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Article

The Korean Diasporic Identity in the Context of K-Pop Consumption: The Case of Young Female Diaspora Members in Kazakhstan*

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The Korean Wave, or Hallyu, is no longer simply a new phenomenon or an unusual surge in the cultural market. We argue that it is instead a cultural trend and environment with substantial influence among youth outside of Korea, and that it has the transformative power of (re)shaping Korean identity among young diaspora Koreans. Drawing upon the literature of diasporic identity construction, we explore the impact of the Korean Wave on the construction of Korean identity among Korean-Kazakhstani youth. The present article examines how young Korean Kazakhstanis interpret K-pop in relation with their self-identity as Korean. Our qualitative analysis of a focus group exhibits that the current trend of K-pop in Kazakhstan not only involves the consumption of a cultural product, but also serves as stimuli for young diaspora Koreans to reflect upon their identity. Using Cohen's (2004) framework for diasporic identity, we find that Korean-Kazakhstani youths interpret K-pop in a universal sense as well as in cultural and biological terms. The popularity of K-pop among local consumers in Kazakhstan has a transformative influence on young members of the Korean diaspora, as the Korean Wave has positively changed people's perceptions of Korea in general.

Keywords: *diaspora, K-pop, identity, Kazakhstan, Korea*

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Introduction

In May 2018, the Bangtan Boys (BTS), a K-pop boy-group, hit the number one spot on the Billboard Top 200, making history as the first foreign-language music album to reach the top of the list in twelve years. Despite skeptical outlooks saying otherwise, the Korean Wave seems to live on. It appears that the popularity of Korean cultural products has continued to rise across the globe. Going beyond Psy's global viral hit in "Gangnam Style", many observers have suggested that K-pop has established a solid ground for an independent culture by expanding its domains of support and consumption in the contemporary world. In addition, the increasing scholarly attention recently paid to the Korean pop culture also exhibits that the worldwide consumption of South Korean commercial and pop culture is not a short-lived fad, but a continuous trend that has been ongoing since the early 2000s. Reflecting such popularity, many studies on the Korean Wave have focused on its success as a business model (Kim et al. 2008; Parc et al. 2016; Parc and Kawashima 2018), a form of soft power (Jang and Paik 2012; Kim and Nye 2013), or a reflection of Korean culture (Shim 2006; Cho 2011; Lie 2012).

Instead of highlighting the material benefits of the recent Korean Wave, we pose a simple question in this paper: what does K-pop mean to Korean societies outside of Korea? In particular, how do diaspora Koreans in different regions interpret K-pop? Does it reinforce their *being Korean*? Or is it simply another kind of popular cultural product in the contemporary global music market?

A heuristic conclusion is that the popularity of K-pop may strengthen individuals' national pride as Korean, and that diaspora Koreans may also experience positive changes in their material and emotional status due to the rise of K-pop and, more broadly, the Korean Wave. This line of speculation may even be desirable and hopeful for Korean diaspora with traumatic backgrounds, such as those in Japan and Central Asia.

For ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan, the surge of Korean pop culture may have such desirable implications. Their collective memory of harsh and brutal mistreatment by the Soviet Union has led to the formation of a unique culture and identity among the Soviet Korean diaspora (Kim 2009; Lee 2011). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, post-Soviet countries earned their independence, which meant that the Korean diaspora in the region faced unexpected changes in its environments; these new environments were

viewed as a window of opportunity to revive their Korean culture and language. However, these hopes were dashed when the new leadership of independent Kazakhstan employed nationalization policies to promote a Kazakhstani mentality. As a result, despite Kazakhstan championing multiculturalism on the surface, Kazakh culture and customs have become dominant in the country (Khazanov 1995; Surucu 2002). The Korean diaspora experience in Kazakhstan is also different from that of other diasporas, especially those in the US and other countries. While the majority of Korean emigrants to other parts of the world moved to those countries of their own will after the Korean War, the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan had been forced to relocate to Kazakhstan as a result of Soviet Union policy. Due to this, ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan have a unique experience, which is likely to have constructed their Korean identity in a distinctive way. We believe that their collective memory of harsh and brutal mistreatment has led to the formation of a unique culture. This background of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan makes the Korean Wave more meaningful for members of the diaspora in the region and makes it in an interesting venue to study.

We focus on whether the Korean Wave, and K-pop in particular, influences the diaspora Koreans' views of Korea and Korean identity and, if so, how it affects them. In order to avoid painting diverse narratives with a single brush, we narrow our analysis down to young Korean Kazakhstanis[1] for analytical convenience and specifically explore how K-pop resonates among members of this young generation of the Korean diaspora in a post-Soviet country.

In this paper, we argue that the consumption of K-pop among young members of the Korean diaspora should be understood as a multifaceted phenomenon, as diasporic listeners are able to interpret K-pop both ethnically and globally. Furthermore, the impact of a cultural product on diasporic identity is not linear or monotonic, as predicted by literature on diasporic nationalism (Lie 2001; Kim 2011). Using a focus group study, we find that the consumption of K-pop is deeply affecting the identity of young Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan. However, the connection between Korean identity and K-pop consumption is not direct. As our analysis indicates, K-pop itself (e.g. lyrics and melody) offers only limited sources of *Koreanness*. Instead, young Korean Kazakhstanis consume K-pop as a globalized

[1] We stick to the term Korean Kazakhstani rather than the term *Koryoin* who have lived throughout Central Asia after World War II. The region where *Koryoin* has lived is not limited to Kazakhstan so that variance among *Koryoin* may appear. Therefore, we decided to use the more precise term Korean Kazakhstani in this article instead of the broader term *Koryoin*.

cultural product. Being ethnic Korean, young diaspora Koreans in Kazakhstan easily build ties with K-pop performers, through whom—not necessarily K-pop music itself—the Korean identity of young listeners is indirectly affected. We suggest that such an influence is rather comprehensive and multi-layered, for diasporic identity is formed through a range of personal and societal interactions.

The body of this paper is organized as follows. First, we provide a brief overview of the literature on K-pop consumption among diaspora Koreans. There have been a few studies conducted on the association between music and diaspora members' identities as Korean. However, the scope of these pioneering studies has been very limited, because they have usually focused on the Korean diaspora in the Western world. This paper focuses on the association between K-pop and the identities of members of the Korean diaspora in a post-Soviet country. Using Cohen's (2004) analytical framework for diasporic identities, we first explore our research questions. We then conduct focus group interviews and provide preliminary results of our analysis. We conclude with future directions of this study with a focus on the Korean diaspora and its members' identities in post-Soviet countries.

Korean Diaspora and Pop Culture

Diasporic music is understood as a crucial element that stimulates the formation of the identity of a diaspora group. This type of music conveys cultural heritage, which often determines listeners' preferences and ideational orientations about "who I am" (Manuel 1997; Carruthers 2001; Leante 2004). Such an impact is expected to be as pronounced for old minds as young ones.

With the advent of social media and low-cost technology for the dissemination of cultural products, K-pop has started to be consumed across the globe. The growing popularity of K-pop has pushed Korean music toward being integrated into the global context. At the same time, K-pop conveys unique Korean cultural elements. Park (2013) argues that even globalized diasporic music still stimulates ethnic identities among diasporic youth. Yoon and Jin (2016) examine how K-pop influences the identities of young members of the Canadian Korean diaspora. These studies suggest that K-pop is also likely to play a crucial role in formulating diasporic Korean identity among youth in Kazakhstan.[2]

[2] The existing studies often discuss the relationship between Korean diasporic identity and K-pop

However, to the best of our knowledge, there has been no similar study done on the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan. As explained earlier, K-pop is expected to have further significance to ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan for historical reasons. During the Soviet Union era, ethnic Koreans were forcefully migrated to the Central Asian region, including Kazakhstan. In order to survive their new environment, they had to assimilate into the places of settlement (Yoon 2012).

Therefore, local songs became an important part of the Korean song repertoire in this region. Um (2000) provides a detailed description of how other ethnic groups' songs started to be listened to by the Korean diaspora. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, increased contact with their homeland (both North and South Koreas) also changed the listening patterns of the Korean ethnic group in the region. Until the late 1980s, North Korean songs were popular among post-Soviet Korean communities. After the late 1990s and 2000s, the songs and cultural products of South Korea become popular among diaspora and local groups alike. Given this historical backdrop and the recent rise of the Korean Wave in the region, it is worth examining whether there are similar patterns regarding the influence of K-pop among young diaspora members in Kazakhstan as there are in Canada and other countries.

Analytical Framework

A diaspora is defined as a group of people who have been scattered away from their place of origin and have settled in hosting societies (Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996; Butler 2001; Yoon 2004; Brubaker 2005). A diaspora is often mistaken for an ethnic minority group characterized by shared memories. Although the concept of diaspora can be juxtaposed with ethnicity, it contains multiple factors that distinguish it from the latter. When discussed within a country, a society, or a specific territory, ethnic minorities and their identities are often viewed as a source of conflict (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Demmers 2014).

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consumption in the context of the Korean nation and Korean ethno-nationalism. For instance, Lie (2012) shows that the content of K-pop has evolved to convey the national culture and pride of Korea, and Yoon and Jin (2016) discuss the ethnic cohesion and solidarity which are strengthened through Korean Wave. In comparison, our study is differentiated from previous works in that we attempt to interpret the effect of K-pop on the shaping of the Korean identity from the perspective of consumers and listeners of K-pop, rather than that of suppliers.

However, diaspora and diasporic identity are not limited or defined by territorial borders. Unlike the paradigms of race or ethnicity, diaspora departs from the idea of a specific territorial domain (Tölölyan 1996; Anthias 1998; Faist 2010). "De-territoriality" is, therefore, a key feature that defines a diasporic identity. Diasporas are formed by migration or displacement, either voluntary or forced, which lead them to lose their conventional territorial reference points and to become mobile. This characteristic of de-territoriality often poses a challenge to the conventional concept of national identity and nation-state (Cohen 1996).

Although a diaspora does not have a territorial base, members of a diaspora are reported to maintain a powerful sense of solidarity. Solidarity within a diaspora is partly represented by a *connective culture*. The shared traditional culture seems to play an important role in creating a cultural bond in a diaspora. For instance, descendants of the Korean diaspora understand the traditions (e.g. holidays, cuisine, and customs) of Korea, regardless of their territories of settlement. Another force driving solidarity is the *shared idea of homeland*. Safran (1991, 2005) emphasizes the ancestral homeland, either actual or ideal, as the ultimate place for their descendants (or themselves) to return to.

In addition to the forces that create strong solidarity in a diaspora, there are other factors that may push diasporas in diverse directions. This difference across diasporas stems from the fact that members of a diaspora need to adjust their customs and ways of life to their respective places of settlement. Their identities, then, should be modified and reshaped in order to blend into the new environments. That is, *locality* explains differences across diasporas and becomes an important factor constituting a diasporic identity.

While studying diverse features of diasporas, Anthias (1998) finds that commonality and diversity co-exist within a single diaspora; she states, "a diaspora is constituted as much in difference and division as it is in commonality and solidarity." That is, diaspora members form their identities independently from an overarching concept, if any. Cohen (2004) also finds that local conditions exhibit influences to the extent that each diasporic identity is rooted in the soil of its settlement, not necessarily that of its homeland: "[B]oth the culture within the ethnic community and the culture of the host society must be considered in any study of diaspora identity" (Cohen 2004, 90).

In sum, studying a diasporic identity requires a comprehensive understanding of multiple aspects of diaspora. Combined and interwoven,

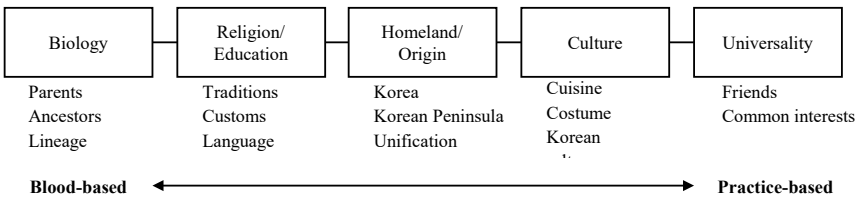

Fig. 1. Components and Conceptual Spectrum of Diasporic Identity Based on Cohen (2004)

the de-territoriality, connective culture, and locality of a diaspora induce further and distinct variations, even within a single diaspora. This challenge applies to the current study of Korean-Kazakhstanis, or *Koryo Saram*.[3]

Among the growing body of scholarly work on diaspora, we choose Cohen's (2004) framework as a basic tool with which to explore young member of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan. By untangling the interwoven characteristics of diaspora between commonality and diversity (i.e., ethnicity and locality), Cohen (2004) identifies five categorical components of diasporic identities from survey data on the Jewish diaspora: (1) biology; (2) religion/education; (3) homeland/origin; (4) culture; and (5) universal. The biological component refers to the primordial characteristic of a diaspora. The formation of an identity through this component emphasizes family lineages and bloodlines. In this sense, the biological component connotes the narrowest definition of diaspora: the blood-based definition or a strong ethnic/racial criterion. Symbols and expressions associated with the biological component in our case include family, parents, blood, narrow eyes, and so on. The religion/education component explains how an individual identity is formulated by the indoctrination of specific ideas of a diaspora. In Cohen's original work (Cohen 2004), Jewish people are distinguished by their religious teaching and texts, which are shared by the Jewish diaspora. For our case of the Korean diaspora, high expectations and pressure regarding education are somewhat distinct traits. For instance, the idea that Koreans are (should be) good at mathematics is a widely accepted convention in describing Koreans. While this does not mean that they necessarily outperform others in specific fields, it shows that the overarching idea of education held by members of the Korean diaspora is distinct. The homeland/origin component refers to the territory of the homeland—in our

[3] *Koryo Saram* refers to ethnic Koreans who live in the post-Soviet states.

case, the Korean peninsula. Following Safran's definition (Safran 1991), diaspora members hold a collective memory about and nostalgic attitudes toward a specific piece of land, which is often idealized. Mentions of Korea (either North or South), the Korean peninsula, and specific locations in Korea (e.g. Baekdu Mountain and Halla Mountain) are viewed as identity formation around the homeland component. The cultural component refers to the cultural elements of being Korean. This includes the observation of traditional holidays and customs, consumption of national cuisine on a daily basis, and other less ideological aspects. We interpret the use of cultural customs and activities as major symbols of the cultural component. The universal component lies on the other end of the spectrum. In this extreme scenario, anyone who follows Korean practices can be regarded as a member of the Korean diaspora. Even if someone identifies herself as a Korean without reference to Korea-specific elements like biological components, this person can also form a Korean identity based on actual behavior and habits. For example, Korean identity is expected to be acquired or reinforced through non-ethnic communal activities, such as common interests in Korea (learning the Korean language, sharing hobbies). On this extreme end, being Korean means nothing special, but is just a regular identity formation. Therefore, one can be Korean on one occasion and Kazakh on another.

We find Cohen's (2004) framework to be suitable and useful for two reasons. First, Cohen's framework is rather universal. Cohen developed an analytical framework to investigate the identities of immigrants, even if he specifically studied the ethnic characteristics of Jews who settled in different parts of the world. In this paper, we apply his analytical framework that emphasizes the universality in terms of analytical scope when analyzing the identities of Korean Kazakhstanis. His five components adeptly explain existing theories and provide a broad spectrum to cover various conceptual definitions of diaspora (see Figure 1). The biological component constitutes an extreme case of the blood-centered definition or the race/ethnicity paradigm of diaspora on one end, while the universal component represents another extreme case of the practice-based definition of diaspora on the other end. Given that diasporas have different conceptual characteristics, we believe that a broad spectrum will be useful for the explorative purposes of our study. Second, Cohen's components are derived from empirical data of more than 10,000 individuals, implying that those components are actually observed in the Jewish diaspora. While the Jewish diaspora clearly differs from the Korean diaspora, we believe that some or all of the broadly defined components will be found among Korean Kazakhs as well. If not, that in itself

will present an interesting contribution that differentiates the two diaspora groups. As found by Cohen himself, the Jewish diaspora is not placed in a single stratum but scattered across different strata depending on their places of settlement. For instance, the diasporic identity of Jews in Argentina is centered around the universal component, while those in the United Kingdom are found on the other extreme of the biological component. Using this analytical framework, the current study attempts to find in which direction the influence of K-pop is found on the spectrum of diasporic identity among young Korean Kazakhstanis.

Research Design

As discussed earlier, our main interest involves the formation of diasporic identity in the context of the consumption of a particular type of pop culture. In our case, the main cultural product is K-pop, and the population of interest is young members of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan. Given the paucity of studies on the topic, this study is the first attempt to explore Korean diasporic identities in Kazakhstan in relation to Korean pop culture. Although we assume that cultural products wield some influence on the identity of Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan, we do not have any specific hypotheses about the process of identity formation at hand. Instead, we aim to delineate how members of the younger generations of the Korean diaspora consume and interpret Korean pop culture.

In order to explore the interaction between the identity formation of young Korean diaspora members and K-pop, we conduct a focus group study and attempt to identify main ideas during the conversations.[4] The focus group method is a form of qualitative research. In a focus group study, investigators lead an open discussion among a small group of people, often about a new product or a particular topic, in order to surmise the reactions that can be expected from the population that the investigators are interested in. The investigators ask about participants' perception, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes toward a topic of discussion, and the participants are free to participate in the discussion as they wish (Liamputtong 2011).

[4] The main purpose of our focus group analysis is to find the overall structure and characteristics of discourses in terms of the relationship between K-pop consumption and Korean identity among participants. Therefore, the main unit of analysis should be the structure of the discourse as a whole, not individual participants. As explained in the research design section, our choice of focus group method and approach aligns with the goal of an exploratory study.

Fortunately, one of our research assistants is Korean-Kazakh, and a volunteer for the Korean Cultural Center in Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana), the national capital of Kazakhstan. Through this volunteer, we were able to contact several students through the Center and recruit participants using snowball sampling, which is appropriate for an unknown population and/or a small sample for interviews (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Robinson 2014). We have few concerns about our sampling method, since this study only concentrates on a small fraction of people in the first place (young Korean diaspora members in Kazakhstan who enjoy K-pop).[5] The research objective also eases the burden of ensuring the representativeness of our sample, because we do not seek generalizable findings, but rather aim to examine factors influencing the process of diasporic identity formation in the context of the consumption of a particular type of pop culture.

We held three sessions of focus group meetings in May and June 2018.[6] Six to eight people participated in each session. In order to avoid Hawthorne effects, each session was led by an undergraduate student moderator, who received training and pre-meditated questions (Adair 1984; McCambridge et al. 2014). The moderator sat in along with the participants and asked questions. The questions were semi-structured, so the moderator could modify or add questions as the discussion evolved. The questions were mainly about the participants' (1) Korean identity, (2) K-pop experience, and (3) influence of K-pop on their (Korean) identity.[7] For compensation, we provided a lunch meal (pizza) after each session. All sessions were conducted in Russian, the primary language of the participants. The entirety of conversations were voice-recorded. The recorded conversations were transcribed manually and independently by two coders. The demographic information on participants in the focus groups is presented in Table 1.[8]

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[5] Our interviewees, by chance, belong to the fourth generation of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan. Unlike the second and third generation of Korean diaspora, the fourth generation appears to be slightly more assimilated into Kazakhstani ways of life. Furthermore, Korea is simply recognized as a country of parents or grandparents, and their native languages are Russian (Lim and Kim 2000).

[6] The procedures conducted at the focus group meetings are available in Appendix A. Also, the investigators were present in the same room during the sessions.

[7] A list of questions are available in Appendix B.

[8] Unfortunately, all the members of the focus group were female between 15 and 22 years old. This was inevitable due to insufficient possible sample and our sampling method.

Table 1
Demographic Information of Focus Group Participants

ID	Korean background	Sex	Age	ID	Korean background	Sex	Age
1	Korean parents	F	15	9	Korean parents	F	18
2	Korean parents	F	16	10	Korean parents	F	14
3	Korean father	F	15	11	Korean parents	F	20
4	Korean grandmother	F	21	12	Korean parents	F	14
5	Korean father	F	15	13	Korean parents	F	19
6	Korean parents	F	16	14	Korean father	F	18
7	Korean parents	F	15	15	Korean father	F	22
8	Half-Korean father	F	18				

Findings

In order to explore the young members of the Korean diaspora's thoughts on their identity, we choose a focus group method. Given the small size of the sample and the nature of a focus group study, it is more appropriate to conduct a whole group analysis than a participant-based group analysis. In order to analyze our data, we carefully follow the three stages of coding qualitative data (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009). First, we assign one or more codes to each transcribed sentence (the open coding stage). Then, we categorize codes to create second-order concepts, or themes, derived from the conversations (the axial coding stage). Finally, we correlate those themes to Cohen's components of diasporic identity and compute the relative significance of each component (the selective coding stage). For example, a sentence reading "I've always wanted to visit [South] Korea" is coded into 'Korea,' 'visit' and 'wish.' These three codes are then together translated into the 'return' theme. For applying Cohen's components, the 'return' theme is again translated into the 'homeland/origin' component.

Beyond Cohen's five components, we add two components for the analysis of our focus group data: locality and individuality. The reason for this addition is to facilitate the interpretation of our data, which is driven by the context of our focus group participants. First, the locality component is included because we believe in the particularity of the Korean diaspora in a former Soviet region (Yoon 2012). The way that the Soviet Korean diaspora has migrated and adjusted to their environment is undoubtedly different from the way other Korean diasporas have done so in Western countries.

Therefore, the locality component allows us to determine whether the collective memory of traumatic displacement has been inherited by younger generations of the diaspora, and if such locality affects the formation of Korean identity among members of the young generation of Korean-Kazakhs. Secondly, the individuality component is created so as to capture the ways our participants interpret K-pop. Considering that most of the participants are teenagers, we observe that their subjective interpretations of K-pop expand to encompass non-musical elements of K-pop. As discussed below, participants focus on personal stories of K-pop performers in reflecting on their own lives and identities. They show personal and emotional attachment to K-pop figures, and even look up to members of K-pop groups as role models. For them, K-pop is not just a pleasant sound, but can in fact serve as a mentor and friend in an affective, doctrinal, or even didactic fashion. This suggests that a link between K-pop and identity may have been created through very personal and individual experiences. However, we take care not to make general arguments about young K-pop listeners. The participants in our study are distinguishable from the general population or other diasporas in terms of age and historical backgrounds. Therefore, we only attempt to find a way to explain the connection between pop culture consumption and diasporic identity formation specifically within our sample. Our participants tend to find bonds with K-pop stars more easily than with other pop stars because of similarities in age and ethnicity. This tendency cannot be boiled down to the universal component, because the internalization and subjective interpretation of K-pop seem to be catalyzed through some 'Korean' connectiveness. For example, one participant might view a member of BTS as an ideal Korean person(ality), who endlessly works hard to achieve his goals. Finally, our study intends to be exploratory research, rather than a generalization or theorization per se. Our intention is not to revise or modify Cohen's framework or diasporic components, but rather to adjust it to reflect the peculiarities of our participants. We only use the two additional components in an ad hoc manner in order to better explain our data while remaining loyal to the original framework of Cohen.

Following the final stage of coding, each component is counted so as to compare the relative frequency within a question. Table 2 shows a list of sample codes at the open coding stage for each component. The primary investigator and two research assistants conduct the coding process independently in order to ensure internal validity. The overall results are similar across all three coders. In total, 2,151 sentences are collected for coding. The primary investigator reports 1,042 entries at the selective coding

Table 2
Selected Codes per Diasporic Identity Component

Component	Codes (selected)	N
Biology	Appearance, blood, eyes, face, family, father, grandparents, hair color, last name, mother, parents, relatives	73
Religion/education	classes, formal, intelligent, language, mathematics, mentality, polite, religion, respect, school, smart,	31
Homeland/origin	homeland, hometown, Korean economy, Korean people, motherland, nation, nationality, North Korea, South Korea	50
Culture	cuisine, customs, dog soup, food, hanbok, history, holidays, kimchi, music, surnames, traditions, temples	56
Universality	Asia, communication, economy, expectation, fame, fashion, friends, love, morality, popularity, style, wealth	386
Individuality	alienated, attraction, change, character, embarrassed, envy, feeling, glad, improve, shy, stable, worry	173
Locality	Almaty, Balkhash, Kazakh, local names, Kyrgyzstan, marrying Russian, Russian, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Vladivostok	31

stage (i.e. the component level), while the two research assistants report 1,073 and 1,013. On average, 68.45 percent agreement is confirmed in pairwise comparison between the two coders. The average pairwise Cohen's kappa is 0.703, which is above the conventional threshold of 0.7 (Lombard et al. 2002).

In order to identify the main ideas expressed by the Korean-Kazakh youths who participated in our focus groups, we analyze all three sessions as a whole. This is because we are less interested in between-session-comparison, since some individuals participated in more than one session. The result of axial-selective coding of the three focus group sessions is presented in Table 3. Each column gives the distribution of components per topic as expressed in a percentage. As the reliability between three coders is confirmed, we use the average percentage of each component per topic for our analysis.[9]

The first column in Table 3 shows the percentage of each component

[9] Detailed distributions of components by questions and coders are available in the Appendix C.

after the selective coding of participants' conversations on Korean identity. The conversation starts with a general question about their identity as Korean ethnics.[10] The objective of this question is to determine which components dominate the discourse on their identity as Korean. Although there is no single dominant component for the question of Korean identity, the biological component is the most frequently mentioned on average, followed by culture and education/religion. This means that the young Korean diaspora members in Kazakhstan tend to relate their diasporic identity to biological and cultural elements. Nearly all participants identify themselves as ethnic Koreans because at least one of their parents are Korean. The outstanding percentage of the cultural component does not seem surprising, since they mention foods, holidays, and customs they observe at home. The education/religion component also accounts for one-fifth of participants' conversation about being Korean. They believe that Koreans are supposed to be well-educated and well-behaved. This explains the individuality component as well, for descriptions of having a personality with good manners and moral teachings at home are considered to be important virtues of Korean identity.

The percentage of locality is not sufficiently large to capture attention across all questions. However, its portion is relatively higher in the Korean identity question (8.6 percent) than in others. Regarding identity alone, some participants make the case for the uniqueness of Korean-Kazakh identity by stressing how they differ from Korean natives: "we say 'tzimchi', not 'kimchi.' This is a big difference for me. We are *Koryoin*, not real Koreans." This suggests that locality also constitutes an important part of their identities as members of the Korean diaspora.

Next, we analyze how our participants interpret K-pop. We asked participants several questions about their K-pop experience and impressions. The main purpose of this was to see how young Korean diaspora members interpret K-pop and how they relate the content of K-pop consumption with their diasporic context. If K-pop, as a diasporic sound, has influence on diasporic youth, it must be interpreted in such ways that listeners relate it with Korea. In other words, their consumption of K-pop should resonate with their Korean identity in a meaningful way. As such, we expect that participants would associate K-pop contents with Korea as a blood-based community, a physical place, or a culturally distinguishable entity. However, as shown in the second column of Table 3, both the biological and cultural

[10] See the appendix for the questions discussed in the focus group sessions.

Table 3
Result of Open Coding of Focus Group Sessions

	Self- identity as Korean	Interpretation of K-pop	K-pop experience and identity
Biology	22.5	9.1	10.8
Religion/Education	20.0	5.2	5.9
Homeland/Origin	6.5	10.7	5.5
Culture	21.2	8.9	9.8
Universality	7.7	45.8	24.5
Individuality	13.4	17.1	35.8
Locality	8.6	3.4	7.8
N	569	1,493	1,066

(Entries are the averages of relative frequencies in %)

components are among the weak components. The strongest component in participants' experience of K-pop is the universality component. This shows that participants interpret K-pop in a universal way, rather than in some culture- or ethnicity-specific way. This is not surprising, however, since K-pop is a globalized cultural product. We asked the participants about the lyrics of K-pop songs to see if the lyrics ever encourage young listeners to find ties to Korea. More than 60 percent of their responses regarding K-pop lyrics were about universal values like love and hope, or instrumental evaluations of the words themselves.

When talking about what they learn about Korea from K-pop, participants often mention Korea as their parents' country of origin or in relation to their distant relatives in Korea. Thus, the homeland component is notably higher for this topic than others. To some extent, this suggests that K-pop encourages young diaspora members to think of Korea as a place of origin or an attractive destination. "By listening to K-pop," one participant says, "it made me interested in Korea as a whole. I began to read more about the country and its culture. I really want to visit someday." However, this should be carefully interpreted, given the high portion of the universality component. Most participants state that their knowledge of Korea is limited because their parents hardly talk about Korea. Instead, they acquire information about Korea from other sources, including the internet. On the other hand, some say that Korea is just another foreign country: "To me, Korea is not very different from Kazakhstan. Korea is just a more developed

country than Kazakhstan." As they compare the economic and social development of the two countries, it does not further push them to consider Korea as their homelands. Instead, Korea is an attractive foreign country or "my parents' homeland" at best.

Then, what are the connections between their consumption of K-pop and their identity? When asked if listening to K-pop ever influences their lives, most participants agree that K-pop has changed their lives. The last column of Table 3 shows the distribution of components within the topic of K-pop experience and identity. While no one component can be considered to be dominating, the universal component (24.5 percent) and individuality component (35.8 percent) account for significantly higher portions than the other components. In contrast to our expectations, the culture component accounts for less than 10 percent, indicating that K-pop consumption does not necessarily lead to increased interest in Korean culture. This suggests that young Korean-Kazakhs enjoy K-pop for being a unique genre of contemporary pop music as well as a cultural product. As simply another genre of music, participants describe K-pop as "bright", "soft", "feminine", and "milder" than Western or Russian music. The main point distinguishing K-pop from other pop culture is not its Korean elements or cultural components, but its universal aspects such as its rhythms, dances, and the tones of songs. It is also found that the contents of K-pop are not interpreted as being Korean. Instead, listeners of K-pop take away more general messages from the music itself. Therefore, it is not surprising that K-pop is thought of more as a form of globalized identity than Korean identity.

How then can we explain the correlation between K-pop and Korean identity among diasporic youths? The data provides us with two possible explanations. First, young diaspora members may overcome their unpleasant memories of being Korean as their surroundings have been changed by the Korean Wave. Our participants share their life stories as Korean diaspora members in order to illustrate how K-pop has changed their lives. Most participants confess to having suffered and having unpleasant memories from their younger days. For example, they may have been mocked for 'narrow eyes,' 'dog soup,' and 'Kim Jong Un.' Such traumatizing experiences discourage them from feeling self-esteem as Koreans. It seems that the rise of K-pop has influenced the development of a young mind by providing a positive reflection of herself as an independent being. One participant says,

> "I was annoyed and bullied by all jokes about Koreans. It was so hard on me that I even hated myself for being a Korean. I told my mother that I wanted

> to change my surname. I said I would for sure marry a Kazakh so that I could change my surname. Then, as K-pop gains popularity, people are surprised [in a good sense] that I am not Kazakh. Everyone says that now Kazakhs are trying to look like Korean because of K-pop. Even though I still love writing in Russian… I thought something has worked out for me, but the hatred from the childhood has alienated me from Korea. Now I accept myself as I am. All my friends are treating me well. They no longer mind that I am Korean."

Another continues,

> "As I said, when I was a child, I disliked that I was a Korean. Then, I came to understand that I am who I am. Because of K-pop, people began to approach me asking if I am Korean. Sometimes it was annoying, but I realized that Koreans also can do something and that being Korean is not that bad. How I grew up, what I saw, what I experienced, all of this formed me the way I am."

Given that most of our participants are teenagers, we observe that they have agonized over the division of their identities between Korean and Kazakh. It seems that unpleasant memories from early childhood have had a traumatic impact on their perception of their Korean identity. As quoted above, a young Korean diaspora member "disliked" being called Korean. Such negative experiences could make young diaspora members hesitant to acknowledge their Korean identities and heritages. One participant, who has a Kazakh parent, tells about how traumatic it was being mocked by non-Korean family members. However, as K-pop gains popularity in Kazakhstan, especially among the younger generations, the perceptions of Korean traits, which were once viewed negatively, have changed; Korean identity is no longer to be hidden and concealed. The Korean Wave changed the surrounding environment, especially the views of Korea held by her peers. Thus, while K-pop may not change one's view of Korea as significantly as it does the views of others, it has helped her learn to accept her Korean identity, albeit indirectly.

Second, identity is not a simple tag that can be attached and detached as one desires. Instead, it interacts with other traits and forms a crucial portion of a person's personality. Our data reveals such a connection between identity and other personality factors. As shown in the outcomes, the individuality component accounts for the highest portion for the topic of K-pop and

identity. This suggests that participants take personal lessons from K-pop in the direction of self-development, thus indirectly transforming their perspectives on Korea and Korean identity.

> "I have more [of a] Kazakh upbringing than Korean. My father didn't visit me much. But when I started listening to K-pop, everything turned upside down, because I began to strive for the best, to improve my life. I began to wake up early and study hard. After all, Koreans are smart and well-educated. I also want to be like that."

Some participants state that watching someone their age become a K-pop star is a big stimulus for change in their own life. For example, one participant who describes K-pop as brighter and softer confesses how K-pop changed her attitude,

> "In the past, I used to swear a lot because I listened to Eminem and 2 Pac only. As I started listening to K-pop, I became feminine, wearing skirts, and so on. I [had] even [been] rude to my family and friends. Now I listen to people, help and support them, my loved ones."

Their consumption of K-pop stretches so far so that personal changes and development become a significant part of their enjoyment of it. Again, this relates to their Korean identity, which emphasizes being well-behaved and well-educated.

Discussion And Conclusion

The results of the focus group interviews show that K-pop wields some influence on the identity of Korean Kazakhstani youths. More importantly, by applying Cohen's framework, we find that K-pop strengthens young diaspora members' Korean identities through all components. The biological component is usually strong across topics. This can be explained by the historical hardship faced by Soviet Korean diaspora members: blood and family have remained the strongest bond of the diaspora community in the region. Universal and cultural components follow as possible dominant components. K-pop consumption is linked to both Korean culture and globalized contexts. Members of the younger generations of the Soviet Korean diaspora appreciate both national and global contexts through K-pop.

This is not at all surprising, since K-pop itself is already a globalized product (Shim 2006; Kim et al. 2008; Cho 2011; Jang and Paik 2012; Lie 2012; Kim and Nye 2013; Parc et al. 2016; Parc and Kawashima 2018). Korean-Kazakh listeners are not vastly different from the general audience of K-pop in this sense. However, their subjective experiences in the post-Soviet environment shaped a certain negativity toward their own Korean ethnicity. The Korean Wave, then, has begun to affect the surroundings of diasporic youths, which has resulted in changes in the local perceptions of Koreans and Korean culture. At the same time, Korean-Kazakh youths also actively interpret K-pop contexts and take personal lessons from it in lieu of Korean identity.

For future research, we acknowledge the limitations of the current study. The present paper focuses on a very small fraction of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan. Also, the paper only focuses on young women due to the limitations of our sampling method. Acknowledging the limited representativeness of our sample, we understand that there are more diverse stories and narratives about Korean identities across region, age, and socio-economic status. Nonetheless, this study seeks to provide the first insights into the diasporic identity of Korean youths in Kazakhstan in relation to the growing influence of Korean pop culture.

This study contributes to the literature of the diaspora in two ways. First, this study expands the previous research in that it initiates a debate as to the identity of Korean-Kazakhstan or *Koryoin*. As noted above, there has been no research on the relationship between K-Pop and Korean diaspora members' identities in the post-Soviet region. This study provides a starting point for this discussion. Second, this study adds two more components to Cohen's framework on diasporic identities: individuality and locality. Our study suggests that these components help better grasp the spectrum of diasporic identities. However, the nature of our research design cannot generalize the emergence of these new components; this is left for a future study.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Procedure

Welcome

Good afternoon and welcome to our session. Thank you for taking the time to join us and talk about your experience and stories. My name is XXX, and assisting me here is [name of assistant], who will do the translation and also moderate today's discussion. We are with Nazarbayev University.

Project

Our research is about young Korean-Kazakhstanis in the context of Korean culture, especially K-pop. We are mainly interested in how members of the young generations of the Korean diaspora interpret K-pop and how it is involved in the formation of their ethnic identities.

Selection

You are selected for this focus group, because (1) you are somehow connected to Korea ethnically - one or both of your parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents are ethnic Koreans; and (2) you listen to K-pop music or are fans of K-pop. It does not matter how often you listen to it. To some extent, all of you enjoy K-pop and find it interesting and it is something that you spend your time consuming.

Participation

We are very open to your opinions and thoughts. We assume nothing about Koreans or Korean-Kazakhs: what they should look like, act like, or speak like. If you don't consider yourself Korean, that is completely fine. Since this is a new research direction in academia, it is crucial for us to just listen to what you say. Your participation is voluntary, and you have no obligation to participate. If you feel uncomfortable being here and talking, or if you just want to leave, please feel free to tell us. We will do our best to accommodate your needs.

Questions

There will be a few questions I want to ask you to think and talk about. But

those questions have no correct answers. In fact, what you are telling us will serve as guidance for us to find an answer. Please don't be bothered by being correct or incorrect, or what others think. All I ask is for you to be nothing but you.

Confidentiality

Your identities will never appear in any of our research outcomes. All of your opinions and words will be anonymized. There is no way for your identity to be linked to our research result, unless you intentionally disseminate the contents of today's meeting to outside sources. So, please listen carefully to the rules I read in a second, and do not tell anyone outside this room about what you say and hear during the session.

Future sessions

We will have some food during and after the session. Please help yourself. You can freely come and go during the session for food or drink. But please use common sense and etiquette for others. This meeting is expected to take about an hour and half, and no longer than two hours. After today's meeting, there will be more sessions similar to today's. You are welcome to come again. For further information, you can contact [name of assistant].

Rules

Before we begin, let me make some rules clear:

1. There is no right or wrong answer, only different points of view.
2. We're tape recording, so one person speaking at a time.
3. We're on a first name basis.
4. You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully.
5. We ask you to turn off or silence your phones. If you need to respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and rejoin as quickly as possible.
6. Our role as moderators will be to guide the discussion.
7. Talk to each other, not to the moderators.

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

We use the following as guiding questions (semi-structured group interview). The moderator has the ability to add, skip, and modify questions.

1. Do you identify yourself as a Korean? If so, what do you think makes you identify as such? If not, why don't you see yourself as Korean?
2. What does "Korean" or "*Koryoin*" mean to you? When you think of Korean, what does come to your mind? You can mention anything, including a simple word, object, or experience.
3. Who is your favorite K-pop band or singer?
4. Think back to the moment or event that you first encountered K-pop. How did you get to know K-pop? What fascinated you about it? What do you think is the charm of K-pop?
5. What do you think of the lyrics of K-pop songs? Do they give you somewhat different meanings than songs in other languages?
6. If you have heard about Korea from your parents or other family members, are there any differences between their descriptions of Korea and what you have learned from K-pop?
7. As you listen to K-pop, do you ever feel that being Korean comes to have some special meaning? Can you explain your feelings about being Korean, if any?
8. How important is your identity as Korean when you listen to K-pop?
9. You may hear from your parents or other family members about 'being Korean.' If you have, what was your response?
10. If you accept Korean identity as a part of who you are what do you think has the greatest influence on this?
11. I want you to think back the time when you didn't know or listen to K-pop. Compare the past you, who didn't listen to K-pop, and the present you, who does listen to it. Is there any difference in your understanding of yourself as Korean? If yes, how? If you feel the same, how?
12. Do you think your interest in K-pop has led you to become interested and involved in other aspects of Korea, such as traditions, politics, or language?
13. There are certain images about Koreans shared within Kazakhstan. What do you think these images are? If such images were applied to you, what would be your response?
14. What does K-pop mean to you?

Appendix C: Inter-Coder Reliability Checks

We measure the inter-coder reliability between three coders: the primary investigator (PI) and two research assistant coders (A and B). The comparison is made against the component level coding (or the last stage, the selective coding stage). Each line is coded into one of eight values (1~5: Cohen's five component, 6: individuality, 7: locality, 99: not coded). The measures of inter-coder reliability are as follows:

Average pairwise percentage agreement	Pairwise percentage agreement		
	PI and A	PI and B	A and B
68.45%	72.99%	70.53%	61.83%

Fleiss' Kappa	Observed agreement	Expected agreement
0.542	0.684	0.311

Average pairwise Cohen's Kappa	Pairwise Cohen's Kappa (weighted)		
	PI and A	PI and B	A and B
0.703	0.803	0.680	0.625
Observed agreement percentage	90.38%	84.38%	81.77%
Expected agreement percentage	51.19%	51.24%	51.38%

We also break down the second question, "interpretation of K-pop," into three sub-questions: general K-pop experience, interpretations of K-pop lyrics, and images of Korea via K-pop. The overall outcome of open coding is nearly identical across all three coders. The result of coding at the selective coding stage by sub-questions and coders is as follows:

	Self- identity as Korean			General K-pop experience			Interpretation of K-pop lyrics			Images of Korea via K-pop			K-pop experience and identity		
Coder*	PI	A	B	PI	A	B	PI	A	B	PI	A	B	PI	A	B
Biology	24.7	24.1	18.6	14.9	5.33	6.9	1.6	0.0	2.4	18.1	10.6	15.4	14.5	4.4	13.4
Religion/Education	25.8	15.5	18.6	2.5	0.6	0.0	5.5	0.0	1.6	14.9	9.6	6.3	10.6	2.7	4.4
Homeland/Origin	6.7	5.9	6.9	2.5	2.4	1.5	0.8	0.7	0.0	24.4	28.1	21.1	7.4	4.4	4.7
Culture	21.1	21.9	20.7	7.4	8.3	1.0	3.2	0.7	0.0	14.9	22.6	13.1	11.9	10.1	7.5
Universality	4.1	2.1	17.0	66.9	57.4	84.7	68.5	53.3	73.0	14.5	2.5	20.6	20.1	20.5	33.0
Individuality	4.6	21.9	13.8	3.3	25.4	5.9	1.6	40.1	22.2	5.4	24.1	21.1	21.6	50.6	35.2
Locality	12.9	8.6	4.3	2.5	0.6	0.0	7.9	5.3	0.8	7.7	2.5	2.3	14.0	7.4	1.9
N	194	187	188	121	169	203	127	152	126	221	199	175	379	366	321

*PI: primary investigator; A and B are independent coders (research assistants). Entries are relative frequencies in %.