Diasporic Koreanness in *Kim's Convenience*

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Introduction

"Representation matters." Paul Sun-Hyung Lee, star of the popular Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) TV sitcom *Kim's Convenience* (2016–2021), made this statement in his acceptance speech at the 2018 Canadian Screen Awards, where he won Best Lead Actor in a Comedy. Upon winning the award for the second time, following the previous year's surprise, Lee stated, "I need to say that representation matters. I think a show like *Kim's Convenience* has proved that representation matters." He then added, "When communities and people see themselves reflected up on the screens, it is an inspiring and very powerful moment for them. Because it means they've moved from the margins into the forefront." Wearing a black pin in solidarity with the #AfterMeToo campaign, Lee noted how representation can empower marginalized people: "It gives them a voice. It gives them hope. Hope is a very empowering thing because it inspires people. When you give people a voice, other people start listening. When people start listening, things start to change. And we need change."

Lee's statement matters. The short yet powerful speech seemed to reveal what had been missing in Canadian media. Indeed, as can be inferred from Lee's urge for change, mainstream Canadian media has until recently paid minimal attention to Asian Canadians' lives. *Kim's Convenience* is the first ever Canadian sitcom led by an Asian cast (Hunt 2016). The show quickly became popular and critically acclaimed, and in 2018, the second season won the award for the Best Comedy Series at the Canadian Screen Awards. This prime-time sitcom reminded audiences that Asian Canadian voices have long been absent from the Canadian mediascape and how deep-rooted stereotypical representations of Asians in the Western media can be reappropriated and negotiated.

Both audiences and critics consider the success of *Kim's Convenience* to be a meaningful moment of the cultural recognition of Asians in Western media (e.g., Hsu 2019). But how is the show relevant to the ongoing discussion about the global waves of South Korean (Korean, hereafter) popular culture overseas—Hallyu—and its reproduction and negotiation of stereotypes? Given the definition of Hallyu as waves of *Korean* popular culture, *Kim's*

Convenience—a made-in-Canada cultural product—may not strictly seem to belong to the category. However, while this show is a Canadian product by its nationality, it is still a cultural text that addresses an important, yet often neglected, aspect of Koreanness–the Korean diaspora. In this regard, the present chapter suggests that the diasporic cultural identity represented in *Kim's Convenience* offers momentum that diversifies the Koreanness narrowly defined in the dominant discourse of Hallyu.[1]

As several scholars argue, studies of Hallyu should move beyond its nationalist discourse, in which the research focus is primarily on the transnational flows of made-in-Korea cultural products (Fuhr 2016; Joo 2011; Jin, Yoon, and Min 2021; Won 2017). Drawing on cultural nationalism, the dominant discourse of Hallyu has tended to reduce the cultural waves to the overseas penetration of Korean products that contributes to the country's national branding or promotion. In this regard, *Kim's Convenience* constitutes an alternative mode of Hallyu that includes heterogeneous voices, such as those of diasporic Koreans. The show's storytelling about and by diasporic Koreans may be different from that of the conventional Hallyu texts, such as K-pop, Korean TV dramas (K-dramas), and webtoons. Moreover, *Kim's Convenience* is produced in the context of Canadian media industry (CBC), while being circulated globally through the US-based mega-platform Netflix.[2]

This globally circulated Canadian show has not been detached from Hallyu; it can be situated in the discourse of the Hallyu diaspora, in which diasporic flows of popular culture are produced and consumed among Koreans overseas (Yoon 2020). The diasporic imagination of Koreanness may in turn affect the directions and diversity of the global flows of Hallyu by dismantling the celebratory discourse of the global expansion of the once-peripheral Korean cultural industries.

Stories of Korean Diasporas

Kim's Convenience is based on the highly acclaimed play of the same title, written by Korean Canadian Ins Choi. Raised in Toronto, Choi developed this play based on his experiences as a child whose immigrant Korean family lived above a convenience store run by his uncle (Hunt 2016). After acclaimed performances, the play was developed by Vancouver-based Thunderbird Films and CBC and was co-created by Ins Choi and Canadian writer/producer Kevin White as a 13-episode prime-time sitcom for CBC that aired at 9 p.m. every Tuesday (except for the finale, which aired at 8 p.m.). The show tells the story of the Kims, a Korean immigrant family that runs a convenience store in downtown Toronto. Each episode revolves around family members Mr. and Mrs. Kim (played by Paul Sun-Hyung Lee and Jean Yoon), who immigrated in the 1980s; their grown-up children, Jung and Janet who were born and raised in Canada (played by Simu Liu and Andrea Bang)[3]; and their neighbors and colleagues.

The show engages with the identity and history of the first-generation Korean Canadians and their children. According to Kim, Noh, and Noh (2012), the first groups of permanent Korean migrants settled in Canada in the 1960s, after the Canadian government established diplomatic relations with South Korea (1963). It was not until 1973 that Canada began to receive a sizable number of Korean migrants; since the 1970s, the Korean Canadian community has slowly grown (Kim, Noh, and Noh 2012). According to the latest census data (Statistics Canada

2016), 198,210 people identified their ethnic origin as Korean, while 153,425 people identified Korean as their mother tongue.

The story of the Kims is not different from that of many Korean immigrant families in US and Canada. The show depicts the parents' dedication to their small business 365 days a year, as well as their close relationship to their ethnic community. Mr. and Mrs. Kim sometimes reveal a traditional perspective on the family and the children's career, which might be derived from the 1980s' Korean society, from which they emigrated. For example, Mrs. Kim seems to maintain a narrow definition of the ideal career and marriage for their children, as shown in her dissatisfaction about Jung's job (an employee at a car rental office) and her call for candidates to be Janet' boyfriend among those who are Korean and Christian. Meanwhile, Mr. Kim sometimes reveals his Confucian mindset. When arguing with Janet who has asked him to appreciate her art works, Mr. Kim exclaims vehemently, "You is my work. Me and Umma [i.e. Mr. and Mrs. Kim] is struggle to make whole life for you" (Season 1, Episode 2: "Janet's Photos").

The parent's lifestyle and attitudes are contrasted with their children's pursuit of engagement with the general, nonethnic economy and communities. Raised in Canada, Janet and Jung appear to be uninterested in taking over the convenience store business at least until the last season of the show; instead, they seek professional occupations. Twenty-year-old Janet, an art school student, wants to be a professional photographer while helping to run her parents' business in her free time. She lives in the parental home, which is located above the convenience store, but by the end of Season 1, she is seeking to leave it and live in her own rental apartment with her friends. On several occasions, Mr. Kim attempts to teach Janet how to run the store, assuming that it might be taken over by his children after his retirement, but neither child seems interested in pursuing this path. For example, Janet complains about her unpaid domestic labor and seeks independence from her parents, while stating, "running the store isn't exactly my dream" (Season 1, Episode 2: "Janet's Photos"). In response, Mr. Kim clarifies his interest in handing the store over to his children, saying "if you work very hard, one day I sell to you store" (Season 4, Episode 11: "Birds of Feathers").

In addition to Janet, Jung is also not interested in the continuation of the convenience store as a family business – at least until the show's finale. Janet's older brother Jung does not get along with the family's patriarch Mr. Kim as he ran away from home, dropped out of school, and got into petty street crime, which ended with his short-term stay in juvenile detention. While putting his past behind him, Jung (now in his mid-twenties) works hard as an employee at a car rental office. Despite his hard work and enthusiasm, Jung struggles with advancing his career because of his past record. In the show's finale (Season 5, Episode 13: "Friends and Family"), having just completed business courses and seeking better job opportunities, Jung laments, "Now I'm back wiping windshields at Handyland (i.e. referring to his car rental company Handy)". To encourage him, his sister Janet suggests that Mr. and Mrs. Kim invite him to give a presentation on future development plans for the Kim's convenience store. Following the presentation, Mr. Kim, whose tension with Jung has significantly lessened throughout the progress of the show, offers Jung the opportunity to take over the store – an offer that Jung appears to be willing to consider. As shown in this finale, taking over and furthering the development of the family's small business is presented as a gesture of generational reconciliation. While the children of first generation Korean immigrants tend to prefer to participate in mainstream economy over inheriting a business from their parents (Min and Noh 2014), continuation of parental businesses

can be an option for second generation Korean-Canadians and a way to understand the first generation's legacies.[4]

Due to several factors, such as language and cultural barriers, Korean immigrants have tended to open their own small businesses, such as groceries, convenience stores, dry cleaners, and restaurants, rather than pursuing the occupations they used to have in Korea (Chan and Fong 2012). Despite being relatively highly educated (compared with the overall Canadian population), the average income of Korean Canadians is far lower than that of the average Canadian (Park 2012). This decades-long trend of occupational adjustment, which is often accompanied by underemployment, can be summarized in the phrase "from white-collar occupations to small business" (Min 1984). Self-employment is almost exclusive to first-generation Korean immigrants who were born in Korea and immigrated after their childhood, while Canadian-born Koreans are mostly wage and salary earners (Chan and Fong 2012).

Kim's Convenience captures the lives of Korean immigrant families by comically engaging with the settings of a downtown convenience store and an ethnic Korean church, both of which are often considered landmark components of Korean Canadian communities—especially first-generation immigrants. Until recently, of all forms of small businesses, the convenience store was a popular entrepreneurial choice for Korean immigrants (Ju 2018). In the show, Mr. Kim, who used to be a teacher in Korea, could not continue his career in Canada, and seems to lament his underemployment after immigration. In one episode, to show customers his former professional career as a teacher in Korea, Mr. Kim displays his teacher certificate behind the checkout desk in the convenience store. He complains that people only see him as a shopkeeper (Season 4, Episode 3: "the Help"). In addition to the convenience store as a symbolic location of immigrants' underemployment and struggles, ethnic churches have played a significant role in Korean Canadian community development. Thus, a Korean Canadian church appears as the main (if not the only) site of Mr. and Mrs. Kim's social lives in *Kim's Convenience*. The diasporic Koreans' involvement in Korean churches is "a way to assert a distinctive Korean religious and therefore cultural identity, not a way to assimilate into" the host society (Baker 2008, 172).

The show introduces Korean Canadians and other Asian Canadians (e.g., the two Asian characters Mr. Chin and Mr. Sanjeev Mehta, who are Mr. and Mrs. Kim's close neighbors) into the mainstream popular culture. The presence and recognition of Asians in the show is significant, as Asian Canadians are positioned as storytellers and as "us" rather than as the "others" of white storytellers and audiences. The success of *Kim's Convenience* also reminds us that the incorporation of diasporic Koreans' stories into the recent Hallyu discourse has been limited. Among the various cultural forces and voices associated with Hallyu, the involvement of diasporic Korean or non-Korean talents in cultural production requires further discussion. As shown in the K-pop industry, diasporic Koreans and Asians play an increasingly important role as content creators and consumers, but their stories are not being integrated to a significant extent into mainstream Hallyu content.[5] Diasporic talents, such as second-generation Korean musicians, are consumed in the context of the dominant discourse of Koreanness in the Hallyu industry (Fuhr 2016). In this regard, the diasporic storytelling in *Kim's Convenience* may offer insights into how the dominant Koreanness can be questioned through diversified storytellers who are not Korean-born Koreans.

The Reception of Diasporic Comedy

Kim's Convenience emerged as a popular prime-time TV series in Canada and then attracted global attention. With an average audience of 933,000 in Canada, the show emerged in as the third most-watched CBC shows in 2016, just behind the two long-run hit shows *Murdoch Mysteries* and *Heartland*, (Reid 2016) and has thus continued with successive seasons. Most reviewers have acclaimed the show and highly evaluated its refreshing, heartwarming, comedic family drama and ensemble performance.

Kim's Convenience's nationwide success has brought it to overseas audiences, including South Korea, through Netflix since 2018, and rave reviews have followed. For example, *The New York Times* stated succinctly, "The show is single-camera comedy, but it has the gentle warmth and slower pace of a multicamera show. If you miss when *Modern Family* was good, try this" (Lyons 2018, para 3). In this way, *Kim's Convenience* was compared with the relatively original early seasons of the praised American sitcom *Modern Family*, which depicted American families of various backgrounds. In the Canadian TV industry, in which original content has been lacking due to the dominance of American content (Mirrlees 2019), the emerging global popularity of *Kim's Convenience* is noteworthy.

The global success of *Kim's Convenience*, which might be coincidental with the rise of Korean popular culture in overseas markets, has sometimes caused the show to be associated with the discourse of Hallyu, especially by Korean-based or ethnic Korean media. The Korean media, as well as the Korean Canadian media, paid considerable attention to the show, especially in 2019 when it began to air in Korea and the lead cast was invited to the Seoul Drama Awards. Broadcast television and several national newspapers reported the main cast's press conference in Seoul, while a TV entertainment news program (*Section TV* by Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation) aired a separate special interview with the three lead actors—Paul Sun-Hyung Lee, Jean Yoon, and Andrea Bang. The Korean news media introduced *Kim's Convenience* as a successful TV show that was contributing to the global recognition of Korean culture. In fact, due to the show's success and the need to inform the audiences of South Korea—the host country of the PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games in 2018—about Korea and Korean culture, the CBC produced an information program in which *Kim's Convenience* star Andrea Bang traveled to Korea to experience the country in 2018. The Canadian national newspaper *The Star* invited the two leads, Lee and Yoon, to demonstrate how to cook the Korean foods *kimchi bokkeumbap* (kimchi fried rice) and *kongnamul muchim* (seasoned soybean sprouts) in the newspaper's food section and on its YouTube channel (Liu 2020).

While the majority of Korean media reports briefly introduced the show as a global hit, giving it favorable reviews, some analyses indicated that it was an unexpected Hallyu item or a cultural item that could promote Korean culture overseas. For example, a Korean government agency's report included *Kim's Convenience* as an example of Hallyu in Canada, stating that "The Canadian public broadcaster's popular sitcom *Kim's Convenience* has effects to promote Korean foods and culture in Canada." (Korea Foundation 2020, 333). Moreover, referring to the show's success, another report published by a Korean government-funded agency suggested that Korean cultural content should be more customized to different local audiences while also considering diasporic Korean audiences (Bang 2018). Similarly, an article published by another government-funded agency noted that the show offered insights into how Korean media

industries should produce more culturally diverse content (Y. Lee 2018). These reports defined *Kim's Convenience* as an example of Hallyu or at least an item that facilitates the Hallyu phenomenon.

As *Kim's Convenience* portrays immigrant Korean families, various forms of Korean cultural customs, foods, and brands are naturally incorporated into the show's narratives. Interestingly, despite the show's frequent references to Korean culture in general, recent forms of Korean popular culture, such as K-pop, drama, and films, do not explicitly appear, except for a few passing occasions. In particular, there are few references to indicate that the younger Korean characters (Janet, Jung, and Kimchee) in the show are immersed in Korean pop culture. Thus, it can be assumed that younger Korean Canadians in the show may not be much interested in K-pop or K-drama.

In the show, references to Korean pop culture, albeit limited, emerge primarily in relation to Mr. and Mrs. Kim–the first generation immigrants. For instance, in one episode (Season 2, Episode 9: "New TV"), Mr. Kim brings home a newly purchased high-definition TV set, saying to his wife who is disappointed that she was not consulted: "Think about Korean drama in HDR! [i.e. High Dynamic Range TV, which is an advanced version of high density TV]" In another episode (Season 3, Episode 4: "Thy Neighbor's Wifi"), Korean Canadian women's viewing of Korean dramas is portrayed in detail. In the episode, when the Kim's wifi is temporarily out of operation, Mrs. Kim is worried about the probable interruption of her viewing a cliff-hanger type Korean drama. Later in the episode, when the wifi is repaired, Mrs. Kim, along with two other Korean women and Latin-Canadian pastor Nina, view the drama in the Kims' living room without subtitles. Pastor Nina, whom Mrs. Kim invited only "to be polite", apparently does not understand the drama's Korean-written conversations, yet seems very excited about the drama. This sequence comically portrays how appealing Korean drama could be to diasporic Koreans and non-Korean viewers of color.

Kim's Convenience implies generational differences in the diasporic consumption of Korean popular culture. That is, the parents who are the first generation immigrants may routinely access and consume the media of their left-behind home country in a relatively traditional format (TV drama) rather than newer genres, such as K-pop. In comparison, the children (i.e. the second generation) may not particularly interested in Korean popular culture. The generational differences may resonate with Yoon's (2017 and 2019) findings. According to the studies, in their leisure time and even during their work hours at their small businesses, first-generation Korean immigrants habitually and often exclusively consume a vast amount of Korean content. Small business-running Korean immigrants frequently access Korean TV via the Internet, but sometimes during their small business work hours they have Canadian TV and radio programs turned on as a kind of "white noise" (Yoon 2017). Prior to the introduction of Internet streaming video services, groceries and supermarkets in Korean neighborhoods offered rental services of VHS recorded Korean TV shows (Yoon 2019). In comparison, younger Korean Canadians' consumption of Korean popular cultural items is selective rather than inherited or habitual (Yoon 2019).

It should be noted that *Kim's Convenience* is written and performed by second generation Koreans and thus their perspective rather than the first generation's might be incorporated more explicitly into the show. In particular, creator and co-writer Ins Choi's experiences are more similar to those of the children (Jung and Janet) in the show. In addition, the cast of Mr. and Mrs. Kim (Paul Sun-Hyung Lee and Jean Yoon), and their children (Andrea Bang and Simu Liu) grew

up in Canada as the second generation with limited exposure to the contemporary popular culture of their ancestral homeland. In several interviews, Paul Sun-Hyung Lee notes that he tried to keep away from Korean culture to "fit in" when he was young: "When you're a kid and you're really trying to fit in, you push away everything that reminds you of your family because your family is different." (A. Lee 2016, para 6). This tendency of avoiding the culture of their ancestral homeland is commonly observed among some second generation young people (Kibria 2003). For example, in Yoon's (2019, 144) study of Korean Canadian youth, a second generation college student who grew up white-dominant neighborhoods notes: "I wanted to fit in, so I had no choice but to avoid the whole K-pop [phenomenon] and listen to what my other friends were listening to, which was like just Western pop instead of K-pop."

Recent Korean pop culture is even critically (if not stereotypically) depicted through the eyes of younger characters in a few episodes. For example, in one episode (Season 1, Episode 4: "Frank and Nayoung"), Janet meets with her cousin Nayoung, a young Korean woman visiting Toronto. Janet seems embarrassed by Nayoung's behaviors, which are depicted somewhat stereotypically in the show. Nayoung is depicted as a grown-up who is wearing excessively cute dress and makeup and makes certain gestures observed in Korean pop culture (e.g., forming the finger–heart symbol, which is a cliché in K-dramas, and taking selfies frequently, which is a common stereotype of Asian tourists). While the depiction of Nayoung as an otaku-like (a pop and consumer culture obsessed person) figure is problematic for some viewers, the occasional, yet exaggerated, characterization of Koreans from Korea (e.g. Korean travelers) in the show–Nayoung in particular–may serve to implicitly critique the commodification of Korean youth culture, which is increasingly distant from the culture of diasporic Korean youth (as shown in the distant between Nayoung and Janet).

Before and After the "Asian August"

Asian characters are seldom portrayed by the mainstream Canadian and US media. In addition to their portrayal being rather sporadic, Asians in North American mainstream media have been depicted stereotypically, whether negatively or positively. While the negative "yellow peril" stereotype was more extensive, another somewhat positive stereotype—the "model minority" stereotype—has increasingly emerged (Ono and Pham 2009; Park, Gabbadon, and Chernin 2006).[6] Furthermore, these two stereotypes are not necessarily separable, as they are interchanged dialectically (Kawai 2005). The media industry has constructed race through stereotypical representation (Saha 2018).

It is only within the past few years that the North American media industry has witnessed noticeable changes in the representations of Asians. These changes have been facilitated by the social atmosphere, in which further representation and the rights of women and people of color are increasingly being demanded due to various campaigns, including the Black Lives Matter movement and the #OscarsSoWhite campaign. In the mid-2010s, media audiences participated in an anti-whitewashing campaign after witnessing Hollywood blockbusters casting white stars in Asian roles in several films, such as *Ghost in the Shell*, *Aloha*, and *21*. In response, a meme with the hashtag #StarringJohnCho circulated online, urging people to imagine having Asian American actor John Cho in major roles in Hollywood films.

Since the mid-2010s, Asian leads have appeared more than before in North American media, especially in August 2018, when several films and TV shows with Asian characters and producers—for example, *Crazy Rich Asians*, *Searching*, and *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*—had tremendous success in the market. This "Asian August"—a term coined by the Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment to recognize the major success of Asian American content in the mainstream media market—might be the symbolic moment in which the presence of Asians in the North American media increased (Rubin 2018). The increasing number of Asian roles in the mainstream media landscape is encouraging for Asian American cultural industries and audiences, as well as for the industry as a whole. There are existing dilemmas regarding how Asian Americans should be represented without reproducing racial stereotypes as exotic others, and how Asian American content can be disseminated to larger audiences.

As Saha (2018) argued, ethnicized cultural content tends to be marketed either to appeal to the bigger general audience or to target niches comprised of ethnic audiences. The recent Asian American TV shows target not only ethnic but also wider audiences. For those mainstream shows with Asian casts, writers, and/or directors/producers, the nuanced and fair representation of Asians is an ongoing task. For example, the production team may have to question how "authentically" and "specifically" ethnic cultures should appear in these shows while simultaneously including "universal" themes to appeal to both ethnic and nonethnic audiences (Feng 2017). As shown in the case of *Kim's Convenience*, the creators seek a balance between specificity (of an ethnic group) and universality (that can be shared across ethnic groups). As Feng (2017) aptly defines in his study of recent Asian American TV series, mainstream TV shows involving minority viewpoints and characters have negotiated the "contradiction between originality and comprehensibility" (126). In other words, recent mainstream shows with Asian leads may have to address primetime audiences (not limited to Asian Americans) and thus have to be "specific enough that racial minorities will find them authentic, but they are relatable enough that they are universal" (Feng 2017, 126).

Recent Asian American TV shows primarily take the form of the (romantic) comedy genre; for example, several TV sitcoms with Asian leads, including *Selfie* (ABC, 2014), *Fresh off the Boat* (ABC, 2015–2020), *Dr. Ken* (ABC, 2015–2017), *Master of None* (Netflix, 2015–2017), and the *Mindy Project* (2012–2017). In the comedy genre, archetypes and stereotypes tend to be used as an instrument to establish quickly recognizable character types and become a central source of humor (Bowes 1990; Macey 2012). Topics and characters in TV comedy shows are often depicted "in a comically exaggerated or satirically distorted manner" (Kamm and Neumann 2015, 2). In other words, stereotypes are deployed in TV comedy to achieve humorous and satirical effects. The use of stereotypes does not necessarily involve the simple repetition of cliché. The use of stereotypes can be intended to challenge the status quo (Kamm and Neumann 2015). In particular, the post-network TV era has witnessed the emergence of "transgressive comedy" that involves intentional offensiveness as a source of humor (Tueth 2005). Like many other narrative genres, comedy has been oscillating between the reproduction of conventions and their transgression. In this regard, TV comedy, including Asian American comedy, may involve stereotypical and alternative representations.

Of course, stereotypes are often troublesome and have detrimental effects on audiences, the stereotyped groups, and the general public (Kawai 2005). In particular, stereotypes reproduce a particular imaginary of marginalized groups of people as the other of the dominant social order (Dyer 1993; Hall 1997). The reproduction of stereotypes involves power relations between those

who stereotype others and those stereotyped. As Hong (2019) observes, Asian Americans were primarily the objects of comedy (i.e., those who were made fun of) but are increasingly emerging as the subjects of comedy. Thus, Asian characters are no longer simply stereotyped by others but, rather, engage with the process of creatively playing with and challenging stereotypes. Indeed, Asian American TV sitcoms revolve around existing stereotypes of Asians, reworking, challenging, and/or negotiating them (Feng 2017). As the first Asian-led Canadian TV sitcom of its kind, *Kim's Convenience*, written and performed primarily by Asian Canadians, reveals the racialization of Korean Canadians. However, this does not mean that the Korean Canadian leads are racialized simply to be stereotyped; rather, they are racialized as a way of doing their identity politics (Feng 2017, 126).

The Negotiation of Stereotypes in *Kim's Convenience*

(In)convenient Stereotyping

In its portrayal of Asian characters, *Kim's Convenience* seems to move beyond the binary opposition of Asians as either the "yellow peril" or the "model minority". However, like many other TV sitcoms, this show is not entirely free of stereotypical representations. The show involves archetypical and/or stereotypical portrayal of characters. As the creator and cast suggested, the show's portrayal of the Kims may be archetypical rather than stereotypical (Westerman 2019). Archetypes as "the broad blueprint of recombinant characters" (Macey 2012) are often used in narrative media genres for time-efficient character building and storytelling. Yet, if placed in a dominant system, archetypes can become stereotypes that associate certain groups of people with specific, fixed, often negative, attributes (Macey 2012).

Kim's Convenience creatively presents its archetypical character study as being in tension with (rather than simply giving in to) the dominant cultural forces that reproduce the stereotypes of minorities. In so doing, the show reveals the pervasiveness of the stereotypical understanding of others in our daily contexts and dominant systems. Its comic episodes implicitly (and explicitly in some cases) address the ways in which the stereotypes are negotiated and critiqued. The show engages with ethnic tropes, especially when portraying some of the main characters (particularly Mr. and Mrs. Kim). For example, audiences may consider Mr. and Mrs. Kim's communication patterns—including their gestures and accents—to be stereotypical. As first-generation immigrants, Mr. and Mrs. Kim use Koreanized English. By using Koreanized English, cast members Paul Sun-Hyung Lee and Jean Yoon, who are in reality native English speakers, play authentic yet legible Korean characters (Feng 2018). The modified accent of the visible minority characters—especially Mr. and Mrs. Kim and their neighbors, including Mr. Chin (John Ng) and Mr. Mehta (Sugith Varughese)—accommodates a general audience (Jang and Yang 2018; A. Lee 2016) and, more importantly, is an essential component of the narrative of shows that tell the stories of immigrants (Davé 2017).

Mr. and Mrs. Kim's racialized accents can be seen as an example of the stereotypical representation of the Korean Canadian characters in the show. Their Koreanized English accents distinctively highlight their characters' identities as first-generation immigrants. Their accents are especially contrasted with the English that their children speak. Mr. and Mrs. Kim's

racialized accents contribute to the authentication of their characters (Davé 2017; Jang and Yang 2018). The accent and language barrier also effectively show the struggles of immigrants in their everyday lives. On several occasions, Mr. Kim, a convenience store owner who interacts with many people on a daily basis, encounters challenges due to his accent. For example, in one episode (Season 1, Episode 3: "Ddong Chim"), Mr. Kim is frustrated after he has difficulty ordering eggs over the phone. In the same episode, he wants to call the police to report a parking violation outside his store, but he asks Janet to do so, complaining that "Police hear accent, they don't take serious!"

As observed in Mr. and Mrs. Kim's racialized accents, first-generation immigrants and Korean travelers are stereotypically portrayed in several episodes of the show. In Season 2, Episode 7 ("Sneak Attack"), Mr. and Mrs. Kim meet a group of Korean travelers at a restaurant near the airport. The Kims are there to buy a large amount of Korean face cream without going through customs so that they can resell it in their store at a higher price. In this episode, the Korean travelers stick together and speak very loudly without considering the other customers, including police officers.

It may be undeniable that *Kim's Convenience*, like other Asian American TV shows, involves stereotypical portrayals (Feng 2017). However, this may not necessarily mean that the show reproduces pervasive stereotypes and thus serves the dominant social order; rather, *Kim's Convenience* appropriates and makes fun of the stereotypes, and in so doing, it comically questions the dominant discourse that often implies and reproduces various power hierarchies. By frequently exhibiting the lead characters' doing and undoing of stereotypes, the show questions pervasive stereotypes and racism. Most stereotypes presented in the show are not implicitly hidden to generate pleasure by sacrificing the voice of minorities but, rather, to reflexively reveal how the stereotypes operate and are negotiated. The Asian Canadians and other recurring characters in the show are not depicted as simply the objects of pervasive stereotyping (i.e., being stereotyped by others); they are also depicted as its subjects (i.e., doing the stereotyping of others). The Kims often encounter the racialization of Asian Canadians while also conveniently stereotyping others—typically members of other minority groups.

By boldly addressing the issue of stereotyping, the show consistently questions and challenges the ongoing discrimination and prejudice that affect both dominant groups and various visible minorities. In so doing, the complexity of identity and the need to further understand cultural diversity and inclusion are implied. This implied message is evident from the very first episode of the show (Season 1, Episode 1: "Gay Discount"), which opens with a scene in which a gay customer accuses Mr. Kim of being homophobic. When two gay men ask Mr. Kim if they can put up their Pride parade poster in window of the convenience store, he says, "I have no problem with the gay. But I have a problem with the parade. Traffic, garbage, noise. If you is the gay, why can't you be quiet, respectful gay?" In response, one of the gay men accuses Mr. Kim of being homophobic. Wanting to prove that he is not homophobic, Mr. Kim begins offering a gay discount at the store. Later in the episode, in his conversation with his neighbor Mr. Chin, Mr. Kim claims he can tell who is gay. This implies that he has stereotypes of gay people. As his conversation continues, Mr. Kim realizes there are various types of genders and sexualities. He speaks with Mr. Chin about potential types of intersectional/trans identities that he might not have thought about in depth before. Mr. Chin says to Mr. Kim, "For example, if a gay man discover he is transsexual…then if he has sex change and becomes a woman...then discover she is actually transgender..." In response, Mr. Kim asks, "What's the difference

between transgender and transsexual?" As evident in this conversation, *Kim's Convenience* challenges the essentialized notion of identities by emphasizing the fluidity of gender and sexual identities. The show engages with the questions of stereotypes and identities, rather than conveniently repeating and reproducing existing stereotypes.

Being Stereotyped

As members of a visible minority group, the Kims are often exposed to white people's racialization of Asians. For example, in one episode (Season 1, Episode 6: "Rude Kid"), Janet's professor assumes that Janet's personal background is dismal. While commenting on Janet's photography assignments, the professor asks, "Where was your family's journey to Canada? Where was the refugee experience?" Janet responds, "My parents aren't refugees." However, the professor keeps assuming: "Well… boat people." Janet says, "My parents flew here," but the professor corrects her: "You mean *fled*." The white female professor stereotypes Janet as the daughter of a struggling immigrant family and abusive parents. Afterward, the professor visits Kim's convenience store with her child. In response to the professor's child making a mess in his store, Mr. Kim flicks the child's head. Gasping, she raises her voice to Mr. Kim, "Negative! Negative! You must apologize immediately!" When meeting with Janet in person at her university office later on, the professor says sympathetically, "I realize how difficult it must be for you to create art with a father like that." Janet attempts to brush the professor's comment off by saying, "No, my dad's fine, he's just Korean. It's how he was raised." However, the professor insists, frowning, "See, this is a classic case of the victim rationalizing the behavior of the aggressor." The white, middle class, art professor reveals racial stereotypes of Asian immigrant parents as an unintelligent and potentially violent group of people, while assuming their children as "victims."

In another episode (Season 2, Episode 2: "Date Night"), Jung, accompanied by his white boss and love interest, Shannon, attempts to buy pre-owned collector-item sneakers. He meets with a white middle-aged man who listed online the type of shoes that Jung is looking for. The man's first words to Jung are "Um… *Konichiwa*. I am sorry. It's the only Oriental I know." Later, the white man also says, "I know *you people* like bargain." When Shannon is perplexed and asks, "You people?", he replies, "Chinese. You like pinching your pennies." In this manner, the show often, albeit comically, explores how Asians are exposed to everyday racism and ignorance; however, the Asian characters in the show only comically challenge others' stereotyping of themselves, and sometimes they even appropriate the same logic toward others. Interestingly, the main characters also use pervasive stereotypes of Asians for their short-term gain. For example, in one episode (Season 2, Episode 7: "Sneak Attack"), Janet uses a Korean accent and pretends to be a North Korean refugee to enable her to get into a film festival that is already at capacity. In another episode (Season 1, Episode 6: "Rude Kid"), she intentionally takes advantage of her professor's stereotype of her as a struggling immigrant child to get a better grade. In several comic tropes of "acting stereotyped Asians," the Asian characters in the show reveal how people of color learn to live with pervasive stereotypes.

In a later episode (Season 4, Episode 3: "the Help"), a rich patron Mrs. Taylor mistakes Mrs. Kim for a server at Janet's university exhibition. Afterward, while chatting with Janet and Mr. Kim in the convenience, Mrs. Kim speaks about the situation, which she considers "funny".

Hearing about this incident, Janet seems deeply offended by this white person's assumption of her mother as a server, calling the misrecognition "racist", while Mrs. Kim states, "I was standing beside food. Lots of waitress is Asian people. Innocent mistake. (…) I was wearing same clothes as waitress." However, Janet exclaims, "NO! It's typical white, unconscious bias." Listening to their conversation, Mr. Kim adds, "Hmm, happen to me all time." Later, when complaining to her professor about the incident, Janet finds out that the rich patron's family adjudicates a prestigious university art award for which she is one of finalists. When the patron, along with the professor dropped by Kim's convenience to apologize, Mrs. Kim pressures her to give Janet the award, which later actually happens as "a done deal"

In this manner, the show addresses the ways in which people of color are exposed to the dominant white gaze that associates them with particular stereotypes. Through comical situations, the show often reveals that the Asian characters negotiate stereotyping forces. In some episodes, the systematic racial hierarchies are not necessarily addressed structurally but rather dealt with at an inter-personal or individual level. Given the nature of this show as situation comedy, it is not surprising that solutions to racial stereotyping are not systematically proposed in the show. However, it is important that through the examples of Asian characters stereotyped by white people, the show reveals that racial stereotyping can be a mundane and pervasive practice. Moreover, the show invites the viewer to think about power relations behind media stereotyping by raising the question of who represents whom and how.

The Stereotyped Who Stereotype Others

While the Kims are stereotyped by others, they do stereotype others too. Indeed, the show often depicts how the Korean Canadian characters make assumptions about other visible minorities and marginalized groups, and in so doing, it reveals that the main characters with whom audiences may identify are not free of the dominant representational system. By showing occasions when characters are both the objects and subjects of stereotyping, *Kim's Convenience* critically engages with the ongoing stereotyping of minority groups in Canadian society, offering audiences self-reflexive moments.

Mr. Kim habitually stereotypes his customers and others. For example, in one episode (Season 1, Episode 7: "Hapkido"), a black man enters the store, and Mr. Kim asks Janet, "What do you think? Steal or no steal?" He then says, "He's a no steal, because he's a black guy, brown shoes." He asserts, "That's no steal. That's a cancel-out combo." Speechless, Janet responds provocatively to Mr. Kim, "A fat Asian gay man with long, straight hair, and a black lesbian with a ponytail and cowboy boots—steal or no steal?" Mr. Kim is confused by this combination, which extends far beyond his stereotyping scheme. Thus, he claims that "Gay Asian is never fat" and adds, "Only skinny Asian is the gay. That's rule. That's how they doing like that." This episode succinctly captures how Mr. Kim, a middle-aged heterosexual man of color, may also be likely to stereotype others—especially other racial groups—and how easily his stereotypes can be dismantled. First-generation Korean immigrants' patriarchal culture is critically portrayed in the show. In one episode (Season 3, Episode 12: "Hit 'n' Fun"), pastor Nina pointed to a misogynous Korean man (Jimmy)'s sexist jokes, while Mrs. Kim is upset at Mr. Kim who is silent about Jimmy's misogynous talks. As the episode progresses, Mr. Kim becomes critically aware of Jimmy's patriarchal attitudes, and thus, argues against him.

The Kims' stereotyping is often toward other marginalized people, such as people of color and LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer). As shown in the above episode, Mr. Kim's stereotypical understanding of his customers is evident when he encounters black characters. His stereotyping of black people seems more evident in the play version than in the TV-sitcom version of the show. In the analysis of the theater play, Daniher (2018) argues that *Kim's Convenience* is not exclusively a drama about Korean Canadians but is also about the racialization of Korean Canadians interrelated with Black and White racialization. Daniher refers to Claire Jean Kim's discussion of "racial triangulation" through which "a dominant racial-social grouping [whites] valorizes one minority racial–social grouping [Asians] in order to subordinate another [blacks]" (Kim 1999, 117–18). Daniher (2018, 20) notes that *Kim's Convenience* effectively reveals "how Black and Korean Canadian lives become entwined through the intersections of global immigration, urban commerce, housing policy, and racial minoritization" and how this makes *Kim's Convenience* "such a remarkable teaching text on contemporary race and racism in Canada." However, Daniher (2018) laments that critics often categorize the show as Korean Canadian or Asian Canadian without paying due attention to its interracial conjunctions.

By showing Mr. Kim's stereotyping of others, *Kim's Convenience* offers viewers a moment to critically reflect on the process through which prejudice operates and becomes pervasive in society. The main character's stereotyping of others reveals vividly and comically how *we* are tempted to stereotype others and how the process should be questioned.

How Representation Matters

The stereotyping by and of minorities in this show does not simply reproduce one-dimensional depictions of others, but offers moments of reflection. Critical engagement with stereotyping serves as the basis for narrative development in several episodes. The Kims negotiate different occasions of stereotyping in which they are discriminated against or realize their own prejudice against others. The main characters are multi-dimensional in that they show diverse, sometimes even contradictory, patterns of behavior and reflect on their mistakes. Minorities in the show are not essentialized but rather (at least eventually) humanized. In this regard, the characters in the show do not remain stereotypical as they consistently challenge the dominant system's reproduction of stereotypes.

Janet questions stereotypes while negotiating her identity between Canadian and Korean. Often questioning Mr. Kim's rigid notion of Koreanness, as exemplified in his anti-Japanese sentiment, Janet is not comfortable with being considered to be either "too Korean" or "not enough Korean" (Carras 2019). Moreover, she attempts to challenge the dominant social order that racializes her and thus restricts her agency. As an art student, she copes with others' stereotyping of her as a woman of color but also seeks to explore her own identity. In one episode (Season 2, Episode 9: "New TV"), Janet criticizes her male photography lecturer, whose work seems to draw on a conventional beauty standard that idealizes tall, slim white women. However, when she is surprisingly asked by the lecturer to assist him, she attempts to tan her skin so that she can look more stereotypically Asian to increase her value as an "authentic Asian"

model. It turns out that the Afro-Latino lecturer did intend to hire Janet as a technical assistant, not as a model. In this way, it is revealed that Janet is not free of the stereotyped Asianness that is imposed by the white-dominant racial order, and in this regard, she is not substantially different from her male lecturer of color who reproduces the dominant white male gaze. Janet's irony echoes previous studies' finding that people of color in cultural industries may gradually internalize the white mainstream understanding of race (Saha 2018).[7]

While addressing various everyday situations in which racial and other stereotyping operates, *Kim's Convenience* questions the media's pervasive and convenient stereotyping others. Interestingly, by engaging with a somewhat clichéd portrayal of visible minorities, the show offers moments of reflection on the Canadian society's (myth of) multiculturalism. It is probable that the clichés and stereotypes in the show, as well as their twists, may be differently received by different groups of audiences. As the first Asian Canadian-led show, *Kim's Convenience* explores how Asians can speak for themselves in the mainstream media. Given that Canada's settler colonialism has continued through the dominant groups' power to narrate and restrict other groups' narratives (Said 1994), the momentum that enables minorities to speak for themselves is invaluable. In a recent interview, award-winning Korean American screen writer Diana Son expressed her excitement about watching Korean characters on TV. After lamenting about the difficulties in creating Asian characters in the white-dominant US media industry, Son referred to *Kim's Convenience* (Miller 2020, 230):

> My family and I have been watching this Korean Canadian show called *Kim's Convenience*, which is about a convenience store, and there's a dad and a mom, and an adult son and daughter. And people ask me, "Is it good?" And I say, "I actually have no idea." I have no idea because it's like when you're drunk without drinking, seeing Korean people on TV that aren't doing K-dramas, but are speaking English and working in a store. I had to work in my parents' store. So I can tell you that I love it, and my family really enjoys it, but I don't know if it's any good. But I'm just so flush. [The characters] speak English ninety-nine-point-nine percent of the time, but every once in a while, a Korean word, like a pet name or a curse, will slip out, and the recognition of hearing that is just shocking. I do think that playwrights of color are going to TV, and saying, "Oh, I can tell my story here."

This account resonates with Paul Sun-Hyung Lee's award acceptance speech cited at the beginning of this chapter and reaffirms why representation matters. For many Korean-Canadians and Korean-Americans, the archetypical Kims are probably some of the rare media characters with whom they can identify. This archetypical yet lively characterization of Korean Canadians as storytellers questions the dominant system that has reproduced stereotypical storytelling about minorities. As observed in *Kim's Convenience*, diasporic Koreans and Asians have just begun to openly tell their stories and write their histories, moving beyond the dominant token representation of visible minorities. The show contributed to facilitating discussions about whose stories should be further included and how the stories should be told in the mainstream media industries. Moreover, the show's storytelling of diasporic lives may facilitate a critical understanding of the somewhat monolithic, dominant discourse of Hallyu, while adding other voices.

Conclusion

Kim's Convenience has been one of the most successful Canadian TV programs in recent years. The show's storytelling of people of color and immigrants may contribute to the diversification of and questions about what actually constitutes "Canadian content."[8] However, the discontinuation of the show after the remarkably successful five seasons reveals that Canadian media industries' infrastructure is still too limited to sustainably embrace the stories of Asians. The praises for *Kim's Convenience* may be largely derived from audiences' desires for cultural diversity and inclusion, which the North American media has severely lacked. Meanwhile, the show may serve to question what the discourse of the Hallyu is missing—that is, the voices of diasporic Koreans and Asians. Regarding the increasing importance of the diasporic flows of Korean popular culture, Yoon (2020) has proposed further studies, which he tentatively called "Hallyu diaspora studies." This approach addresses "how the Korean diaspora affects Hallyu's production and circulation and/or how the phenomenon affects Korean diasporic identity" (Yoon 2020, 155). Diasporic Koreans are not only consumers of recent Korean pop cultural content but also producers and mediators of Hallyu. In this regard, it is important to explore how diasporic storytelling of *Kim's Convenience* is integrated into the recent global waves of Korean pop culture.

By examining the ways in which the cultural stereotypes are identified, questioned, and negotiated in the popular TV show, created and performed by Asian Canadians, this chapter has questioned how colorblindness of Western mainstream media industries can be questioned. Moreover, the chapter has suggested that *Kim's Convenience* offers a potential antidote to clichés and stereotypes observed in mainstream Korean pop culture and its global flows. K-pop videos and romantic K-dramas have been criticized for their recurring clichés and stereotypes, such as traditional gender roles and Confucian age-based hierarchies (Epstein and Turnbull 2014; Unger 2015). Indeed, the stereotypes that are often observed in mainstream Hallyu texts as a method of marketing particular forms of body images and identities are problematic. The diasporic narratives in *Kim's Convenience* confront the pervasive stereotypes and thus ask questions of identity in transcultural contexts. The show provides an interesting case study of how diasporic Korean storytelling and representations contribute to expanding the narrowly defined and imagined Koreanness in contemporary Korean popular culture. The diasporic negotiation of stereotypes in *Kim's Convenience* serves to expand the boundaries not only of Canadian media but also of Hallyu. The diversification of representation matters.

Coda

On March 8, 2021, in the midst of running of the fifth season of *Kim's Convenience*, the CBC abruptly announced the discontinuation of the show. It was an unexpected cancellation as the CBC had already ordered a sixth season. In response to the news, fans expressed their disappointment and attempted to revive the show by spreading the hashtag #SaveKimsConveneince. The cast of the show also individually shared their frustrations in several interviews and social media postings. The CBC's decision was reportedly due to the

creator Ins Choi's uncertainty about the next season. As the show was rooted in his autobiographical stories and characterization, the executives did not want to continue production without Choi's involvement (Houpt 2021). However, as Choi did not make public comments on the show's cancellation, there emerged speculation about the specific reasons for discontinuation and debates about the probable revival of the show by other showrunners.

This unexpected closure revealed the structural restrictions of Canadian media industries, in which few creators of color have played an active role. For example, Ins Choi was often the only writer of Asian heritage on the production team, and thus he may have had significant responsibilities during the five seasons of *Kim's Convenience* (Houpt 2021, Weaver 2021). The difficulty recruiting writers to continue the show indicates that even the globally successful *Kim's Convenience* was not free from the white-dominant production culture in which most mainstream TV shows are run by white creators (Weaver 2021). The near absence of creators of color in Canadian media industries is shocking given that the Canadian TV industry has recently been enjoying success in domestic and global markets (Weaver 2021). Given the structural problems in the industry, the legacy of *Kim's Convenience* is invaluable. It opened doors for culturally engaged, diverse storytelling in Canada and facilitated public debates about what type of storytelling should be facilitated to better engage with the question of cultural diversity (Weaver 2021).

After the cancellation announcement, CBC revealed its plan to run two new comedies starring two cast members of *Kim's Convenience*. As a spinoff scheduled for the 2021-22 season, *Strays* stars Nicole Power, who played Jung's white love interest Shannon in *Kim's Convenience.* This new show revolves around Shannon who begins a new career in another Canadian city. *Strays*, produced by *Kim's Convenience* co-creator Kevin White, however, does not involve Ins Choi. Meanwhile, Andrew Phung, who played Jung's Korean roommate Kimchee in *Kim's Convenience*, will star in a new CBC comedy show *Run the Burbs* that he created. Reportedly, these two shows were already planned before the cancellation of *Kim's Convenience* (Houpt 2021).

The fans, the cast, and Asian Canadian communities could not save the show as its finale aired on April 13, 2021. Despite its unexpected, early departure, the show has undeniably left legacies and tasks for the representation of Asians in the Canadian media landscape. Indeed, the show's contribution to expanding the diasporic scope of "Korean" popular culture (or popular culture by diasporic Koreans) suggests how the diasporic dimension of the Korean Wave can engage with the narratives of cultural diversity.

Notes

[1] *Kim's Convenience* is not the only case that demonstrates the diversified waves of Korean popular culture that include cultural texts not only made-in-Korea but also made-*about*-Korea. Several other important cultural texts have contributed to the re-orientation of Hallyu toward further transnationally diverse and complex cultural waves. The acclaimed American independent film *Minari* (2020) by Isaac Lee Chung heartwarmingly portrays an immigrant Korean family's struggle in 1980s Arkansas. While it is an American film by its nationality, its director, cast, and themes are diasporic–both Korean and American. *Minari* reveals how Korean popular culture elements (e.g., the roles played by Korean actors Yuh-jung Youn and Yeri Han) and the diasporic Korean themes and talent are incorporated into American independent filmmaking. Similar to *Kim's Convenience*, *Minari* indicates how diasporic cultural practices can enrich the content and form of diversity in cultural industries.

While *Minari* shows how diasporic Korean cultural practices can impact the evolution and diversification of Hallyu, the multi-award-winning Korean film *Parasite* (2019) by Bong Joon-ho illustrates how Hallyu can be transnationalized through local storytelling that resonates with global audiences. Set in contemporary Seoul, *Parasite* offers a satirical social critique of class division in Korea, which is rarely attempted in mainstream Hallyu content, such as kaleidoscopic K-pop videos and urban trendy K-dramas. In an early press conference in Seoul, the director Bong described the film as "being full of Korean-specific nuances (…) that only Korean audiences can fully appreciate" (Yim 2019). It turned out that the film's Korean-specific references were translatable and were understood by global audiences because the theme of class division was timely and appealing to other local contexts.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Psy's *Gangnam Style* (2012) can be considered an example of variation in the dominant discourse of Hallyu (rather than an example of the dominant Hallyu trend). Although overshadowed by its global megahit and comical dance moves, *Gangnam Style* is a harsh satire of middle class Seoulites' materialism. Moreover, Psy is not categorically a conventional K-pop idol systematically "manufactured" for local and global audiences. *Gangnam Style* might be an early example of an alternative direction of Hallyu–not only made-in but also made-*about*-Korea. This new direction involves cultural content that strongly draws on local themes and references rather than intentionally targeting global markets.

[2] Netflix typically does not release specific viewer counts of its shows. Thus, the international reception of *Kim's Convenience* can only be estimated. According to Parrot Analytics' (tv.parrotanalytics.com) data as of January 2021, outside of Canada, the show is particularly popular in the United States (US) and Australia – in those two countries, the show ratings are far higher than the average of other comedy programs on Netflix. According to the data, the show's popularity lags in South Korea.

[3] Interestingly, the Kims' eldest child Jung has a Korean name, while Jung's younger sister Janet has an English name only. In one episode (Season 3, Episode 1: "New Appa-liance") in which Janet wants to have a unique Korean name instead of her English name, Mr. Kim reveals a history behind the children's names: Janet was given an English name because her older brother Jung was teased by his peers for his Korean name. Mr. Kim says to Janet, "(It was) Just to be safe for we not give you a name people make fun of. 'Dumb Dumb Jung', 'Ping Pong Jung', 'Donkey Kong Jung.'"

[4] The theme of generational reconciliation is not rare in Korean Canadian or Korean American media narratives. For example, the father-son reconciliation through the continuation of a family business in the ethnic economy portrayed in Kim's Convenience resonates with some second generation Koreans' stories (e.g. Historica Canada 2015).

[5] It is no longer the exception that K-pop idol groups include diasporic Korean or non-Korean members. For example, the globally popular K-pop group Blackpink is comprised of one Korean, one Thai, and two diasporic Koreans. The Netflix original documentary *Light Up the Sky* (2020) reveals the four members'

journey to global stardom. As three members out of the four were raised overseas, the documentary portrays those members' transnational experiences to a large extent. However, as portrayed in *Light Up the Sky*, young multinational trainees are disciplined according to the uniquely Korean in-house training system through which all elements of production, management, and marketing of idols are assembled under the control of major Korean entertainment companies (Shin 2009). In addition to the strict idol manufacturing system, existing cultural nationalism in Korea has restricted how diasporic or non-Korean talents are represented and represent themselves (Fuhr 2016).

[6] As historian Henry Yu (2010) noted, Asians in North America have resisted the label "model minorities", as it comes with high costs: "One cost was the destruction of anti-racism coalitions with Jewish-Americans and African-Americans that had helped overcome white supremacy during the Civil Rights era. Another cost was the revival of the racist image that Asians were a threat to 'normal' white Americans" (para 7).

[7] The internalization of racial order has also been echoed by Korean Canadian actor Sandra Oh. In an interview on her role as the main character Eve in the award-winning TV show *Killing Eve* (2018–present), Oh admitted that she did not expect she would be offered the main role because she had been told to limit herself as a person of color in the white-dominant media industries for decades. Critically reflecting on how she had internalized the white mainstreaming understanding of race, she stated, "Oh my god! They brainwashed me!" (Jung 2018).

[8] In keeping with the stipulations of the Broadcasting Act of Canada, Canadian radio and television broadcasters must provide a certain percentage of content that is produced by Canadians. While this Canadian content quota is maintained to protect the Canadian media industry and Canadian cultural identities, there are ongoing debates regarding the nature of Canadian content (e.g., whose Canadian content?) (Mirrlees 2019).

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