial strategy (Choi 2010). Some  
35  
36 participants of this study preferred a story about people who made every effort to succeed,  
37  
38 calling it a typical genre of Korean dramas. They sympathised with characters who overcame  
39  
40 unfortunate situations and strived to succeed. The young migrant audiences sympathised not  
41  
42 only with fictitious characters in media products but also with Korean celebrities who devoted  
43  
44 themselves to excelling in their areas. Well informed about the Korean media industry, they  
45  
46 also knew that Korean actors and singers had spent many years to train, as planned by their  
47  
48 management companies. Participant 3, who was a loyal fan of many K-pop bands, such as Big  
49  
50 Bang, said that she liked not only their music but also their behind-the-scenes stories  
51  
52 portraying the long hours of practice and multiple hardships necessary to be stars. Similarly,  
53  
54 some other participants regularly followed the stories about their K-pop stars on the Internet.  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 While appreciating stories about hardworking people from Korea, participants were  
4 proud of the image of Vietnamese people as hardworking migrants. Although they agreed that  
5 the work ethic originated in traditional Vietnamese cultural values, they specifically  
6 constructed the image of hardworking people from their daily context in the diasporic  
7 community. Most participants shared a similar view of their diligent parents as the main  
8 reason for their current stable life. Their hardworking parents spent excessive hours at their  
9 work places, such as small grocery stores called *potraviný*<sup>1</sup> in Czech, small retail stores  
10 selling imported goods, or large Vietnamese wholesale complexes located in major Czech  
11 cities like Prague and Brno.

22  
23  
24 “Vietnamese people are known as hardworking people. I agree. Our older generations  
25 like my parents have worked so hard. Vietnamese’s stores always open first and close  
26 last.” (Participant 3)

27  
28  
29  
30 A strong work ethic was also practiced by the young migrants, who displayed their  
31 belief in the norm as a necessary condition for their diasporic life. Some participants  
32 summarised their school life with the image of a hard-studying student, regarding their  
33 educational achievement as a reward for their sacrificial parents. It was important to them to  
34 point out that they were willing to embrace the stereotypical image of hardworking migrants.  
35 Participant 7, who shared her experience at her school, where teachers and classmates  
36 stereotypically expected her to outperform, said the image helped her devote herself to  
37 schoolwork. For her, a strong work ethic was not only an inherited value from her family and  
38 community but also a role she played as a young migrant from a stereotyped diasporic  
39 community.

---

56  
57 <sup>1</sup> *Potraviný* is a very important contextual cue in understanding the Vietnamese diasporic community in CR.  
58 Backed by large wholesale networks of Vietnamese, Vietnamese run small grocery stores on every corner of  
59 Czech cities. Stores carry a variety of groceries and open early and stay open late to attract local customers who  
60 casually shop for a small amount of groceries. Participants also said that Vietnamese in the CR are typically  
represented as people working at a *potraviný*.

1  
2  
3           Raised in a hardworking family and motivated to be diligent, Vietnamese young adults  
4 were familiar with the stories about hardworking people in Korean media products. Cultural  
5 proximity was identified through the familiarity. By consuming the image of Korea and the  
6 represented image of hardworking Koreans in the media, they could confirm the willingly  
7 embraced image of hardworking migrants. Going one step further, some of them even shaped  
8 their future by consuming the images of fictitious characters. Those who liked Korean  
9 television shows dramatizing a variety of professionals such as medical doctors, lawyers,  
10 cooks, IT engineers, and financial managers yearned to live like the characters who made  
11 every effort to achieve their life goals. Another component of cultural proximity was found in  
12 the lifestyles of the fictitious, hardworking professionals.  
13  
14

### 25 ***Keeping Pace with Trends***

26  
27           As previous studies have explained, Asian (migrant) audiences can feel the  
28 contemporariness in the up-to-date styles of Korean media products (e.g., Yoon 2017). This  
29 study's participants were also loyal audiences of the so-called Korean trendy dramas  
30 characterised by stories about urban professionals surrounded by contemporary lifestyle  
31 amenities. They stayed informed about Korean celebrities, cultural trends in Seoul, new  
32 fashion and beauty products, and so on. Participant 2 revealed her cultural tastes by  
33 romanticizing about the image of the technologically advanced society and hypermodern  
34 urban spaces frequently represented in Korean television shows.  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45

46           “It's funny to see every person on Korean dramas lives in a luxurious flat. They wear  
47 expensive suits and drive expensive cars. I know it's just a drama. But, I am interested  
48 in them. I want to visit Seoul to see this kind of scenes. Especially, I want to go to  
49 Gangnam and Hongdae. I heard people are very stylish in these areas” (Participant 2).  
50  
51

52           In the meantime, consuming Korean media is a cultural practice differentiating the  
53 young Vietnamese migrants not only from Czech people but also from other kinds of  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Vietnamese migrants, such as their parents' generation and recent migrants. They tended to  
4 regard Czech people as slow to adopt new cultures and products and insensitive to trends.  
5  
6 Many participants bluntly said Czech people looked outdated. They contrasted Czech society  
7  
8 with the young Vietnamese community as old versus young people. This attitude was partly  
9  
10 affected by their earlier experiences in small Czech towns. More than half the participants  
11  
12 were raised in small towns because of their parents' businesses. They often compared their  
13  
14 life in small towns with their life in Prague or Brno.  
15  
16  
17

18  
19 "I lived in a small village near Ostrava. It's a never changing town. People are so  
20  
21 conservative and do the same things all the time. They don't know anything about new  
22  
23 culture. Now I am happy with my life in Prague. There are more young people and  
24  
25 foreigners. In Prague I have many friends who are interested in Korean media. I  
26  
27 haven't seen anyone (who is interested in Korean media) in the village." (Participant  
28  
29  
30 7)  
31  
32

33 They identified themselves as people who were sensitive to cultural trends and had tastes  
34  
35 commensurate with urban life by employing the analogy comparing young Vietnamese versus  
36  
37 old Czech people with urban centres like Prague versus small Czech towns. Meanwhile, they  
38  
39 regarded Korean media culture as a new, trendy one. Distinguishing themselves from the old,  
40  
41 outdated image of the Czech village, they highlighted their cultural taste for the urban, trendy  
42  
43 lifestyle found in Korean media products. The cultural proximity between their cultural tastes  
44  
45 and the represented images of Korean young professionals' lifestyles kept them aloof from  
46  
47 the stagnant Czech culture as they defined it. Moreover, the distancing strategy was also  
48  
49 carried out in their diasporic community.  
50  
51  
52

53 While belonging to the Vietnamese diasporic community, they were more tuned in to  
54  
55 the upcoming trends of media, culture, and lifestyle than were other Vietnamese because the  
56  
57 young migrants saw themselves as having higher human capital. Benefitting from stable  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 living conditions, the 1.5 generation of Vietnamese migrants could gain multilanguage skills  
4 and maintain a relaxed lifestyle, which allowed them to use a wide range of media sources.  
5

6  
7 On the other hand, the older generation or recently migrated young Vietnamese were known  
8 to have very limited options in their media consumption. Those who worked all day in their  
9 small shops continued to use Vietnamese satellite television, often as background noise.  
10  
11

12  
13 Although those Vietnamese also used the Internet and mobile devices, they relied on Web  
14 services based in Vietnam and narrow compatriot networks on social media. A limited  
15 linguistic competence in Czech and other foreign languages as well as long hours of work  
16 hindered the older generation and the new migrants from diversifying their media choices.  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

23  
24 Many parents of this study's participants also watched Korean television shows on a  
25 regular basis. However, the patterns of Korean media consumption of the two generations had  
26 deviated from each other over time. While the young audiences stayed updated on Korean  
27 media and cultural trends by surfing the information ocean, their parents were likely to be  
28 tenacious in their practice of watching seemingly old-fashioned Korean television shows that  
29 were available on Vietnamese satellite and Web services in the Vietnamese language.  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36

37  
38 "Recently, I only watch Korean dramas with English subtitles. They are more  
39 available and much quicker (to obtain) than those with Vietnamese subtitles. They are  
40 supposed to be distributed by Korean Americans. . . . I get information about Korean  
41 media, culture, and celebrities from many websites in English." (Participant 6)  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46

47  
48 The migrants who were competent in English could access all available media  
49 sources, which allowed them to keep pace with Korean media trends. Taking advantage of  
50 their perceived higher human capital, they took a step closer to the cultural tastes of their  
51 contemporary Korean audiences while taking a step back from other Vietnamese who had  
52 experienced different life trajectories. In other words, cultural proximity to cultural trends in  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 Korean media was identified in the distance lying between their own and other Vietnamese's  
4 media practices, which was possibly explained by different life experiences.  
5  
6

7  
8 In sum, the trendy media consumers recognised that Korean media represented Korean  
9 society's value of stressing the pursuit of human capital by portraying a variety of professions  
10 that lead the society. The young audiences, who position themselves as educated, modernised,  
11 trendy, and urban young migrants, identified cultural proximity to a Korean media culture that  
12 represents fast-changing urban lifestyles. Korean dramas featuring young professionals are  
13 regarded as a subgenre the migrant children are especially fond of. By reflecting on their self-  
14 defined cosmopolitan identity, the young Vietnamese identify their cultural proximity to  
15 Korean society and the way they see their values in a certain genre of Korean media (Pastina  
16 and Straubhaar 2005).  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27

### 28 **Discussion and Concluding Remarks**

29  
30 This study examines how young Vietnamese in the CR reflect their diasporic life  
31 experiences in the way they define the cultural proximity of their lives to Korean culture  
32 represented in the media. While explaining the reasons for their preferences for certain  
33 Korean media genres or programs, the young adults often disclose their life experiences that  
34 are part of their self-identification as the 1.5 generation of Vietnamese in the CR. While they  
35 have been educated in the Czech educational system and have built various communities with  
36 Czech people, they have also been strongly pushed to maintain Vietnamese cultural practices  
37 in their families. The image of hardworking people earned through their parents' migratory  
38 lives is also actively embraced by the migrant children, who have also been stereotypically  
39 identified as hardworking Vietnamese students. They value the work ethic as the main driving  
40 force making it possible for them to settle in the CR successfully. While appreciating their  
41 parents' sacrifice for a new life in the CR, they also differentiate themselves from their  
42 parents, whose community is quite limited within the Vietnamese diaspora. Benefitting from  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 education and global experiences, the migrant children stress their urban and cosmopolitan  
4  
5 cultural tastes to distinguish themselves from other Vietnamese migrants as well as from  
6  
7 Czech people. These diasporic experiences, which lead them to identify as the 1.5 generation  
8  
9 of Vietnamese migrants in the CR, are reflected when they define the cultural proximity of  
10  
11 their life experiences to Korean culture portrayed in Korean media.  
12  
13

14  
15 First, grounded in the context of Vietnamese migrant families in the CR continuing  
16  
17 Vietnamese family practices as a way of maintaining (or nurturing) Vietnamese identity, the  
18  
19 migrant children feel closer to the represented Korean family in Korean media. Instead of  
20  
21 identifying with the essential similarities of Vietnamese and Korean family cultures, they  
22  
23 particularly reflect their diasporic family experiences in defining cultural proximity to Korean  
24  
25 family culture. The migrant family is located in the center of their description of their life  
26  
27 experiences in the CR. Raised by selfless, yet strict, parents who believe Vietnamese language  
28  
29 and family practices are important values for maintaining their Vietnamese-ness, the migrant  
30  
31 children appropriate their experience of being part of Vietnamese migrant families as a main  
32  
33 means to contrast with Czech culture. In sum, they place their family experiences in a  
34  
35 diasporic context while identifying the cultural proximity of their families to Korean families  
36  
37 represented in Korean media.  
38  
39  
40  
41

42  
43 Second, the image of hardworking migrants overlaps with the diligent Korean young  
44  
45 professionals represented in Korean media. Vietnamese migrants have stressed work ethic as  
46  
47 the primary means of survival in a new country of settlement, and consequently, Czech people  
48  
49 have stereotyped them as being hard workers even though they experience Vietnamese people  
50  
51 in many ways. Having witnessed their hardworking parents, the migrant children agree that  
52  
53 their academic performance is the best reward for their parents who have made so many  
54  
55 sacrifices for them. In doing so, they appropriate the image of hardworking migrants as part  
56  
57 of their own identity. The identified proximity of the image of hardworking migrants to the  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 typified image of young professionals in Korean media is grounded in this unique context of  
4  
5 the migrant children, who embrace the nurtured as well as the stereotyped image  
6

7  
8 Last, the young, educated, and cosmopolitan migrants highly value the advanced  
9  
10 lifestyle of successful young professionals, which is one of the most common motifs of  
11  
12 Korean media products. In finding cultural proximity to the cosmopolitan lifestyle stereotyped  
13  
14 in Korean media, the young Vietnamese differentiate themselves not only from local Czech  
15  
16 people but also from the elders in their own diasporic community. Their preference for the  
17  
18 lifestyle portrayed in Korean media, a lifestyle that is contrasted with the seemingly stagnant  
19  
20 lifestyle of their local Czech and diasporic communities, plays an important role in displaying  
21  
22 their cultural tastes. The migrant children have been educated in major Czech cities and have  
23  
24 acquired multilanguage skills, which allow them to be more accessible to cultural products  
25  
26 overseas than others are. By placing themselves in a cosmopolitan context, they feel close to  
27  
28 the young cosmopolitan professional lifestyle depicted in Korean media.  
29  
30  
31  
32

33  
34 This study's findings confirm that young Asian diasporic audiences of Korean media  
35  
36 tend to be attracted to the self-developed, successful young individuals portrayed in Korean  
37  
38 media (Yoon 2017). In addition to these findings, this study demonstrates why the diasporic  
39  
40 context of the migrant children should be taken into account in understanding their way of  
41  
42 identifying their cultural proximity to the represented Korean culture. As Georgiou (2012)  
43  
44 illuminates in her research on Arab audiences in the United Kingdom, this study's participants  
45  
46 also reflect multiple yet interrelated identities as migrant children: hardworking Vietnamese  
47  
48 students, urban professionals, and multilingual cosmopolitans. By reflecting on their life  
49  
50 experiences and their identities, the migrant children find cultural proximity to the lifestyles  
51  
52 and everyday practices represented in Korean media products. Their reflexivity in the course  
53  
54 of finding cultural proximity to Korean media products seems to show how they place  
55  
56 themselves in a broader global context as well as the diasporic context in the CR. Cultural  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 proximity is reflexively shaped in a dynamic between transnational migrants and media, yet it  
4  
5 is only subjectively identified by audiences grounded in their own life experiences (Iwabuchi  
6  
7 2001). The reflexive cultural proximity of the young migrant children to the represented  
8  
9 young professionals in Korean media also explains how people find cultural proximity in a  
10  
11 certain genre (Pastina and Straubhaar 2005).  
12  
13

14  
15 However, the findings of this study also show the limitations of this study. Participants  
16  
17 represent only a relatively homogeneous group of Vietnamese. Their perceived higher human  
18  
19 capital explains their distinctive living context. Thus, the findings limitedly explain cultural  
20  
21 proximity as identified by this specific group of people rather than by the general Vietnamese  
22  
23 population in the CR. However, this study directed me to the next steps for my research very  
24  
25 clearly; studies on media practices of other Vietnamese populations, such as old people,  
26  
27 recent migrants with limited language skills, and migrants separated from or assimilated to  
28  
29 Czech society, would further expand the understanding of transnational media, diasporic  
30  
31 community, cultural proximity, and human capital.  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

## References

- 1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60
- Ainslie, M. J. 2016. "K-dramas across Thailand: Constructions of Koreanness and Thainess by contemporary Thai consumers." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 14(7): 1–15. <https://apjff.org/2016/07/Ainslie.html>
- Alamgir, A. K. 2013. "Race is elsewhere: state-socialist ideology and the racialisation of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia." *Race and Class* 54(4): 67–85.
- Aricat, R. G. 2015. "Mobile/social media use for political purposes among migrant laborers in Singapore." *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 12(1): 18–36.
- Chan, A. 1996. "Confucianism and development in East Asia." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 26(1): 28–45.
- Cheng, T. H., and Hu, L. Y. 2015. "The dual identity and social integration of international immigrants in the Czech Republic: A survey research on the second generation of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants." *Tamkang Journal of International Affairs* 19(1):129–197.
- Chib, A., Malik, S., Aricat, R. G., and Kadir, S. Z. 2014. "Migrant mothering and mobile phones: Negotiations of transnational identity." *Mobile Media and Communication* 2(1): 73–93.
- Cho, Y. 2011. Desperately seeking East Asia amidst the popularity of South Korean pop culture in Asia. *Cultural studies* 25(3): 383–404.
- Choi, J. 2010. Of the East Asian cultural sphere: Theorizing cultural regionalization. *China Review* 10(2): 109–136.
- Christiansen, C. C. 2004. "News media consumption among immigrants in Europe: The relevance of diaspora." *Ethnicities* 4(2): 185–207.

- 1  
2  
3 Cunningham, S. and Nguyen, T. 2001. "Popular media of Vietnamese Diaspora." In *Floating*  
4  
5 *lives: The Media and Asian Diasporas*, edited by S. Cunningham, and J. Sinclair, 91–  
6  
7 135. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.  
8  
9
- 10 Czech Statistical Office. 2017. "Foriegners in the Czech Republic." *Czech Statistical Office*,  
11  
12 Accessed 18 September 2018  
13  
14 [https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/45709982/29002717.pdf/770a1c14-6ea7-4c47-](https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/45709982/29002717.pdf/770a1c14-6ea7-4c47-831e-3936e3ca1ab3?version=1.2)  
15  
16 [831e-3936e3ca1ab3?version=1.2](https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/45709982/29002717.pdf/770a1c14-6ea7-4c47-831e-3936e3ca1ab3?version=1.2)  
17  
18
- 19 Drbohlav, D., Lachmanová-Medová, L., Čermák, Z., Janská, E., Čermáková, D., and  
20  
21 Dzúrová, D. 2009. "The Czech Republic: on its way from emigration to immigration  
22  
23 country." *IDEA Working Papers* 11.  
24  
25 [https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2004/SOC732/um/Drbohlav\\_et.al.\\_2009.\\_The\\_Czech\\_R](https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2004/SOC732/um/Drbohlav_et.al._2009._The_Czech_Rpublic.On_its_way_from_emigration_to_immigration_country.pdf)  
26  
27 [epublic.On\\_its\\_way\\_from\\_emigration\\_to\\_immigration\\_country.pdf](https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2004/SOC732/um/Drbohlav_et.al._2009._The_Czech_Rpublic.On_its_way_from_emigration_to_immigration_country.pdf)  
28  
29
- 30 Drbohlav, D., and Dzúrová, D. 2007. "Where Are They Going?: Immigrant Inclusion in the  
31  
32 Czech Republic (A Case Study on Ukrainians, Vietnamese, and Armenians in  
33  
34 Prague)." *International Migration* 45(2): 69–95  
35  
36
- 37 Edwards, L. 2012. "How did Gangnam Style go viral?" *Social Media Today*, November 7.  
38  
39 <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/how-did-gangnam-style-go-viral>  
40  
41
- 42 Ehrkamp, P. 2005. Placing identities: Transnational practices and local attachments of  
43  
44 Turkish immigrants in Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies* 31(2): 345–  
45  
46 364.  
47  
48
- 49 Georgiou, M. 2012. "Watching soap opera in the diaspora: cultural proximity or critical  
50  
51 proximity?." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35(5): 868–887.  
52  
53
- 54 Hess, K., and Waller, L. 2011. "Blockbusters for the YouTube generation: a new product of  
55  
56 convergence culture." *Refractory: a journal of entertainment media* 19: 1–12.  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Hüwelmeier, G. 2015. "Mobile entrepreneurs: Transnational Vietnamese in the Czech  
4 Republic." In *Rethinking Ethnography in Central Europe*, Edited by H. Cervinkova,  
5 M. Buchowski, and Z. Uherek, 59–73. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.  
6  
7  
8  
9
- 10 Iwabuchi, K. 2001. "Becoming "culturally proximate": the ascent of Japanese idol dramas in  
11 Taiwan." In *Asian Media Productions*, Edited by B. Moeran, 54–74. Richmond, UK:  
12 Curzon  
13  
14  
15
- 16 Iwabuchi, K. 2002. *Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese*  
17 *Transnationalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.  
18  
19  
20
- 21 Iwabuchi, K. 2008. "Cultures of empire: Transnational media flows and cultural  
22 (dis)connections in East Asia." In *Global Communications: Toward a Transcultural*  
23 *Political Economy*, Edited by Y. Zhao, and P. Chakravartty, 143–161. Lanham, MD:  
24 Rowman and Littlefield.  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29
- 30 Jin, D. Y. 2012. "Hallyu 2.0: The new Korean wave in the creative industry." *International*  
31 *Institute Journal*, 2(1): 3–6.  
32  
33  
34
- 35 Jin, D. Y. 2018. "An Analysis of the Korean Wave as transnational popular culture: North  
36 American youth engage through social media as TV becomes obsolete." *International*  
37 *Journal of Communication*, 12: 404–422.  
38  
39  
40  
41
- 42 Ju, H., and Lee, S. 2015. "The Korean Wave and Asian Americans: the ethnic meanings of  
43 transnational Korean pop culture in the USA." *Continuum*, 29(3): 323–338.  
44  
45  
46
- 47 Jung, S., and Shim, D. 2013. "Social distribution: K-pop fan practices in Indonesia and the  
48 'Gangnam Style' phenomenon." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17(5): 485–  
49 501.  
50  
51  
52
- 53 Kama, A., and Malka, V. 2013. "Identity prosthesis: Roles of homeland media in sustaining  
54 native identity." *Howard Journal of Communications*, 24(4): 370–388.  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Kang, M., and Kim, S. 2011. "Are our families still Confucian? Representations of family in  
4 East Asian television dramas." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(3): 307–  
5 321.  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10 Kartosen, R., and Tan, E. 2013. "Articulating Asianness: young Asian Dutch and non-  
11 homeland Asian popular media." *International Communication Gazette*, 75(7): 653–  
12 671.  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17 Kim, H. M. 2005. Korean TV dramas in Taiwan: With an emphasis on the localization  
18 process. *Korea Journal*, 45(4): 183–205.  
19  
20  
21 Kim, S. 2009. "Interpreting transnational cultural practices: Social discourses on a Korean  
22 drama in Japan, Hong Kong, and China." *Cultural Studies*, 23(5-6): 736–755.  
23  
24  
25  
26 Kim, T. S. 2016. "Transnational communication practices of unaccompanied young Korean  
27 students in the United States." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 25(2): 148–167.  
28  
29  
30  
31 Kim, Y. 2006. "The rising East Asian 'wave'." In *Media on the move: Global flow and*  
32 *contra-flow*, Edited by D. K. Thussu, 121–135. London: Routledge.  
33  
34  
35  
36 Kim, Youna, ed. 2013. *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global*. London: Routledge.  
37  
38  
39  
40 Kraidy, M. M. 2002. "Hybridity in cultural globalization." *Communication Theory*, 12(3):  
41 316–339.  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60
- Kang, M., and Kim, S. 2011. "Are our families still Confucian? Representations of family in East Asian television dramas." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(3): 307–321.
- Kartosen, R., and Tan, E. 2013. "Articulating Asianness: young Asian Dutch and non-homeland Asian popular media." *International Communication Gazette*, 75(7): 653–671.
- Kim, H. M. 2005. Korean TV dramas in Taiwan: With an emphasis on the localization process. *Korea Journal*, 45(4): 183–205.
- Kim, S. 2009. "Interpreting transnational cultural practices: Social discourses on a Korean drama in Japan, Hong Kong, and China." *Cultural Studies*, 23(5-6): 736–755.
- Kim, T. S. 2016. "Transnational communication practices of unaccompanied young Korean students in the United States." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 25(2): 148–167.
- Kim, Y. 2006. "The rising East Asian 'wave'." In *Media on the move: Global flow and contra-flow*, Edited by D. K. Thussu, 121–135. London: Routledge.
- Kim, Youna, ed. 2013. *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global*. London: Routledge.
- Kraidy, M. M. 2002. "Hybridity in cultural globalization." *Communication Theory*, 12(3): 316–339.
- Kušniráková, T. 2014. *Vietnamci v Česku a ve světě- migrační a adaptační tendence* [Vietnamese in the Czech Republic and in the world - migratory and adaptive tendencies]. Prague, Czech Republic: Slon.
- La Pastina, A. C., and Straubhaar, J. D. 2005. "Multiple proximities between television genres and audiences the schism between telenovelas' global distribution and local consumption. *Gazette*, 67(3): 271–288.
- Lee, H. 2018. "A 'real' fantasy: hybridity, Korean drama, and pop cosmopolitans." *Media, Culture and Society*, 40(3): 365–380.



- 1  
2  
3 Leung, L. (2008). "Mediating nationalism and modernity: The transnationalization of Korean  
4 dramas on Chinese (satellite) TV." In *TV in East Asian Pop Culture: Analyzing the*  
5 *Korean Wave*, Edited by B. H. Chua and K. Iwabuchi, 53–70. Hong Kong: Hong  
6 Kong University Press.  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12 Meza, X. V., and Park, H. W. 2015. "Globalization of cultural products: a webometric  
13 analysis of Kpop in Spanish-speaking countries." *Quality and Quantity*, 49(4): 1345–  
14 1360.  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19 Marinescu, V., and Balica, E. 2013. "Korean Cultural Products in Eastern Europe: A Case  
20 Study of the K-pop Impact in Romania." *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern*  
21 *Europe, and Central Asia*, 2(1): 113–135.  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26 Nožina, M., and Kraus, F. 2016. "Bosses, Soldiers and Rice Grains. Vietnamese Criminal  
27 Networks and Criminal Activities in the Czech Republic." *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68(3),  
28 508–528.  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33 Park, J. S. 2004. "Korean American youths' consumption of Korean and Japanese TV dramas  
34 and its implications." In *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of*  
35 *Japanese TV Dramas*, Edited by K. Iwabuchi, 275–300. Hong Kong: Hong Kong  
36 University Press.  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42 Oh, C., and Chae, Y. 2013. "Constructing culturally proximate spaces through social network  
43 services: The case of 'Hallyu' (Korean Wave) in Turkey." *Uluslararası İlişkiler /*  
44 *International Relations*, 10(38): 77–99.  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49 Ryoo, W. 2009. Globalization, or the logic of cultural hybridization: The case of the Korean  
50 wave. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 19(2): 137–151.  
51  
52  
53  
54 Sherman, T., and Homoláč, J. 2017. "'The older I got, it wasn't a problem for me anymore':  
55 Language brokering as a managed activity and a narrated experience among young  
56 Vietnamese immigrants in the Czech Republic." *Multilingua*, 36(1): 1–29.  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Shim, D. 2006. Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia. *Media, culture and*  
4 *society*, 28(1): 25–44.  
5  
6  
7 Suralová, A. 2014. “The Czech nanny as a “door to majority” for children of Vietnamese  
8 immigrants in the Czech Republic.” *Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny*, 3(40):  
9 171–186.  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14 Straubhaar, J. D. 1991. “Beyond media imperialism: Assymetrical interdependence and  
15 cultural proximity.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 8(1): 39–59.  
16  
17  
18  
19 Straubhaar, J. D. 2003. “Choosing national TV: Cultural capital, language, and cultural  
20 proximity in Brazil.” In *The Impact of International Television: A Paradigm Shift*,  
21 Edited by M. G. Elasmár, 77–110. London: Routledge.  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26 Sung, S. Y. L. 2013. “Digitization and online cultures of the Korean Wave.” In *The Korean*  
27 *Wave: Korean Media Go Global*, Edited by Y. Kim, 135–147. London, UK:  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34 Sung, S. Y. L. 2015. “Face of the nation: Articulating a new image of Korea and Taiwan  
35 through regionally popular celebrities,” *International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*,  
36 11(1): 35–52  
37  
38  
39  
40 Svobodová, A., and Janská, E. (2016). “Identity Development Among Youth of Vietnamese  
41 Descent in the Czech Republic.” In *Contested Childhoods: Growing Up in Migrancy*,  
42 Edited by M. L. Seeberg, and M. E., Gozdziaik, 121–137. Berlin, Germany: Springer.  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47 Szymańska-Matusiewicz, G. 2015. “The Vietnamese communities in Central and Eastern  
48 Europe as part of the global Vietnamese diaspora,” *Central and Eastern European*  
49 *Migration Review*, 4(1): 5-10.  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54 Thussu, D.K. (2000) *International Communication: Continuity and Change*. London: Arnold.  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60 Thussu, D. K. (2007). “Mapping global media flow and contra-flow.” In *Media on the Move:*  
*Global Flow and Contra-flow*, Edited by D. K. Thussu, 11–32. London: Routledge.

- 1  
2  
3 Vacková, J., Velemínský Sr, M., Brabcová, I., and Záleská, V. 2014. “Subjective social status  
4 in select Ukrainians, Vietnamese, and Mongolians living in the Czech Republic.”  
5  
6 *Neuro Endocrinology Letters*, 35(Suppl 1): 90–101.  
7  
8  
9  
10 Yamato, E. 2014. “Cultural proximity and reflexivity in interpreting transnational media texts:  
11 the case of Malaysians consuming Japanese popular culture.” *The Qualitative Report*,  
12  
13 19(47). <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol19/iss47/2/>  
14  
15  
16  
17 Yang, J. 2012. “The Korean wave (hallyu) in East Asia: A comparison of Chinese, Japanese  
18 and Taiwan.” *Development and Society*, 41(1): 103–147  
19  
20  
21 Yoo, J. W., Jo, S., and Jung, J. 2014. “The effects of television viewing, cultural proximity,  
22 and ethnocentrism on country image.” *Social Behavior and Personality: an*  
23  
24 *international journal*, 42(1): 89–96.  
25  
26  
27  
28 Yoon, K. 2017. “Korean Wave| Cultural Translation of K-Pop Among Asian Canadian Fans.”  
29  
30 *International Journal of Communication*, 11: 2350–2366  
31  
32  
33 Yoon, K., and Jin, D. Y. 2016. “The Korean Wave Phenomenon in Asian Diasporas in  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

### Abstract

Based on in-depth interviews with Vietnamese young adults in the Czech Republic who consume Korean media products on a regular basis, this study investigates how their diasporic contexts are reflected in the consumption of Korean media products. While participants quickly spotted cultural proximity as the reason for their preferences, the in-depth analysis further revealed that cultural proximity was particularly identified (a) when they devised a concept of the Asian family from the dialectic relationship among their family experiences, the represented family culture in Korean media, and the observed Czech family culture; (b) when they found their diasporic identity in the image of hardworking immigrants; and (c) when they highlighted their cultural tastes and valued their human capital in contrast to those of Czech people and other kinds of Vietnamese migrants.

Keywords: Vietnamese migrants, Czech Republic, cultural proximity, Korean media, transnational media consumption, diasporic contexts

## **Young Migrant Vietnamese in the Czech Republic Reflect Diasporic Contexts in Their Identification of Cultural Proximity with Korean Media**

### **Introduction**

In 2012 when I started teaching at a university in the Czech Republic (hereafter, CR), I came across an interesting news story about a K-pop (Korean pop music) World Festival held in Korea. A Czech girl band won the grand prize with its performance, which copied a famous K-pop girl band, Girl's Generation. It was the picture of the girl band that caught my attention, though, because five members out of eight looked not Czech but Asian. The news story made me aware that Vietnamese performers account for a large segment of Korean popular culture fandom in the CR. And a simple question, why?, popped up, which was followed by a few common-sense questions: Is the popularity of Korean media in the CR because of the popularity of Korean media in their home country, Vietnam? Is it because they find commonalities with Korean media? or Is it because globally mobile people are naturally more into transnational media products? I learned in casual conversations with Vietnamese people that the answer to these questions is mostly yes Korean media has been popular for years in Vietnam. The cultural distance between Vietnam and Korea is much smaller than that between Vietnam and the CR. Transnational people like the Vietnamese in the CR and me tend to be more exposed to various cultures. Thus, the answer must be yes. However, the questions and answer were firmly grounded in so-called methodological nationalism that does not account for various cultural variations and individual contexts. Thus, my questions led me to plan a research project focusing more on the transnational dynamics of migrants' lives, cultural flows, media representations, and so on.

This study focuses specifically on young Vietnamese migrants who routinely consume Korean media products by posing a broad question: How are their diasporic contexts reflected in the consumption of Korean media products? In order to fully understand their life

1  
2  
3 experiences and cultural orientations, this study delves specifically into how the young  
4 migrants place themselves in diasporic contexts in the CR and how their life experiences  
5 directly and indirectly shape their preferences for Korean media products. Cultural proximity  
6 is a possible theoretical concept that may explain their daily consumption of Korean media.  
7  
8 However, this study looks further into where and how the proximity between the young  
9 migrants and Korean media texts is identified.

## 17 **Literature Review**

### 19 ***Vietnamese in the CR***

21 According to the Czech Statistical Office, the official number of Vietnamese in the CR  
22 reached 58,025 in 2016 (Czech Statistical Office 2017). After a short period post-1989, during  
23 which the number of Vietnamese dropped, the size of the Vietnamese community has  
24 dramatically expanded from 3,500 in 1992 (Drbohlav et al. 2009). Vietnamese are currently  
25 the third largest group of foreigners with long-term residence permits in the CR (Kušniráková  
26 2014).

27 Since Vietnamese are generally classified as economic migrants like other non-EU  
28 migrants from former Soviet states and Mongolia, there have been many studies focusing  
29 specifically on economic motives and labor relations (e.g., Hüwelmeier 2015). In addition,  
30 since most studies have been reported in the Czech language, Vietnamese in the CR are a  
31 relatively less known population of international migration. Recently, Vietnamese have been  
32 one of the main immigrant populations examined by multiple studies aiming to evaluate  
33 multiculturalism and integration policy in the CR as a country facing a transition from an  
34 emigration country to a country of immigration (e.g., Drbohlav and Džúrová 2007). However,  
35 the migrants' everyday experiences have been less represented in academia compared to  
36 multiple criminological studies on this population (e.g., Nožina and Kraus 2016),  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Intercultural studies have recently focused on the sociocultural experiences of  
4  
5 Vietnamese in the CR. One study investigated the history of the racialization of Vietnamese  
6  
7 and cultural adaptation in comparison with other minority groups (Alamgir 2013). A  
8  
9 sociological study highlighted distinctive kinship relations in Vietnamese families who have  
10  
11 hired Czech nannies; the nannies supplement the role of parents who are absent due to  
12  
13 extensive economic activity (Souralová 2014). Also, multiple studies have been conducted on  
14  
15 the language practices of the study population (e.g., Sherman and Homoláč 2017)  
16  
17

18  
19 Vietnamese are also known for a higher number of children (30%) and women (43%)  
20  
21 compared to other groups of migrants in the CR (Drbohlav et al. 2009). The number of  
22  
23 children and youth (up to 26 years of age) in the Vietnamese immigrant population has  
24  
25 increased and accounts for 40% of the Vietnamese population in the CR (Kušniráková 2014).  
26  
27 Despite the large number of children and young adults, detailed demographic information  
28  
29 such as birthplace and educational level is very limited. A recent study that focuses  
30  
31 specifically on the identity construction of young Vietnamese migrants illustrates the fluid  
32  
33 nature of identity construction; identity hovers between one that reflects their family traditions  
34  
35 and another that reflects the majority community in the CR (Svobodová and Janská 2016).  
36  
37 Also, a comparative study highlights the ambivalent identity of Vietnamese in the CR (Cheng  
38  
39 and Hu 2015). In response to the increasing interest in the diasporic identity of Vietnamese in  
40  
41 the CR, this study pays a close attention to their transnational life and cultural experiences.  
42  
43  
44  
45

#### 46 ***Migrants' Transnational Media Practices***

47  
48  
49 Migrants' transnational communication practices have been increasingly studied as  
50  
51 advanced communication technologies have been widely adopted in everyday life and global  
52  
53 mobility has increased sharply in recent decades. Previous studies from a variety of  
54  
55 disciplines, including migrant studies and intercultural communication, have demonstrated  
56  
57 how new media from satellites to the Internet have changed the life experiences of  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 international migrants; aided by various communication technologies, migrants (re)build  
4 human and social networks across borders by keeping ties with people like family members  
5 and peers in their countries of origin (e.g., Chib, Malik, Aricat, and Kadir 2014).  
6  
7

8  
9  
10 Transnational communication is also an important means of engaging in domestic politics in  
11 their home countries (Aricat 2015). While some studies highlight the importance of  
12 transnational media consumption in maintaining native identity (e.g., Kama and Malka 2013),  
13 others demonstrate how migrants' transnational practices reciprocally shape members of the  
14 receiving society and their identity (e.g., Ehrkamp 2005). Transnational media  
15 communication is also an important means for migrants to cope with daily stress in their new  
16 home by entertaining themselves (e. g., Kim 2016).  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

26 The above-mentioned studies focus on transnational practices between migrants'  
27 country of origin and their new home. As the distribution of cultural products widens along  
28 with rapid technological advancements, however, migrants have often crossed multiple  
29 borders to find culturally relevant media products. Using data across different European  
30 countries, Christiansen (2004) demonstrates that migrants tend to seek more news than does  
31 the majority population by accessing not only news media of their country of origin but also  
32 international news media in English, such as BBC World, which is available on satellite  
33 television. An earlier study presents the cultural negotiation of Vietnamese youths in  
34 Australia, who consume media products from Hong Kong by using earlier forms of electronic  
35 media like video recorders (Cunningham and Nguyen 2001). Similarly, Korean American  
36 youths access Japanese as well as Korean television series not only because they prefer media  
37 products with which they are familiar but also because they want to compensate themselves  
38 for limited cultural representation in U.S. television products (Park 2004). Kartosen and Tan  
39 (2013) investigate a broader population of young Asian migrants in the Netherlands who  
40 extensively consume nonhomeland Asian media products, and they discuss the construction  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 of Asian ethnic-cultural identity through the consumption of media products mainly from  
4  
5 China, Japan, and Korea.  
6

### 7 ***Global Korean Media***

8  
9  
10 Since the late 1990s when a couple of Korean television dramas (K-dramas) gained  
11  
12 popularity with Chinese audiences, the increasing popularity of Korean media products in  
13  
14 Asia has been noted by both academia and the public (Shim 2006). The cultural phenomenon  
15  
16 came to be called the “Korean Wave,” with a series of successful Korean television dramas  
17  
18 gaining popularity in China starting in the mid-1990s. Since then, multiple Korean  
19  
20 blockbuster films and systematically commodified pop singers (K-pop) have successfully  
21  
22 penetrated Asian cultural markets (Shim 2006). In particular, the continuous success of  
23  
24 television dramas such as *Winter Sonata* in various countries, including Japan and Vietnam,  
25  
26 in the early 2000s stimulated developments in related industries such as tourism and  
27  
28 consumer-goods markets in Asia (Ryoo 2009). The popularity of Korean media products,  
29  
30 followed by the increasing market share of Korean businesses in the Asian market, has led to  
31  
32 the formation of a brand-like image of the country (e.g., Sung 2015). Originally coined by  
33  
34 Chinese news media in the late 1990s, the term “Korean Wave” has been widely used to  
35  
36 describe the international success of Korean media (Kim 2013).  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41

42 The role of advanced communication technologies should not be underestimated in the  
43  
44 later phase of Korean media’s success. While the early phase of Korean media’s success in  
45  
46 Asia was initiated through more traditional practices of media marketing, such as the export  
47  
48 of media products, the diffusion of Korean media products beyond Asia in recent years has  
49  
50 been propelled by integrating media products into consumers’ activities on Web 2.0, which is  
51  
52 called “Korean Wave 2.0” (e.g., Jin 2012). The huge success of certain media products on  
53  
54 social media such as YouTube has attracted giant media corporations to invest their resources  
55  
56 in social media (Hess and Waller 2011). The worldwide success of Psy’s “Gangnam Style”  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 demonstrates how Korean media corporations elaborately adopt social media in promoting  
4 their products overseas (Edwards 2012). The strategic new media promotion has been backed  
5 by the voluntary distribution of Korean media products by audiences, widening the scope of  
6 consumption and distribution of Korean media products in the world (Jung and Shim 2013).  
7  
8 Audiences for Korean media have become more active in sharing their opinions and feelings  
9 about Korean media with their peers via social media (Jin 2018).  
10  
11

12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17 Propelled by extended dissemination, Korean media products have gradually gained  
18 popularity with non-Asian audiences (e.g., Jin 2018; Lee 2018; Marinescu and Balica 2013;  
19 Meza and Park 2015). Once established through an increased market share in the Asian-  
20 culture industry, Korean media corporations aggressively promoted their products to reach  
21 beyond Asia. Studies on the non-Asian reception of Korean media products have also focused  
22 on Asian diasporic audiences in the West, which consume Korean media and form  
23 transnational fan communities. Asian immigrant audiences in Austria, who are marginalized  
24 in Western society, have constructed an East Asian imagined community by consuming  
25 culturally familiar media products from Korea (Sung 2013). In the United States, young Asian  
26 migrants nurture a pan ethnic identity while constructing a coeval territory of East Asia across  
27 borders (Ju and Lee 2015). Asian Canadians, who are mainly networked via social media,  
28 consume advanced and stylish Western tastes and/or their own ethnic traditions from Korean  
29 media texts (Yoon and Jin 2016). As diasporic Asians, Korean pop-music fans in Canada  
30 embrace cultural products by reflexively interpreting the meaning of cultural products as a  
31 means of exercising their diasporic identity (Yoon 2017).  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50

51 The extended transnationalization of Korean media in an advanced technological  
52 context, the Western reception of Korean media, and the transnational imagined communities  
53 of Asian migrants consuming Korean media may define the current study population,  
54 Vietnamese young adults in the CR who extensively consume Korean media products.  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Guided by these previous studies, the current study focuses mainly on how the migrant  
4 audiences reflect their diasporic contexts in their transnational media consumption.  
5  
6

7 ***Transnational Media Consumption: Reflexively Identifying Cultural Proximity***  
8  
9

10 The success of Korean media in the globalized media market has become additional  
11 evidence for the emergence of new transnational media flow decentralizing the global media  
12 market (e.g., Thussu 2007). The emergence of regional or counter media flow refutes the  
13 dominant discourse of cultural imperialism that has highlighted a global media market  
14 monopolized by U.S. media (Thussu 2000). Especially in Asia, rapid economic growth, the  
15 transnationalization of the media industry, the large size of the regional market based on its  
16 high density of population, and advanced communication technologies have been important  
17 contextual bases of the emergence of intra-regional flow (Iwabuchi 2002). Media industries in  
18 East Asia have successfully localized their media products in the course of transnationalization  
19 in their regional markets (Iwabuchi 2008).  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32

33 The cultural proximity thesis has been usefully employed to explain decentralized  
34 media flow. Exemplifying the regional media flow in Latin America, the thesis posits that  
35 media consumers tend to prefer media products from culturally adjacent regions (Straubhaar,  
36 1991). With the rapid transnationalization of media industries, the notion has been useful in  
37 explaining migrants' consumption of media products from their countries of origin. La  
38 Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) further developed the notion of cultural proximity by  
39 presenting the existence of multilayered proximity; first, cultural proximity varies across  
40 locals within a country, and second, people often identify their cultural proximity with certain  
41 genres dominated by advanced media industries, such as U.S. cartoons. In studies on the  
42 transnational dissemination of Korean media products, cultural proximity has been widely  
43 applied to explain their popularity not only in East and South East Asia (e.g., Yoo, Jo, and  
44 Jung 2014) but also in distant countries like Turkey (Oh and Chae 2013). These studies  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 center on international audiences' shared cultural values and traditions, such as family values  
4 reflected through Korean cultural products. Similarly, social proximity is a common variable  
5 explaining the popularity of Korean media products in different East Asian countries (Yang  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

center on international audiences' shared cultural values and traditions, such as family values reflected through Korean cultural products. Similarly, social proximity is a common variable explaining the popularity of Korean media products in different East Asian countries (Yang 2012).

However, the notion of cultural proximity has also been criticized mainly because it sees culture as a static unit that can be observable and predictable (Kraidy 2002). Viewing culture as a static unit in which the essence of a culture is unchangeable hinders understanding of the variation during reception (Kim 2009). On the other hand, the notion of reflexive (critical) proximity particularly focuses on migrants' media consumption, highlighting reflexive diasporic identities positioned between their past experiences in home cultures and migrant experiences across the border (Georgiou 2012). As Arab women in the United Kingdom consume soap operas on Arabic television, they reflect multiple identities as Arabs, Arab women, Muslims, immigrants, Londoners, and more. While the migrant women appropriate Arabic soap operas as a means to connect them with their region of origin, some of them reflect their gender identity as Arab women in London in the course of distancing distance themselves from the cultural logic underlying the television shows (Georgiou 2012). Similarly, cultural proximity does not lie in national or ethnic origin but is presented through an individual's reflexive contexts. Audiences tend to individually identify proximity in certain media texts (Yamato 2014). Iwabuchi (2001, 58) claims that cultural proximity could only be "subjectively identified and experienced by the audience" in his study on the dissemination of Japanese pop culture in Taiwan. Taiwanese audiences do not find an intrinsically similar culture in Japanese cultural products but identify cultural proximity by recognizing the same temporality in Japanese contemporary culture.

Studies on the reception of Korean media products in Asian societies have also found cultural proximity between the audiences' contexts reflected in their consumption and the

1  
2  
3 Korean context placed in the products. Positing the recent popularity of Korean cultural  
4 products in East Asia as a descendent of previous Asian pop culture once led by Hong Kong  
5 and Japanese media industries, Cho (2011) suggests Asian audiences find a coeval  
6 relationship with the represented Korean sociocultural context in Korean media products.  
7  
8 Asian fans of Korean media products feel the contemporariness of the modern and urban  
9 styles of Korean media products, which project their shared capitalist-consumerist  
10 orientations. Also, Ainslie (2016) shows that Thai fans of Korean television programs use  
11 foreign cultural products as a means to assess and critique their own positions in diverse Thai  
12 sociocultural contexts. The study demonstrates how urban audiences and rural-ethnic  
13 audiences find cultural proximity differently in Korean media texts. In an earlier study on the  
14 Taiwanese consumption of Korean media, Kim (2005) describes a coeval relationship  
15 between the characteristics of contemporary Korean society represented in Korean media  
16 products and everyday experiences and identities in contemporary Taiwanese society.  
17  
18 Recently, Yoon (2017) elaborates cultural proximity by introducing a new concept called  
19 “cultural affinity.” In his study, Asian K-pop fans in Canada exercise their identity as Asian  
20 migrants by appropriating the represented images of youthful and successful individuals in  
21 Korean media products. Along with previous studies on young migrant audiences consuming  
22 Korean media products, an understanding of reflexive cultural proximity guides the current  
23 study to focus particularly on the contextual reflection of Korean media consumption by  
24 diasporic Vietnamese young migrants in the CR.  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

### 49 **Methodology**

50  
51 As part of a larger research project on transnational media practices in the Vietnamese  
52 diasporic community of the CR, the current study focused particularly on young adults who  
53 actively consumed Korean media products by taking advantage of their language skills and  
54 technological literacies. Before starting the study, the investigator learned that young adult  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Vietnamese in the CR were the first group of people who explicated their cultural preference  
4 for Korean media products. They shared some aspects of demographical background with the  
5 investigator; they were mostly born in Vietnam and moved to the CR in their early years; they  
6 were relatively well educated; many of them could speak multiple languages, including  
7 Vietnamese, Czech, and English. Investigating the contextual connection between  
8 participants' life experiences and their media practices, the current study focused narrowly on  
9 this relatively homogenous population in the Vietnamese diasporic community of the CR.  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18

19 This study was based on qualitative data from 12 in-depth interviews conducted in  
20 two major Czech cities, Prague and Brno. Following the basic principle of purposive  
21 sampling, this study specifically selected participants who were suitable for the research  
22 focus. The youngest participant was 18 years old, while the oldest was 26. Since it was not  
23 difficult to find fluent English speakers in this population, all interviews were conducted in  
24 English. With the exception of two participants who attended English-based private colleges  
25 in the CR, all participants were either students at or graduates of Czech national universities.  
26 Likewise, the economic status of their families was generally homogeneous. Despite the  
27 occupational diversity of their parents, most participants identified their families as middle  
28 class. In this study, however, gender was not equally represented because it was known that  
29 Korean media fans in the Vietnamese community were predominantly female, and thus  
30 female participants could be recruited much more easily. Although two male participants  
31 joined the research initially, their interview data were excluded from this study because of the  
32 weak intensity of their Korean media consumption. Planning a larger future research project  
33 covering a wider scope of participants, the investigator ruled out other young Vietnamese  
34 migrants who either were born or arrived in the CR only recently because these two  
35 populations were far less representative of the young-adult generation of the Vietnamese  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 diasporic community. Thus, all study participants were born in Vietnam and moved to the CR  
4  
5 at young ages ranging from 5 to 8.  
6

7  
8 The first four participants were recruited through a Czech informant who was involved  
9  
10 in diverse international communities in Prague, including Vietnamese and Korean  
11  
12 communities. Snowball sampling was used to recruit the rest of the participants with the help  
13  
14 of earlier participants. Although the researcher conducted a total of 17 interviews, five  
15  
16 interviews were excluded from this study due to lack of relevance, such as weak intensity of  
17  
18 Korean media consumption or multiple relocations for family reasons. The semistructured  
19  
20 interview was composed of two broad themes, life experiences and media consumption. An  
21  
22 interview typically lasted at least two hours because the investigator often asked many  
23  
24 subquestions to encourage participants to share detailed experiences. The investigator  
25  
26 transcribed interviews verbatim for data analysis and coded the data by repeatedly reading the  
27  
28 transcription. By comparing interviews, the investigator found similarities and differences in  
29  
30 the data, which eventually led to identifying significant common themes. During the process  
31  
32 of data analysis, each participant was assigned a number.  
33  
34  
35  
36

### 37 Findings

#### 38 *Why Korean Media?*

39  
40  
41  
42 There was a common oxymoron in the interviews. Many participants said, “I like  
43  
44 Korean TV,” but they did not watch television. Rather, they consumed media products mostly  
45  
46 on the Internet by using either their computer or mobile phone. Although most households of  
47  
48 the study participants subscribed to satellite television, it was a technology for their parents,  
49  
50 who used it for watching Vietnamese news and shows both at home and in the workplace. On  
51  
52 the other hand, the youngsters were loyal Internet users. Like many other Internet users, they  
53  
54 used a variety of online services primarily for practical purposes. When it came to  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

entertainment, however, they almost exclusively consumed Korean media products available on the Internet.

Many participants started consuming Korean television shows on a daily basis in their early years. While some of them started watching dramas with their mother or sibling, others first learned about Korean television shows from their Vietnamese friends in the CR. Participants often used abstract adjectives such as *funny*, *interesting*, and *entertaining* to explain the reason they consistently consume Korean media products. Cultural proximity was also frequently cited by participants as the reason for their cultural preference for Korean media. Asked more about cultural proximity, however, many participants initially responded that “Korean culture is similar to Vietnamese culture,” which was based on the commonsensical understanding of culture as national culture. Aiming to know how to interpret the cultural proximity between the young Vietnamese migrants in the CR and Korean media texts, this study inquired further about their life experiences as diasporic children in the CR and transnational Korean media consumption. Based on the answers, this study found that cultural proximity between participants and Korean media texts was identified (a) when they devised the concept of the Asian family from the dialectic relationship among their family experiences, family practices portrayed in Korean dramas, and Czech family culture; (b) when they found their diasporic identity in the image of hardworking immigrants; and (c) when they highlighted their cultural tastes and valued their human capital in contrast to those of Czech people and other kinds of Vietnamese migrants.

#### ***Dialectically Identified Meaning of Family***

“When I first saw *Full House* (a drama series) more than 10 years ago, I liked the stars on the show. The two main stars were good looking. . . I liked the warm-hearted story. People in the show had kind hearts like family members.” (Participant 1)



1  
2  
3 *Family* was a frequently mentioned word when participants stressed familiarity with  
4 Korean television shows. As family is one of the most salient themes of Korean television  
5 dramas (Kang and Kim 2011), much literature on Korean drama consumption points out  
6 family values as evidence of cultural proximity between Asian (diasporic) audiences and  
7 Korean cultural texts (e.g., Leung 2008; Sung 2013). Likewise, participants of this study  
8 found cultural similarities in the structure of Korean families, family communication styles,  
9 and the decision-making process in a household, which are often depicted in Korean dramas.  
10 Particularly, some participants specifically pointed out that the authority-submission  
11 relationship between parents and children was commonly seen in many Korean dramas as  
12 well as in their own families. As immigrants, their parents often stress that conventional  
13 family values be strictly kept in their diasporic life, such as the importance of family meal  
14 time, family language practices, and discipline in child education.  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29

30 “In Korean drama, there are many scenes of family dinner. It’s an important scene to  
31 understand family relationship. . . . It’s similar to my family. Dinner time is my mom’s  
32 nagging time (laugh).” (Participant 5)  
33  
34  
35  
36

37 Participants also defined the conservative family culture in their close, yet  
38 subordinate, relationship with their parents. More important, conservative family values are  
39 reflected in their diasporic context. For many participants, family was a diaspora separated  
40 from everyday Czech society. Even if they were well integrated into Czech society and  
41 culture, their parents believe family should be maintained in conventional Vietnamese ways  
42 because it was one of the most distinctive cultures accounting for their identity. When  
43 contrasted to Czech family culture, their own found common ground with Korean family  
44 culture depicted in Korean dramas. This was typically reflected in a term, “Asian family  
45 culture,” used by participant 12.  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 “I know my Czech friends also have family gathering often. Family is important for  
4 Czech people. But, it’s not like Asian family. My parents are stricter than Czech  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

“I know my Czech friends also have family gathering often. Family is important for Czech people. But, it’s not like Asian family. My parents are stricter than Czech parents and they are crazy about our education. I don’t think Czech parents are like that” (Participant 12).

In sum, the cultural proximity found between their families and Korean families represented in television products was formulated in the transnational dynamic of their lives: (a) their parents conservatively maintained family practices that originated across the border; (b) family culture was one important cultural element that distinguished them from Czech culture; and (c) they found a seemingly similar family culture in television dramas produced in another Asian country. The individual, diasporic Vietnamese family experience was coined as Asian family culture when it was contrasted with a Western family culture and supported by references found in Asian media products.

### **Hardworking People**

“I’ve seen many Korean dramas about people working hard. It’s a kind of cliché. Everyone in Korean dramas work hard. It’s a typical image of Korean people to me . . . Vietnamese people work very hard. It is a kind of our thing.” (Participant 2)

As many academic studies emphasize work ethic as a common traditional value that facilitates rapid economic development in Asia (i.e., Chan 1996), participants of this study often identified their fellow Vietnamese and themselves as hardworking migrants while stereotypically associating Korean people with the image of hardworking people in the media. Responding to the stereotype, Korean media has been keen on embedding traditional cultural values like work ethic in their products as part of their industrial strategy (Choi 2010). Some participants of this study preferred a story about people who made every effort to succeed, calling it a typical genre of Korean dramas. They sympathized with characters who overcame unfortunate situations and strived to succeed. The young migrant audiences sympathized not

1  
2  
3 only with fictitious characters in media products but also with Korean celebrities who devoted  
4 themselves to excelling in their areas. Well informed about the Korean media industry, they  
5  
6 also knew that Korean actors and singers had spent many years to train, as planned by their  
7  
8 management companies. Participant 3, who was a loyal fan of many K-pop bands, such as Big  
9  
10 Bang, said that she liked not only their music but also their behind-the-scenes stories  
11  
12 portraying the long hours of practice and multiple hardships necessary to be stars. Similarly,  
13  
14 some other participants regularly followed the stories about their K-pop stars on the Internet.  
15  
16  
17  
18

19 While appreciating stories about hardworking people from Korea, participants were  
20  
21 proud of the image of Vietnamese people as hardworking migrants. Although they agreed that  
22  
23 the work ethic originated in traditional Vietnamese cultural values, they specifically  
24  
25 constructed the image of hardworking people from their daily context in the diasporic  
26  
27 community. Most participants shared a similar view of their diligent parents as the main  
28  
29 reason for their current stable life. Their hardworking parents spent excessive hours at their  
30  
31 work places, such as small grocery stores called *potraviný*<sup>1</sup> in Czech, small retail stores  
32  
33 selling imported goods, or large Vietnamese wholesale complexes located in major Czech  
34  
35 cities like Prague and Brno.  
36  
37  
38

39  
40 “Vietnamese people are known as hardworking people. I agree. Our older generations  
41  
42 like my parents have worked so hard. Vietnamese’s stores always open first and close  
43  
44 last.” (Participant 3)  
45

46  
47 A strong work ethic was also practiced by the young migrants, who displayed their  
48  
49 belief in the norm as a necessary condition for their diasporic life. Some participants  
50  
51 summarized their school life with the image of a hard-studying student, regarding their  
52  
53  
54

---

55  
56  
57 <sup>1</sup> *Potraviný* is a very important contextual cue in understanding the Vietnamese diasporic community in CR.  
58 Backed by large wholesale networks of Vietnamese, Vietnamese run small grocery stores on every corner of  
59 Czech cities. Stores carry a variety of groceries and open early and stay open late to attract local customers who  
60 casually shop for a small amount of groceries. Participants also said that Vietnamese in the CR are typically  
represented as people working at a *potraviný*.

1  
2  
3 educational achievement as a reward for their sacrificial parents. It was important to them to  
4 point out that they were willing to embrace the stereotypical image of hardworking migrants.  
5  
6 Participant 7, who shared her experience at her school, where teachers and classmates  
7 stereotypically expected her to outperform, said the image helped her devote herself to  
8 schoolwork. For her, a strong work ethic was not only an inherited value from her family and  
9 community but also a role she played as a young migrant from a stereotyped diasporic  
10 community.  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18

19 Raised in a hardworking family and motivated to be diligent, Vietnamese young adults  
20 were familiar with the stories about hardworking people in Korean media products. Cultural  
21 proximity was identified through the familiarity. By consuming the image of Korea and the  
22 represented image of hardworking Koreans in the media, they could confirm the willingly  
23 embraced image of hardworking migrants. Going one step further, some of them even shaped  
24 their future by consuming the images of fictitious characters. Those who liked Korean  
25 television shows dramatizing a variety of professionals such as medical doctors, lawyers,  
26 cooks, IT engineers, and financial managers yearned to live like the characters who made  
27 every effort to achieve their life goals. Another component of cultural proximity was found in  
28 the lifestyles of the fictitious, hardworking professionals.  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41

### 42 ***Keeping Pace with Trends***

43

44 As previous studies have explained, Asian (migrant) audiences can feel the  
45 contemporariness in the up-to-date styles of Korean media products (e.g., Yoon 2017). This  
46 study's participants were also loyal audiences of the so-called Korean trendy dramas  
47 characterized by stories about urban professionals surrounded by contemporary lifestyle  
48 amenities. They stayed informed about Korean celebrities, cultural trends in Seoul, new  
49 fashion and beauty products, and so on. Participant 2 revealed her cultural tastes by  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

romanticizing about the image of the technologically advanced society and hypermodern urban spaces frequently represented in Korean television shows.

“It’s funny to see every person on Korean dramas lives in a luxurious flat. They wear expensive suits and drive expensive cars. I know it’s just a drama. But, I am interested in them. I want to visit Seoul to see this kind of scenes. Especially, I want to go to Gangnam and Hongdae. I heard people are very stylish in these areas” (Participant 2).

In the meantime, consuming Korean media is a cultural practice differentiating the young Vietnamese migrants not only from Czech people but also from other kinds of Vietnamese migrants, such as their parents’ generation and recent migrants. They tended to regard Czech people as slow to adopt new cultures and products and insensitive to trends. Many participants bluntly said Czech people looked outdated. They contrasted Czech society with the young Vietnamese community as old versus young people. This attitude was partly affected by their earlier experiences in small Czech towns. More than half the participants were raised in small towns because of their parents’ businesses. They often compared their life in small towns with their life in Prague or Brno.

“I lived in a small village near Ostrava. It’s a never changing town. People are so conservative and do the same things all the time. They don’t know anything about new culture. Now I am happy with my life in Prague. There are more young people and foreigners. In Prague I have many friends who are interested in Korean media. I haven’t seen anyone (who is interested in Korean media) in the village.” (Participant 7)

They identified themselves as people who were sensitive to cultural trends and had tastes commensurate with urban life by employing the analogy comparing young Vietnamese versus old Czech people with urban centers like Prague versus small Czech towns. Meanwhile, they regarded Korean media culture as a new, trendy one. Distinguishing themselves from the old,

1  
2  
3 outdated image of the Czech village, they highlighted their cultural taste for the urban, trendy  
4 lifestyle found in Korean media products. The cultural proximity between their cultural tastes  
5 and the represented images of Korean young professionals' lifestyles kept them aloof from  
6 the stagnant Czech culture as they defined it. Moreover, the distancing strategy was also  
7 carried out in their diasporic community.  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13

14 While belonging to the Vietnamese diasporic community, they were more tuned in to  
15 the upcoming trends of media, culture, and lifestyle than were other Vietnamese because the  
16 young migrants saw themselves as having higher human capital. Benefitting from stable  
17 living conditions, the 1.5 generation of Vietnamese migrants could gain multilanguage skills  
18 and maintain a relaxed lifestyle, which allowed them to use a wide range of media sources.  
19 On the other hand, the older generation or recently migrated young Vietnamese were known  
20 to have very limited options in their media consumption. Those who worked all day in their  
21 small shops continued to use Vietnamese satellite television, often as background noise.  
22 Although those Vietnamese also used the Internet and mobile devices, they relied on Web  
23 services based in Vietnam and narrow compatriot networks on social media. A limited  
24 linguistic competence in Czech and other foreign languages as well as long hours of work  
25 hindered the older generation and the new migrants from diversifying their media choices.  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41

42 Many parents of this study's participants also watched Korean television shows on a  
43 regular basis. However, the patterns of Korean media consumption of the two generations had  
44 deviated from each other over time. While the young audiences stayed updated on Korean  
45 media and cultural trends by surfing the information ocean, their parents were likely to be  
46 tenacious in their practice of watching seemingly old-fashioned Korean television shows that  
47 were available on Vietnamese satellite and Web services in the Vietnamese language.  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55

56 "Recently, I only watch Korean dramas with English subtitles. They are more  
57 available and much quicker (to obtain) than those with Vietnamese subtitles. They are  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 supposed to be distributed by Korean Americans. . . . I get information about Korean  
4 media, culture, and celebrities from many websites in English.” (Participant 6)  
5  
6

7 The migrants who were competent in English could access all available media  
8 sources, which allowed them to keep pace with Korean media trends. Taking advantage of  
9 their perceived higher human capital, they took a step closer to the cultural tastes of their  
10 contemporary Korean audiences while taking a step back from other Vietnamese who had  
11 experienced different life trajectories. In other words, cultural proximity to cultural trends in  
12 Korean media was identified in the distance lying between their own and other Vietnamese’s  
13 media practices, which was possibly explained by different life experiences.  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

23 In sum, the trendy Korean media consumers recognized that Korean media  
24 represented the Korean society’s value of stressing the pursuit of human capital by portraying  
25 a variety of professions leading the society. The young audiences, who position themselves as  
26 educated, modernized, trendy, and urban young migrants, identified cultural proximity with a  
27 Korean media culture that represents fast-changing urban lifestyles. Czech people and other  
28 kinds of Vietnamese migrants were often employed to highlight their own closeness to  
29 Korean cultural trends.  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

#### 40 **Concluding Remarks**

41  
42 As part of a larger study on the transnational media practices of Vietnamese in the CR,  
43 this study focuses specifically on the 1.5 generation of Vietnamese migrants who consume  
44 Korean media products on a regular basis. Even if the youngsters are native Czech speakers  
45 and educated through the formal Czech educational system, they still strongly belong to the  
46 largest Asian immigrant community. Thus, it seemed quite obvious that they were likely to be  
47 fans of cultural products from one of the most powerful media industries in Asia. Cultural  
48 proximity seemed to be an easy thesis explaining their preference for Korean cultural  
49 products, compared to the commonsensical understanding of the cultural distance between an  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Asian culture and a European culture. The young Vietnamese migrants also quickly picked  
4 cultural proximity as the reason for their Korean media consumption. However, this study  
5 goes deeper to understand how cultural proximity originated in their life experiences as  
6 migrant children instead of in the cultural distance classified by cultural regions.  
7  
8  
9  
10

11  
12 Cultural proximity between the young participants' life experiences and the  
13 represented Korean cultures and lifestyles in media products was identified around three  
14 interrelated values. Firstly, raised in migrant families, they often differentiate their family  
15 relations from those of Czech people while finding similarities with family values represented  
16 in Korean media products. The similarity is not simply grounded in the notion of the Asian  
17 family but also through their experiences with parents who have strived to survive in a  
18 Central European country. Secondly, the image of hardworking people links their own  
19 identification of Vietnamese people to a typical image of the Korean young professional  
20 portrayed in Korean media products. They value work ethic as a driving force of success  
21 while embracing it as a norm for migrant children who are supposed to perform well in their  
22 family, community, and school. Last, the young, educated, and globalized migrants fix their  
23 sights on the advanced lifestyle of successful professionals living in an urban center, which is  
24 one of the most common motifs of Korean media products. Differentiating themselves from  
25 other kinds of Vietnamese migrants as well as from Czech people, they define themselves by  
26 their distinctive human capital, which is often represented and highlighted in Korean media  
27 products.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

49 The findings of this study also reflect the limitations of this study. Participants only  
50 represent a relatively homogeneous group of Vietnamese. Their perceived higher human  
51 capital explains their distinctive living context. Thus, the findings limitedly explain cultural  
52 proximity as identified by this specific group of people rather than by the general Vietnamese  
53 population in the CR. However, this study directed me to the next steps for my research very  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 clearly; studies on media practices of other kinds of Vietnamese, such as old people, recent  
4 migrants with limited language skills, and migrants separated from or assimilated to Czech  
5 society, would further expand the understanding of transnational media, diasporic community,  
6 cultural proximity, and human capital.  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

For Peer Review Only

## References

- 1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60
- Ainslie, M. J. 2016. "K-dramas across Thailand: Constructions of Koreanness and Thainess by contemporary Thai consumers." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 14(7): 1–15. <https://apjff.org/2016/07/Ainslie.html>
- Alamgir, A. K. 2013. "Race is elsewhere: state-socialist ideology and the racialisation of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia." *Race and Class* 54(4): 67–85.
- Aricat, R. G. 2015. "Mobile/social media use for political purposes among migrant laborers in Singapore." *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 12(1): 18–36.
- Chan, A. 1996. "Confucianism and development in East Asia." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 26(1): 28–45.
- Cheng, T. H., and Hu, L. Y. 2015. "The dual identity and social integration of international immigrants in the Czech Republic: A survey research on the second generation of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants." *Tamkang Journal of International Affairs* 19(1):129–197.
- Chib, A., Malik, S., Aricat, R. G., and Kadir, S. Z. 2014. "Migrant mothering and mobile phones: Negotiations of transnational identity." *Mobile Media and Communication* 2(1): 73–93.
- Cho, Y. 2011. Desperately seeking East Asia amidst the popularity of South Korean pop culture in Asia. *Cultural studies* 25(3): 383–404.
- Choi, J. 2010. Of the East Asian cultural sphere: Theorizing cultural regionalization. *China Review* 10(2): 109–136.
- Christiansen, C. C. 2004. "News media consumption among immigrants in Europe: The relevance of diaspora." *Ethnicities* 4(2): 185–207.

- 1  
2  
3 Cunningham, S. and Nguyen, T. 2001. "Popular media of Vietnamese Diaspora." In *Floating*  
4  
5 *lives: The Media and Asian Diasporas*, edited by S. Cunningham, and J. Sinclair, 91–  
6  
7 135. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- 8  
9  
10 Czech Statistical Office. 2017. "Foriegners in the Czech Republic." *Czech Statistical Office*,  
11  
12 Accessed 18 September 2018  
13  
14 [https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/45709982/29002717.pdf/770a1c14-6ea7-4c47-](https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/45709982/29002717.pdf/770a1c14-6ea7-4c47-831e-3936e3ca1ab3?version=1.2)  
15  
16 [831e-3936e3ca1ab3?version=1.2](https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/45709982/29002717.pdf/770a1c14-6ea7-4c47-831e-3936e3ca1ab3?version=1.2)
- 17  
18  
19 Drbohlav, D., Lachmanová-Medová, L., Čermák, Z., Janská, E., Čermáková, D., and  
20  
21 Dzúrová, D. 2009. "The Czech Republic: on its way from emigration to immigration  
22  
23 country." *IDEA Working Papers* 11.  
24  
25 [https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2004/SOC732/um/Drbohlav\\_et.al.\\_2009.\\_The\\_Czech\\_R](https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2004/SOC732/um/Drbohlav_et.al._2009._The_Czech_R_epublic.On_its_way_from_emigration_to_immigration_country.pdf)  
26  
27 [epublic.On\\_its\\_way\\_from\\_emigration\\_to\\_immigration\\_country.pdf](https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2004/SOC732/um/Drbohlav_et.al._2009._The_Czech_R_epublic.On_its_way_from_emigration_to_immigration_country.pdf)
- 28  
29  
30 Drbohlav, D., and Dzúrová, D. 2007. "Where Are They Going?: Immigrant Inclusion in the  
31  
32 Czech Republic (A Case Study on Ukrainians, Vietnamese, and Armenians in  
33  
34 Prague)." *International Migration* 45(2): 69–95
- 35  
36  
37 Edwards, L. 2012. "How did Gangnam Style go viral?" *Social Media Today*, November 7.  
38  
39 <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/how-did-gangnam-style-go-viral>
- 40  
41  
42 Ehrkamp, P. 2005. Placing identities: Transnational practices and local attachments of  
43  
44 Turkish immigrants in Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies* 31(2): 345–  
45  
46 364.
- 47  
48  
49 Georgiou, M. 2012. "Watching soap opera in the diaspora: cultural proximity or critical  
50  
51 proximity?." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35(5): 868–887.
- 52  
53  
54 Hess, K., and Waller, L. 2011. "Blockbusters for the YouTube generation: a new product of  
55  
56 convergence culture." *Refractory: a journal of entertainment media* 19: 1–12.  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Hüwelmeier, G. 2015. "Mobile entrepreneurs: Transnational Vietnamese in the Czech  
4 Republic." In *Rethinking Ethnography in Central Europe*, Edited by H. Cervinkova,  
5 M. Buchowski, and Z. Uherek, 59–73. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.  
6  
7  
8  
9
- 10 Iwabuchi, K. 2001. "Becoming "culturally proximate": the ascent of Japanese idol dramas in  
11 Taiwan." In *Asian Media Productions*, Edited by B. Moeran, 54–74. Richmond, UK:  
12 Curzon  
13  
14  
15
- 16 Iwabuchi, K. 2002. *Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese*  
17 *Transnationalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.  
18  
19  
20
- 21 Iwabuchi, K. 2008. "Cultures of empire: Transnational media flows and cultural  
22 (dis)connections in East Asia." In *Global Communications: Toward a Transcultural*  
23 *Political Economy*, Edited by Y. Zhao, and P. Chakravartty, 143–161. Lanham, MD:  
24 Rowman and Littlefield.  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29
- 30 Jin, D. Y. 2012. "Hallyu 2.0: The new Korean wave in the creative industry." *International*  
31 *Institute Journal*, 2(1): 3–6.  
32  
33  
34
- 35 Jin, D. Y. 2018. "An Analysis of the Korean Wave as transnational popular culture: North  
36 American youth engage through social media as TV becomes obsolete." *International*  
37 *Journal of Communication*, 12: 404–422.  
38  
39  
40  
41
- 42 Ju, H., and Lee, S. 2015. "The Korean Wave and Asian Americans: the ethnic meanings of  
43 transnational Korean pop culture in the USA." *Continuum*, 29(3): 323–338.  
44  
45  
46
- 47 Jung, S., and Shim, D. 2013. "Social distribution: K-pop fan practices in Indonesia and the  
48 'Gangnam Style' phenomenon." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17(5): 485–  
49 501.  
50  
51  
52
- 53 Kama, A., and Malka, V. 2013. "Identity prosthesis: Roles of homeland media in sustaining  
54 native identity." *Howard Journal of Communications*, 24(4): 370–388.  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Kang, M., and Kim, S. 2011. "Are our families still Confucian? Representations of family in  
4 East Asian television dramas." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(3): 307–  
5  
6 321.  
7  
8  
9
- 10 Kartosen, R., and Tan, E. 2013. "Articulating Asianness: young Asian Dutch and non-  
11  
12 homeland Asian popular media." *International Communication Gazette*, 75(7): 653–  
13  
14 671.  
15  
16
- 17 Kim, H. M. 2005. Korean TV dramas in Taiwan: With an emphasis on the localization  
18  
19 process. *Korea Journal*, 45(4): 183–205.  
20  
21
- 22 Kim, S. 2009. "Interpreting transnational cultural practices: Social discourses on a Korean  
23  
24 drama in Japan, Hong Kong, and China." *Cultural Studies*, 23(5-6): 736–755.  
25  
26
- 27 Kim, T. S. 2016. "Transnational communication practices of unaccompanied young Korean  
28  
29 students in the United States." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 25(2): 148–167.  
30  
31
- 32 Kim, Y. 2006. "The rising East Asian 'wave'." In *Media on the move: Global flow and*  
33  
34 *contra-flow*, Edited by D. K. Thussu, 121–135. London: Routledge.  
35  
36
- 37 Kim, Youna, ed. 2013. *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global*. London: Routledge.  
38  
39
- 40 Kraidy, M. M. 2002. "Hybridity in cultural globalization." *Communication Theory*, 12(3):  
41  
42 316–339.  
43  
44
- 45 Kušniráková, T. 2014. *Vietnamci v Česku a ve světě- migrační a adaptační tendence*  
46  
47 [Vietnamese in the Czech Republic and in the world - migratory and adaptive  
48  
49 tendencies]. Prague, Czech Republic: Slon.  
50  
51
- 52 La Pastina, A. C., and Straubhaar, J. D. 2005. "Multiple proximities between television genres  
53  
54 and audiences the schism between telenovelas' global distribution and local  
55  
56 consumption. *Gazette*, 67(3): 271–288.  
57  
58
- 59 Lee, H. 2018. "A 'real' fantasy: hybridity, Korean drama, and pop cosmopolitans." *Media,*  
60  
*Culture and Society*, 40(3): 365–380.

- 1  
2  
3 Leung, L. (2008). "Mediating nationalism and modernity: The transnationalization of Korean  
4  
5 dramas on Chinese (satellite) TV." In *TV in East Asian Pop Culture: Analyzing the*  
6  
7 *Korean Wave*, Edited by B. H. Chua and K. Iwabuchi, 53–70. Hong Kong: Hong  
8  
9 Kong University Press.
- 10  
11  
12 Meza, X. V., and Park, H. W. 2015. "Globalization of cultural products: a webometric  
13  
14 analysis of Kpop in Spanish-speaking countries." *Quality and Quantity*, 49(4): 1345–  
15  
16 1360.
- 17  
18  
19 Marinescu, V., and Balica, E. 2013. "Korean Cultural Products in Eastern Europe: A Case  
20  
21 Study of the K-pop Impact in Romania." *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern*  
22  
23 *Europe, and Central Asia*, 2(1): 113–135.
- 24  
25  
26 Nožina, M., and Kraus, F. 2016. "Bosses, Soldiers and Rice Grains. Vietnamese Criminal  
27  
28 Networks and Criminal Activities in the Czech Republic." *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68(3),  
29  
30 508–528.
- 31  
32  
33 Park, J. S. 2004. "Korean American youths' consumption of Korean and Japanese TV dramas  
34  
35 and its implications." In *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of*  
36  
37 *Japanese TV Dramas*, Edited by K. Iwabuchi, 275–300. Hong Kong: Hong Kong  
38  
39 University Press.
- 40  
41  
42 Oh, C., and Chae, Y. 2013. "Constructing culturally proximate spaces through social network  
43  
44 services: The case of 'Hallyu' (Korean Wave) in Turkey." *Uluslararası İlişkiler /*  
45  
46 *International Relations*, 10(38): 77–99.
- 47  
48  
49 Ryoo, W. 2009. Globalization, or the logic of cultural hybridization: The case of the Korean  
50  
51 wave. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 19(2): 137–151.
- 52  
53  
54 Sherman, T., and Homoláč, J. 2017. "'The older I got, it wasn't a problem for me anymore':  
55  
56 Language brokering as a managed activity and a narrated experience among young  
57  
58 Vietnamese immigrants in the Czech Republic." *Multilingua*, 36(1): 1–29.
- 59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Shim, D. 2006. Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia. *Media, culture and*  
4 *society*, 28(1): 25–44.  
5  
6  
7 Suralová, A. 2014. “The Czech nanny as a “door to majority” for children of Vietnamese  
8 immigrants in the Czech Republic.” *Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny*, 3(40):  
9 171–186.  
10  
11  
12 Straubhaar, J. D. 1991. “Beyond media imperialism: Assymetrical interdependence and  
13 cultural proximity.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 8(1): 39–59.  
14  
15  
16 Straubhaar, J. D. 2003. “Choosing national TV: Cultural capital, language, and cultural  
17 proximity in Brazil.” In *The Impact of International Television: A Paradigm Shift*,  
18 Edited by M. G. Elasmár, 77–110. London: Routledge.  
19  
20  
21 Sung, S. Y. L. 2013. “Digitization and online cultures of the Korean Wave.” In *The Korean*  
22 *Wave: Korean Media Go Global*, Edited by Y. Kim, 135–147. London, UK:  
23 Routledge.  
24  
25  
26 Sung, S. Y. L. 2015. “Face of the nation: Articulating a new image of Korea and Taiwan  
27 through regionally popular celebrities,” *International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*,  
28 11(1): 35–52  
29  
30  
31 Svobodová, A., and Janská, E. (2016). “Identity Development Among Youth of Vietnamese  
32 Descent in the Czech Republic.” In *Contested Childhoods: Growing Up in Migrancy*,  
33 Edited by M. L. Seeberg, and M. E., Gozdziaik, 121–137. Berlin, Germany: Springer.  
34  
35  
36 Thussu, D.K. (2000) *International Communication: Continuity and Change*. London: Arnold.  
37  
38 Thussu, D. K. (2007). “Mapping global media flow and contra-flow.” In *Media on the Move:*  
39 *Global Flow and Contra-flow*, Edited by D. K. Thussu, 11–32. London: Routledge.  
40  
41  
42 Vacková, J., Velemínský Sr, M., Brabcová, I., and Záleská, V. 2014. “Subjective social status  
43 in select Ukrainians, Vietnamese, and Mongolians living in the Czech Republic.”  
44 *Neuro Endocrinology Letters*, 35(Suppl 1): 90–101.  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Yamato, E. 2014. "Cultural proximity and reflexivity in interpreting transnational media texts:  
4 the case of Malaysians consuming Japanese popular culture." *The Qualitative Report*,  
5  
6 19(47). <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol19/iss47/2/>  
7  
8  
9
- 10 Yang, J. 2012. "The Korean wave (hallyu) in East Asia: A comparison of Chinese, Japanese  
11 and Taiwan." *Development and Society*, 41(1): 103–147  
12  
13
- 14 Yoo, J. W., Jo, S., and Jung, J. 2014. "The effects of television viewing, cultural proximity,  
15 and ethnocentrism on country image." *Social Behavior and Personality: an*  
16  
17 *international journal*, 42(1): 89–96.  
18  
19  
20
- 21 Yoon, K. 2017. "Korean Wave| Cultural Translation of K-Pop Among Asian Canadian Fans."  
22  
23 *International Journal of Communication*, 11: 2350–2366  
24  
25
- 26 Yoon, K., and Jin, D. Y. 2016. "The Korean Wave Phenomenon in Asian Diasporas in  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60