
HALLYU AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE COMPLEXITIES
OF ASIAN AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the role of Hallyu (Korean popular media) amongst Asian Australian people as they negotiate the tensions between belonging in Australia and connections to their Asian heritage. By looking at how and why participants use and engage with Hallyu 1.0 (Korean television content, ‘K-dramas’) and Hallyu 2.0 (Korean Pop Music, ‘K-pop’), the thesis offers a deep, qualitative study of the mediated experiences of being Asian in Australia. Young diasporic Asian people grow up with a distinct awareness of their cultural differences in Australia. They are often conflicted between feeling obligations to remain connected to their Eastern heritage, whilst trying to find belonging within a Western society. As a global media phenomenon, Hallyu offers symbolic material with which Asian Australians can construct and negotiate their identities.

Hallyu (trans. Korean Wave) encompasses a global circulation of Korean media and popular culture which has had an increase in both media and scholarly attention. However, whilst literature goes into great depth on the reasons for its global success, there is a lack of investigation into how Hallyu media as a cultural product is a valuable facilitator for young Asian individuals who are exploring, testing, and understanding their complex identities as being ‘of’ Australia and simultaneously ‘other’. This thesis contributes to this understanding through semi-structured interviews with nine 1.5 – 3rd generation Asian Australians, aged 18-30 years old, as well as moments of ethnographic observation with selected Hallyu fans.

The results show that interviewees feel misunderstood and excluded from White Australian society. In the context of being racialised through their Asianness, participants also discuss a sense of solidarity in being Asian Australian. Hallyu reconnects participants to the Eastern values of their individual cultures, despite being a Korean cultural product. Hallyu provides positive Asian representation and makes being Asian ‘cool’. It also encourages negotiation between Eastern and Western cultures that allows participants to build fluid identities and negotiate the inherent tensions

of diaspora. Broadly, this project engages with understandings of dual-identities and how pop culture can influence and contribute to negotiations of identity. Hallyu acts as a heuristic diasporic media for Asian Australians and its consumption and reception provide insights into how young Asian Australians use pop culture to facilitate an understanding of themselves.

DECLARATIONS

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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INTRODUCTION

In politician Tim Watts' book, *The Golden Country, Australia's Changing Identity*, he expressed the fear he had for his Australian-raised, mixed-race children not being able to experience an 'unalloyed love' for Australia because of how they would be identified ethnically and racially as children of a Hong Kong mother (Watts 2019). Watts' concerns are shared amongst many Asian immigrant families as Australia continues to welcome and encourage immigration. Younger members of these families in particular feel a sense of both belonging to Australia and connection to a foreign homeland. The way in which society views them, and how individuals view themselves, impacts the perception of one's dual and complex identity. As we can see in Watts' concerns, even when Asian Australians are 'of Australia' (by being raised and/or born here), being also 'of Asia' (through heritage) can be a social barrier to acceptance within Western society. Such individuals experience the internal struggle of trying to find balance between their multiple identities that appear to have 'absolute' parameters that make them incompatible with each other. That is to say, the idea of a Western identity and Eastern identity are often seen to clash due to the perception of their values, such as individualistic vs collectivistic, being opposed.

This thesis investigates how Hallyu (Korean wave media), as a global phenomenon, can and has altered the perception of Asian Australian identity as being both of the East and the West. It does so by considering how Hallyu media is interacted with by Asian Australians as a cultural product and as a practise of Asian diasporic culture. Thus, Hallyu becomes a facilitator for the process of diaspora for Asian Australians undergoing identity negotiation between their two selves. Interviews were held with a selection of Asian Australian individuals – from a range of Asian ethnic backgrounds and from both Brisbane and Adelaide – who engage with Hallyu. Their purpose was to gain an understanding of what ways participants use Hallyu and how their perceptions of their own bi-cultural identity have changed since gaining interest in Korean media. This thesis provides new

insights into how an under-researched group – Asian Australians – have begun to view the cultural gap between the East and the West both within themselves and in Australian Society as Hallyu has and continues to gain popularity in mainstream media. It further shows that Hallyu acts as a heuristic device which Asian Australian individuals use to renegotiate the tension between being Asian and Australian; to create a new multifaceted understanding of what Asianness means to them; and re-evaluation being Asian as compatible in the West.

Asian Australians use media to balance the daily experience of Australian society with their transnational connection to homelands. We see this reflected in studies such as Marie Gillespie's work in London or Kyeong Yoon's in Canada. In both examples, diasporic Asians experience culture and keep up to date with homeland affairs through media. This is often done within 'safe' spaces such as within the home with family, or with other members of their ethnic communities. These community members can share similar cultural backgrounds and hence understand the significance of the content being shared. Often times this would be because they, too, are using media and technology to remain connected to the homeland (Cunningham and Sinclair 2001, 2-3).

However, it is not to say that this was the only manner in which Asian media came into the West, or that Western countries such as Australia had been uninterested in Asian media entirely. Whether it is Hong Kong films, Japanese anime, or its most recent iteration, Korean popular media, the West has seen several 'waves' of Eastern media become popular. In discussions of today's mediascape, South Korean entertainment has become increasingly commonplace in the West. Hallyu (or The Korean Wave, Korean: 한류, Hanja: 韓流) refers to the cultural phenomenon of South Korean media being circulated globally. Media such as K-dramas, K-pop,

meokbang/mukbang [먹방] (eating broadcasts)¹, Korean beauty and fashion, and other Korean pop culture trends have become more and more common within the West.

Hallyu has begun to challenge the West-centric mediascape by providing a platform for Asian media, music, and identities to gain global recognition and a strong fanbase. With its place becoming more cemented in mainstream media, Hallyu has become a valuable source of transnational media for young people (Jin et al. 2021). In doing so, diasporic Asians are provided an opportunity to see a shift in the perception of ‘Asianness’ in the West as something which is not only acceptable and compatible but celebrated. In this thesis, I show how Hallyu can be an important facilitator to both: a change in the perception of Asianness in Australian society; and the process of diaspora for Asian Australians who are investigating their connections to Asian cultures to negotiate their dual identities.

Contextualising Hallyu: A Brief History of South Korea and its media

Until 1942, Korean film production experienced strict legal censorship due to the Japanese occupation (Yu 2011; Gateward 2003). Whilst the country was liberated after World War II, Japanese control was closely followed by the Korean War, and it was not until the 1980s that many strict policies gave way to allow for artistic freedom in the Korean film industry. Considering this tension between external influences and the desire to preserve Korean culture, it is important to note

¹*Mukbang* is an eating show broadcast online in which a host consumes a variety of foods whilst interacting with an audience. It originated in South Korea where hosts would also cook their food before eating it. Now, hosts may also buy a series of foods to try for entertainment.

that film and media production in South Korea formed from a harsh environment of war and political instability.

Whilst South Korean culture is largely one based in traditional Eastern values of collectivism through its historical ties within its geographical region, Korea has had notably Western and American influence since the Korean War (1950-1953). Frances Gateward highlighted in his own investigation into the South Korean identity that Korea's postwar culture had been 'assaulted by Western approaches to science and technology, Western customs, [with] institutions modelled on Western structures...', he further iterates that as American culture has become a dominant exporter of media in the global mediascape, Korea has consumed Western popular culture and ideologies (Gateward, 2003, 118). Despite this, Korean culture – and further, its media – appears to assimilate some Western structures while maintaining its own unique culture that continues to place significance on not only its own history, but in preserving Eastern values as an Asian country and society.

Since the earliest iterations of Korean screen media in 1950s and 1960s there has been a tendency towards melodrama. Gateward describes many Korean productions as focusing on post-war separation of lovers and families after liberation (2003; Kim and Kim 2011). These concepts continued to grow into the genre of K-dramas that Hallyu markets today. Youna Kim in her book, *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global* (2013), describes modern K-dramas as continuing to be 'emotionally powerful and self-reflective' and artful in the way in which it intends to 'touch the sensibilities of disparate audiences' (2013, 7) even in stories no longer involving war (though to note, there are still many K-dramas around war, separation, or the North Korean border tensions). Many studies around K-dramas and K-drama fans conclude that these productions, whilst covering a variety of subjects, genres, and themes, continued to portray the significance of family and Eastern values in Korean culture (see Kim and Kim 2011; Kim 2014; Shin 2005).

Whilst the Korean film industry was growing, a separate media industry was also finding its place in Korea – music. Perhaps the most memorable moment of this in the West was Psy’s 2012 *Gangnam Style* which became a viral international sensation under the guise of K-pop. However, K-pop began with roots in J-pop. Jayson Makoto Chun explains that ‘the terms “K-pop” and “J-pop” indicate transnational genres with national labels’ (Chun 2023, 1). J-pop’s popularity largely came from the international consumption of anime but struggled to move further into the global mediascape outside of Asia – though it was extremely successful in the Asian market (Ng 2003). However, it contributed majorly to the structured models of the K-pop training industry that is still present today (Chun 2023). Unlike with K-drama, K-pop’s marketing has largely come to incorporate international interest, from the creation of Japanese and Chinese ‘versions’ of popular Korean songs, to the inclusion of international K-pop performers to entice fans of those nationalities to support their fellow countrymen (and women).

K-pop scholarship reflects a strong desire to examine how cultural differences are being translated and explored by fans who may be culturally and linguistically different (see Jin et al. 2021; Yoon 2022). Artists such as BTS and Blackpink have not only provided a new visual image of Asian people to global platforms by being ‘cool’, but also provide ‘discourses about the frequent genre/style mixes that are observed in recent Korean media’ (Yoon 2022, 9). K-pop provides examples of potential for dynamic cultural hybridity between Eastern and Western ideas and values, while also offering a counter to dominant hegemonic Western-centric mediascape.

The way in which Hallyu is used by the interviewees in this thesis shows its position as a practice of culture to enable understanding of how to negotiate complex identities. Parc and Kawashima state that when negotiating culture,

The creation of culture is important, but the sharing of it may be even more critical since this function calls on culture to exert its power. The process of culture moving from creation to

acceptance involves other participants who consume it and develop their own derivative forms. (Parc and Kawashima 2018, 25)

Hallyu scholarship has solidified the idea that its first wave, K-dramas, was a powerful force in re-solidifying Eastern values as something that drew in Asian audiences (see Kim and Kim 2011). This thesis looks to build on these concepts by highlighting how it can draw in diasporic Asian audiences by being a source of media that reconnects them to Asia as a homeland that they desire but feel separated from. In the addition of the second wave, Hallyu becomes a global phenomenon that offers opportunity for cultural hybridity and a new understanding of how the West and the East, though previously understood as contrasting, can coincide. Hallyu as an Asian media exists in parallel to Western content, rather than as a novelty which conforms to Western criteria.

At the time of this thesis, the cultural ‘waves’ of Hallyu have continued to grow for over two decades and there is scholarly debate about the exact timelines and inclusions of each wave. The division of waves is based on both content and timeline. Often each wave is considered in relation to a popular media rising in popularity, e.g. 1.0: K-dramas, followed by 2.0 K-pop. There is often large crossover between the waves. Therefore, rather than seeing each wave as the rise and fall of a certain media form, it is more accurate to see each wave as building upon each other to add to the overall ‘wave’ of Hallyu as a whole. Alternatively, waves are also at times considered in temporal groups, for example Minsung Kim outlines the waves in decade groupings, with Hallyu 1.0 in the mid-1990s to mid-2000s; Hallyu 2.0 as mid-2000s to mid/early 2010’s, and Hallyu 3.0 as early 2010s to present time (2022). This alternative way of breaking down the waves has less to do with content and more to do with political policies in exporting media and ultimately building South Korea’s soft power.

Whilst both are valid ways of interpreting the Hallyu waves, this thesis relies on the qualitative data of cultural understanding and thus uses the waves as a method of referencing the

target media of that wave. For example, when Hallyu 1.0 is spoken of, it is in reference to the media of K-dramas and K-movies as the target media first in the timeline of Hallyu. In focusing on Hallyu 1.0 and 2.0, it is still important to acknowledge the two latter waves which have begun to gain popularity globally. Hallyu begins to delve into more abstract content with 3.0 (K-Culture) and 4.0 (K-Style). These forms, whilst still valuable points of research, can often be tied back to the earlier waves of generated media. Whilst these are both mentioned throughout the thesis and are considered as part of both the interview guiding questions, interviewing process, and analysis, it was decided that the first two waves of traditional media (screen and music) would be the primary focus of this thesis. In understanding culture, cultural identity, and cultural practices, the latter two waves would inevitably show themselves through the investigation of the first two (see Bok-rae 2015; Kim & Kim 2011; Boman, 2020). For example, online networks (the prominent media platform of Hallyu 3.0) are now a common method of access to and communication surrounding Hallyu. Often discussion and sharing of Hallyu 1.0 and 2.0 occur on online platforms from both the West (e.g. Twitter/X, Instagram) and the East (Weibo). Furthermore, Hallyu 4.0 focuses on K-culture and lifestyle, which are displayed within both K-dramas and K-pop. Fundamentally, this thesis will consider how traditional media products of Hallyu screen and music are instigators and facilitators for negotiation with the understanding that often these call into play the elements of culture and technology associated with 3.0 and 4.0 waves.

Taking this into consideration, the next section examines an under-researched group – Asian Australian diaspora – and how they use Hallyu cultural products as a practice of culture both individually and as a practise for and by a collective. It seeks to fill gaps not only in giving Australian perceptions and scholarship a platform amongst increasing global scholarship that often neglects Australia, but also to seek understandings of how Asian Australian identity is being affected by the rise of Hallyu’s popularity, and what this could mean for a broader perception of Asians in Australian society.

Contextualising Asian Australian Diaspora

Watts' concerns around the concept of an 'unalloyed love' between the nation and his children shows one of the ways in which being Australian is understood. The notions of nationalism through loyalty to Australia and commitment to Australian lifestyles of freedom and mateship are presented often through what is expected of the people who reside within the country. Certain ideals are aspired towards whilst being simultaneously used to enforce a role of conformity upon minorities who otherwise risk exclusion (which can still occur regardless of attempts to conform). And so diasporic communities often find themselves defending their place within Australia despite claims of cultural acceptance and encouragement, and the country's desire for cosmopolitanism amongst its cities. Nina Glick-Schiller suggests that modern cosmopolitan cities are 'diverse collections of mini enclaves' (2014, 1) created from many migrations and saturation of cultures which aims to create spaces of the homeland traditions and practices whilst still accommodating to an overarching yearning for the host country lifestyle. Consequentially, individuals negotiating how they find and understand their own sense of belonging are also negotiating complex identities based on multiple contributions such as national, ethnic, racial, and multi-cultural influences. This is particularly true in 1.5 and 2nd generation immigrants, who are the main focus in this investigation. For clarity, immigrants born overseas settling into the host country from here on shall be labelled as 1st generation; with their children born overseas (but migrated as a young enough age that nationalism and cultural connections to a place have not been strongly formed) being 1.5; 1st generation's children born in the host country being 2nd generation; 1.5/2nd generation's children being 3rd and so on. These distinctions are acknowledged to highlight that the practices of home building and cultural connection is different for generations depending on how long they and their ancestors have known Australia as 'home'.

In the context of this research, whilst home can be imagined anywhere, this thesis looks to consider when home is built by communities in Australia, with the claim of being Australian

coming from experiences of being raised (and often born) as a part of Australian society and culture. Therefore, this claim to ‘Australianness’ should be seen as equal in validity as their claim to an ethnic heritage from a hereditary homeland. This claim is important because it is extending to a claim of national and cultural identity tied to being Australian, whilst also attempting to understand one’s claim to ethnic heritage, and the proceeding tension between the two. Both identities within the individual will seek out cultural practices and cultural products to appease the desire for belonging to both here and there – whilst simultaneously not belonging to either. As Kalra et al. states, ‘home is not a stable category’, and thus it can change, shift, and be rebuilt (2005, 18).

Asian Australians, as many minorities do, feel their sense of ‘two-ness’ as W.E.B. Du Bois describes (1903). His theory of the ‘Double Consciousness’, and Paul Gilroy’s later theories of dual-identity (1993) emphasises the idea that ‘hyphenated’ or bi-cultural individuals see themselves through the eyes of the society that racialises them. In this context, this is Australian society – a Western society. Through social engagement and popular media, Asian Australians gage how they, as Asian individuals, are viewed in Australian society. Importantly from this, we must acknowledge that media plays a crucial role in this process of individuals engaging with and understanding cultures to negotiate their two-ness. However, rarely does Hallyu scholarship consider how Hallyu as this crucial media and as a global phenomenon can alter the social perception of Asian media and Asian individuals.

This project began with the aim of understanding how Asian Australians engage with Hallyu because I had felt my own engagement with it was significant. As a second-generation daughter to immigrant parents, I intended to explore how growing up within the parameters of Western society and simultaneously being influenced and taught by Eastern culture would allow negotiation of a dual identity. This thesis shows that identity is fluid and can change with cultural context, time, and different media. By speaking to each of the interviewees, it is evident that negotiation can be a shared experience amongst Asian Australians and yet remain a largely personal and unique

procedure undergone differently by each individual. By highlighting the experiences of these interviewees, diaspora as a process is revealed through the way in which Hallyu is a heuristic device that is used to facilitate understanding and negotiation of Asian Australian identities.

Language Romanisation and Organisation of Thesis

Before continuing, it is important to make note of language and romanisation. Much of this thesis engages with sources typically associated with the field of Asian studies. Obviously, these areas of research engage with several Asian personalities from various cultural backgrounds. Customarily, East Asian names are ordered with the family name placed first in contrast to the western convention of it being a last name. Before proceeding I would like to clarify that I have chosen to write full names according to how a person and/or surrounding media has predominantly presented their name. Therefore, whilst for some authors, entertainers, and other relevant personalities the family name will come first or a hyphen may be used for disyllabic names, it is not to say this will apply for all Asian names or names which appear to have Asian elements. The reason for this is to consider each individual's culture and preference to the best of my ability, rather than attempt to conform to an English standard.

In relation, the use of Romanisation must also be discussed. Romanisation is the conversion of a languages' writing system to Roman Latin script and is commonly used for Asian languages due to the difference in characters or logo-graphic alphabets in comparison to Latin-derived alphabets (re: English). This thesis integrates not only some of the Korean language but also some Chinese and Japanese. Most Asian languages lack a universally accepted Romanisation method and therefore, in an academic setting I am presented with multiple options when attempting to write them in a Romanised form. To simplify the process, I have elected to follow the most common standardised Romanisation of each language as closely as possible. Chinese will follow *hanyu*

pinyin, Korean: the ‘Revised Romanization of Korean’, and Japanese: the ‘Hepburn Romanization’. However, these systems are not perfect and have internal debates due to certain linguistic incompatibilities. I have made personal judgements in these instances to the best of my ability. Additionally, I have put these Romanised words into italics to indicate their transliteration and transcription (this is in addition to the convention of italicising media text titles, not in place of).

Finally, this thesis is organised thusly: the first chapter explores and reviews existing scholarship by looking at literature around diaspora, home and homeland, the Double Consciousness, diasporic media, cultural hybridity, Cool Japan, and two individual waves of Hallyu: 1.0 and 2.0. The second chapter covers my methodology and the interview approach. The next two chapters are analysis of the data focusing on the contexts of belonging to Australia’s Asian Diaspora and Asian ethnicity as a role to be practised (Chapter 3), before moving on to how Hallyu 1.0 and then 2.0 were used by interviewees to facilitate their changing perceptions around how they negotiate Asian media in their lives and engage with their own Asian heritages. Further, it places Hallyu not only as a global phenomenon modifying Asian Australian individuals’ understandings of how they see themselves, as well as society’s perception of ‘Asianness’ (Chapter 4). A range of different elements of Hallyu are explored from both waves to create a fuller picture of how Hallyu is affecting Asian Australian identity by bridging the gap between the ideologies of the East and the West. The final chapter concludes by focusing on many dimensions of identity building for those with dual-identities and a summary how of Hallyu media has played a significant role and what this could mean for Asian Australian individuals, the global mediascape, and future research.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Diaspora and Home

Whilst diaspora originally described transnational movement and longing for a homeland, it has since moved away from ideas of remnant populations and toward a wide spread of individuals and communities defined through their connections to immigration and homelands (Clifford 1994; Glick Schiller 2014; Cohen 1997). Diasporic individuals reflect the ways in which culture is created within and by diasporas - how culture is maintained and performed. Diaspora requires looking at culture outside of ethnic absolutism, by layering and negotiating a hybrid version of culture. Diaspora, therefore, has evolved to incorporate concepts of globalisation, multiculturalism, and an increasingly common practise of emigration.

Some research suggests associating certain diasporic people as part of a 'post-diasporic' group due to the negotiation undergone to form a cultural hybridity. Choi Hee Young uses post-diaspora to 'propose a "new diaspora" to connote an in-between position of not fitting neatly into the general characteristics of the term diaspora but feeling strongly connected to certain practises and discourses of ancestry' (2012, 3). However, post-diaspora suggests a diaspora in the past and is therefore not suitable when investigating notions of attempting to hold onto and negotiate ties to diaspora. In saying this, the sentiment of not fitting perfectly into the definitions of diaspora suggests there is need for flexibility and better inclusivity to appreciate the expansion of diaspora as a concept. Floya Anthias notes the desire for more consideration around transnational individuals (1998). It is important to understand that experiences of diaspora can be foundational in an individual's understanding of belonging to their society, their social circles, and the ethnic communities with which they are associated.

The identities formulated within diasporas are complex and intertwined with understandings of, and connections to, multiple cultures. James Clifford conveys diasporic identity as entangled with ‘partially overlapping networks of communication, travel, trade, and kinship [which] connect the several communities of a transnational “people”,’ (1994, 321-322). Particularly when navigating between tensions of the state and existing as one of the state’s people, diasporic individuals learn to ‘mediate, in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place’ (1994, 311). This is a common thread of diaspora scholarship in that diaspora communities are about ‘here’ and ‘there’. However, contemporary use of the term encompasses not only the geographical and physical placement and resettlement of diasporas but the intricate tying, layering, and negotiating of culture, identity, and experience. Marie Gillespie describes diaspora not simply as a descriptive concept about people who have settled away from ancestral homelands, but rather as a heuristic device which can be used to explore social experiences regarding identity (1995). In this way, we are considering not simply identity but diasporic identity, which relates to the complex ideas behind understanding one’s own ethnic, racial, and national identities in relation to each other and to multiple cultures. This concept has become more popular within diasporic research as diasporas continue to become more common on a global scale (Gilroy, 1993; Fortier, 2000; Anthias, 1998; Smets, 2018). Diaspora, then, can also be considered a process undergone by diasporic individuals who perform and experience cultural displacement and dialogue throughout their lives.

To understand how individuals negotiate their diasporic identity, it is important to consider the cultural attachments of ethnic communities. These attachments are essential in the way diasporic individuals of different generations relate back to the homeland while being surrounded by a host society’s culture. Different generations experience diaspora differently depending on whether one has personally experienced migration or not. The distinction between first and later generations is particularly important due to the nature of cultural connection and the way in which it is formed to

both the host country and the ancestral country of origin, the 'homeland'. This is the important distinction to make when discussing a diasporic individual remembering a homeland they have experienced leaving, and a diasporic individual desiring a homeland that they perhaps have never experienced as the home country.

Avtar Brah's concept of diaspora incorporates the notion of the 'homing desire' as separate from the desire for the homeland and the home (Brah 1996):

Where is home? On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. (Brah 1996, 192)

Stuart Hall (1990), too, writes about home no longer existing as a solid reality but as something remembered and therefore largely tied up with an imagined community. And though it can be considered on local, national, and transnational geographical terms, it is also, essentially, a space-less place (Brah 1996; Cohen 2008). It is largely related to feelings of belonging to something – whether it is a geographic location or a local community. Whilst it is important for all individuals to create and feel belonging, for diasporic identities this is particularly important as it provides security and comfort where there is uncertainty about their place in the host country. Brah puts into words the description of the 'diasporic space', a concept encompassing the 'entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of staying put' (1996, 181). This space is inhabited by migrants and migrant-descendants and can be represented as an endemic experience intertwined with memory of the homeland.

Home, therefore, can be seen not only in the sense of a physical place but also the collective experience of nostalgia and the building of somewhere to belong. It is true, then, that the connection and conceptualisation of 'home' may develop through experiences, social relations, and a formed –

and nurtured – sense of belonging. Anthias further complicates questions of belonging and home, critiquing some existing scholarship for a “lack of attention given to trans-ethnic solidarities...from the perspective of the development of multiculturalism, and more inclusive notions of belonging” (1998, 577). She notes the possibilities of cultural negotiations and hybridisation through social relations and the dynamic nature of ethnic bonds that no longer fit into older ‘absolutist’ notions of origin (1998).

Re-imagining the Homeland

What, then, of origin and the ‘homeland’? In earlier renditions of diaspora when it referred to the dispersion of people, it was assumed that there was an original place from which they dispersed. Even this original place was re-constructed in the imaginations of the diaspora to re-establish an understanding of the homeland. However, this cannot be claimed in the same way by the second generation of immigrants who are born and raised in the host country. Even to claim the title ‘host’ country lacks accuracy. This raises questions and a need for investigation into desire for the homeland beyond simply experiencing foreignness in a new place. Several key scholars have attempted to map out definitions of what constitutes inclusion in a diasporic community. William Safran defined it through lenses of mass migration which included communities moving to a host country where they were tied together with memory of the homeland and an impression to recreate it in the host country as they would never be accepted by their hosts (Safran 1991). Robin Cohen acknowledges this but disagrees, suggesting Safran’s criteria was too restrictive and needed to acknowledge later generations (Cohen, 1997). He further pushed for five types of diasporas: victim diaspora forced into exile; labour diaspora in search of work opportunities; trade diaspora seeking trading links; imperial diaspora within empire maintenance (also a form of victim diaspora); and de-territorialised diaspora related to chain migration (Cohen 1997, 200).

Cohen examines these through consideration of the 'collective memory'. He maintains that the concept of diaspora was applicable to any individual who may be part of the community regardless of their lack of resettlement so long as they retained an impression of a collective memory of the homeland which connected them to an external place, whether it be through action and belief, and/or through feelings of non-acceptance or difference (at least in part) from other individuals in their daily society (2007). With this in mind, the homeland signifies a connection to hereditary roots and the lasting cultural influence of one's familial heritage, connections used to build an individual's experience of culture. Heritage is an important device used for dual-ethnic connection and navigating one's identity between homeland and home cultures. Heritage can be seen as individuals connecting back to the homeland even when they are displaced. Halleu Ghorashi's work, too, supports this concept that diasporic understanding of homeland signifies 'not a place to return to but rather a domain or idea that serves as one of the available discourses within the present negotiation of identity' (2003, 133). This lies at the core of current views of diaspora as being constructed, imagined and experienced (Ghorashi 2003; Cohen 2007; Hall 1990). Individuals find themselves considering and internally balancing a cultural identity – tied to ethnic, racial, and ancestral connections, as well as expectations placed onto them by their host/home society based upon physical appearance, verbal patterns, and observed family traditions – with a national identity built from daily social experiences of a home country and culture.

To tie this into this thesis, individuals who are part of the 1.5 and 2nd generations within Asian diasporas in Australia are the beginnings of a demographic which not only forms its relationship to Australia through social interactions and a nurtured nationalism, but also values the fostered connection to an ancestral 'homeland', usually through cultivated interactions and mediated experiences of the homeland country. The latter is usually guided and at times refined by parents through cultural practices within the household, or other various forms of contact with the homeland (some examples may be interaction with family through a shared nostalgia or visiting the

homeland). However, these individuals may push back against ideas of returning to the homeland by placing an emphasis upon Australia as home. They may have never experienced the homeland in such a way as to imagine it as home, and any ethnic ties they feel to it may differ from the generations who physically left the homeland. Here lies the distinct difference between desiring the homeland and desiring a return to the homeland. 1.5 and 2nd generation immigrants may foster a desire for aspects of homeland culture, but they may not desire a full return to it (Chiang and Liao 2008; Pung 2008; Santos & Umana-Taylor 2015). Acknowledging this difference of desire can be the beginning of seeing how certain generation define their identity, ethnicity, and understanding of where they belong as transnational individuals. In the next section, it is further explored how newer generations' identities becomes more complex as more cultural points of connection form.

Dual-Identity and Asian Diaspora

It is important to acknowledge the complexity of identity as it can be tied to multiple identifiers such as racial, cultural, or ethnic identity. The different layers of identity should be considered with the recognition that diasporic identity is complex and cannot always be reduced to a singular concept. Anne-Marie Fortier describes a person's ethnicity and ethnic identity as 'tying up culture and biology' (2000, 24) and this idea can be expanded further. Ethnic identity can be considered as a point of crossover between several other identifiers such as one's race, heritage, nation, and other social and cultural influences, including gender and age. Such understandings of identity can be seen to encompass and encourage the possibility of a more transnational identity apparent in modern diasporas.

Hall theorises that ethnicity and ethnic identity need to be detached from singular notions of nation, culture, or race (1998, 29). For example, being Australian does not mean a single race, culture, and appearance, though it is not to say there is not an assumed one or that there is not an

overarching shared culture. By making these distinctions, Hall recognises that ethnic identity is in fact separate from nationalism, patriotism, and race. Often, ethnicity is employed in these settings, resulting in problematic consequences such as stereotyping or discrimination. However, such instances should be understood as ‘points of attachment’ (Hall 1994, 29), connections an individual may choose to consider and incorporate in the construction of their identity. This, in large part, is the process of diaspora in which individuals choose from a variety of racial, cultural, and ethnic experiences – both positive and negative – to build their identity.

Gillespie states that ‘identity is not an essence but a positioning’ (1995, 20), suggesting ethnicity is a flexible, changeable placement of oneself among elements of culture, race, and social experience. This allows for identity to be, as Gilroy suggests, a more fluid positioning dependent on context rather than something defined by sound resolution. Gillespie further points out that ‘cultural change, in a sense, is a tautological term. All cultures are lived and therefore are always in flux’ (1995, 4). Gilroy, in turn, has critiqued previous iterations of cultural scholarship wherein:

Culture is perceived along ethnically absolute lines, not as something intrinsically fluid, changing, unstable, and dynamic, but a fixed property of social groups rather than a relational field in which they encounter one another and live out social, historical relationships. When culture is brought into contact with race it is transformed into pseudo-biological property of communal life (1987, 59).

He emphasises here that considering ethnic identity and diaspora in absolutes creates boundaries for understanding its nature as a unique process that involves a community as much as it does the individual (Gilroy 1987; 1993). Identity is not and cannot be formed solely on the ideas of the individual in question. External elements of daily social interactions and the society’s perceptions of ethnic culture affect how one’s ethnic identity is viewed. Gilroy uses Du Bois to expand on these dualities within diasporic individuals who negotiate between them.

The 'Double Consciousness' was a theory first introduced by W.E.B. Du Bois in 1903 in his book, *The Souls of Black Folks*, in which he argued that in a society that racialises certain groups, a racialised group sees themselves through the eyes of the society that they are both a part of and separated from. The context within which he situated this theory was through his own experiences as an African American. He wrote about, 'always looking at one's self through the eyes of others...[o]ne ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings' (1903, 18). Influenced by this almost a century later, Gilroy used this theory to explain the sense of 'dual-ethnic identity' (1993). In his own book, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and the Double Consciousness*, he stipulates that members of the African American diaspora experience being both of and not of the West. This creates an unhappy symbiosis between dual selves that can cause tensions in the process of negotiating cultural, racial, and national elements associated with diasporic modes of thinking that intensify the process of ethnic identity formation (Gilroy 1993; Gillespie 1995). Dual identities form where the individual feels they could be one, the other, or both selves based on the situation and company which they keep. In line with the concept of fluid identity, those of dual ethnic identity can feel the two-ness of themselves as they are faced with conflicting cultural influences; the impressions of themselves through the eyes of society they reside in and the one they connect to through desire for the homeland. And yet whilst they lay claim to both, they are told they do not fit into either often leading to the desire and creation of a 'third space' of hybridity (Bhandari 2020; Bhabha 1994).

Ethnic and race scholarship delves into the plausibility of applying this to any non-White race that comes into the West (Gutierrez and Baquedano-Lopez 1999; Kibria 2000; Howard and Maxwell 2021). In the context of Asian Australians, such duality is reflected in experiences of being too Australian or too Western for Asian homelands, while simultaneously being told they are Asian, Other, and perpetually foreign in the West because of their home practices and – often – visual appearance. This creates tension between desires to belong to two differing cultures. An individual's

identity can fluctuate back and forth between appearing 'more Australian' or 'more Asian' depending on the practices individuals participate in, the people they engage with, and the values they prioritise.

Hall encompassed this tension when he said, 'diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing themselves anew, through transformation and difference' (1990, 235), whilst also being shaped by external factors which enforce transformation. In studies around Asian ethnic identities in the West, this dual identity can be seen reflected in the separation of an 'Asian self' and a 'Western self' (Wang 2008). This can develop through ethnic identity processes wherein individuals over-perform 'Westernness' in an attempt to be seen as part of the West where being seen as 'Asian' is incompatible with assimilation. Nazli Kibria called this the 'white phase' in her research and pointed out that in the technological age of the internet, this was largely performed by consuming Western media but also absorbing the stereotyped representations of Asians (Kibria 2000). However, Asian individuals experiencing this white phase are usually part of the visible minority and are unable to remove themselves from being seen as Asian. Through this, they develop what Claude M Steele called identity contingencies: things one is expected to engage with due to the identity given to you by the society you live within (Steele 2011). In the context of this research, these contingencies tend to rely heavily on stereotypes and ill-informed perceptions of all Asians being similar enough to be encompassed under a single monolithic 'Asian'.

In Australia, what is seen as 'Asianness' is often cultural proximity and actually a proxy of 'East and South-East Asianness'. This lies largely in the fact that both East Asian countries (e.g., Japan, China, Korea) and South-East Asian countries (Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, etc.) often share similar cultural practices and values, and hence, Asian Australians share many cultural experiences. Often Australians therefore assume that these cultures can be seen as the same when in fact there are distinct differences. Asia contains 48 countries and regions divided into five geographic areas: West, Central, South, East, and South-East. It is the latter two (sometimes

including South) that are generally what the West are referring to when speaking of Asians. This is true in Australia. Whilst the etymology of 'Asian' is simple: of Asia, there is an existing misconception over exactly who we are referring to when speaking of Asians which can change depending on the user and context. 'Asian' is often used as an identifier that can either include or exclude certain subgroups in its cultural usage. An example of this is the term 'bamboo ceiling' which began being used around 2005 in the US to bring awareness to the difficulty and exclusion of Asians in political positions. However, scholarship around the term points out its significance in showing the perception of who was an Asian in the West (Lu, Nisbett and Morris 2020). Often when users of the term 'the bamboo ceiling' speak of Asian exclusion, who they are referring to is East and South-East Asian exclusion. There was a selectivity in labelling certain 'Asian' characteristics based on geographical factors and racial features (2020). South, Central and West Asian groups from Asian countries such as India or Saudi Arabia, were seemingly omitted from consideration of 'bamboo ceiling', sometimes based on visual characteristics (2020, 459).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics in their 2005/6 *Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ed.2)* report removed West Asians from their broad groups, choosing to classify them entirely as Middle Eastern, and having the Asian ethnic groups consist of 'South-East Asian', 'North-East Asian', and 'Southern and Central Asian'. It perpetrates a dissection of the Asian continent (ABS 2006). This gives insight into the Australian government's division and categorisation of the region. Whilst this categorisation is a functional system, it does outline that 'Asian' in this context constitutes not simply the continent but a racial profiling of East and South-East Asians as a group separate from the rest of Asia through historical ties, physical and racial similarities, and cultural proximity to each other. It is a form of Orientalism in which Asia is continuously portrayed and referred to in such a way that its people fit into a 'suitable' image for the West. The truth, however, is that Asia is a diverse, intricately intertwined, and therefore complex continent of various cultures that have their own irreducible traditions, languages, appearances,

histories, fashions, and so on. Ethnicity and race are not only malleable in the way that people experience and perform them, but also in the ways they are defined and applied to people and communities based on certain political criteria or agendas.

Immigration has increased and continues to increase as the borders between countries become easier and easier to cross both physically and digitally. Australia, too, has taken pride in its ability to host diverse communities, you need look no further than the first line on the Australian Government's '*About Australia*' page:

Australia is a unique and diverse country in every way – in culture, population, climate, geography, and history...Australian culture is as broad and varied as the country's landscape. Australia is multicultural and multiracial and this is reflected in the country's food, lifestyle and cultural practices and experience. (Australia.gov.au, collected Nov. 2022).

Modern-day Australia is built upon immigration, having tracked consistent waves of international settlement since British colonisation. Asian migration dates back to the days of the Australian gold rush. However, it was not until the dismantlement of 'White Australia' policies in the early-mid 1970s that we began to witness the increase of Asian bodies and culture entering the country. In 1995, Asian people comprised an estimated 6% of the Australian population inclusive of Asian immigrant children born in Australia (West 2015). As of June 2019, the Asian-born percentage was approximately 12%, but no longer including Australian-born descendants (McDongall 2019). According to the *Migration Australia* release for the 2019-20 financial year, the Australian population's Top 10 countries of overseas-born residents included six Asian countries with the highest two being India in 2nd place with 2.8%, and China (excluding SARs and Taiwan) 3rd with 2.5% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, Table 1.2).

The people in this statistic, as well as Asian-descended Australian-born individuals who are noticeably excluded from these percentages, may claim ancestry from any of the 48 countries

belonging to Asia. The expression 'Asian Australian' therefore encompasses not only a large but also fundamentally diverse group of people. However, it works as a uniform 'catch-all term' which shows a prevalent attitude when considering how Australia distinguishes race or ethnicity as significant depending on the visual characteristics of an individual. Whilst both are social constructs, 'race' is aligned with sharing certain physical traits and features sometimes with ties to certain geographical regions. Whereas 'ethnicity' is acquired through interactions with cultures – geographically or ancestrally (Blakemore 2019).

Erik Erikson stated that 'identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observations...by which the individual judges himself in the light of which he perceives to be the way others judge him' (1968, 22). This idea returns again and again in identity scholarship (for example, Charles Cooley's 'looking glass self'). The perceptions of oneself in the Double Consciousness also plays into the role of duality formation, especially if those perceptions are negative. Ethnic individuals are hyper-aware of the stereotypes built around their ethnic identities. As they undergo the process of diaspora, they become aware that performing certain ethnically associated acts will tie them to these ethnic stereotypes and may choose to over-perform opposing acts to counter them (Yook, Yum and Kim 2014; Chiang and Liao 2008; Smets 2018). It is important to then consider the concept of the 'white phase' and the performance of identity contingencies. Fortier states that during this process there are 'circumstances in their [physical] descriptions...that influence their narrative of self- representation' (2000, 25) that can induce the desire to be seen as more White than Asian for ease of assimilation. However, eventually individuals realise that this can never be achievable as the stereotypes they are provided and forced to endure can feel fake or untrue. This can lead to an unstable understanding of oneself, fostering a 'racial impostor syndrome' or feelings that one isn't Asian enough or White enough to fit into either category. Chiang and Liao's study participants made interesting points about Australian culture, saying that 'no matter how long you stay in Australia...you are forever Asian' (2008, 256) and 'since

childhood they [Asian diaspora children] are socialised as Chinese' (256) with identities that bounced between Asian and Australian depending on the situation and company they were with. They go on to state that this caused distress and often when asked what ethnicity they were, 'I said I was Australian, and I never said I was Chinese' (2008, 256) to distance themselves from Asian culture. Regardless of if one was of Chinese descent or not, any acknowledgement of their Asianness and seemingly mundane aspects of life become acts of cultural acknowledgement (2008). We can see a common thread of Asians in Australia seeing being Asian as a crutch or something to overcome to be able to enjoy their Australianness.

Used as both a racial and ethnic identifier, the catch-all term 'Asian Australian' can fail to capture the diversity of Asian identity. Take for example a Caucasian Australian of French heritage. In my experience the common label would be French-Australian before it is European-Australian or Caucasian Australian. It is not to say either is wrong or that one is more accurate than the other, it is simply an observation of social uses of identifiers. 'Asian' as a term holds multiple connotations as a racial, ethnic, and geographical identifier. However, it is also used to confuse cultural similarity with a proxy for cultures with similar values and history. A recognition of 'mutual Asianness' exists in the West which affects the perception of Asian cultures and enables a casting of an 'Asian Self' and a 'Western Self' in individuals who are negotiating identity between the two (Choi 2012; Wang 2008).

Furthermore, Australia has developed a habit of mythmaking when it comes to its treatment of Asian identities. Rather than acknowledge that Australia's tolerance for Asia and Asian Australians stems from the fact that Australia has ongoing political, economic, and security-related stakes in Asia, it has produced a narrative of racial acceptance in line with its much-vaunted and highly dubious claims of perfect multiculturalism. It would be unwise to conflate this rose-tinted picture of Australia's self-professed racial tolerance towards Asia and Asian Australians with genuine acceptance of Asia, Asian cultures, or Asian people. There can be no doubt that Australia

still regards Asian Australians, especially anybody who is visibly of Asian descent, as foreign and culturally ‘other’, regardless of that individual’s actual national, cultural, or ethnic attachments (Chan 2021; Chiang and Liao 2008; Keith 2015).

As generations progress, the bridge between themselves and both the homeland and its corresponding diasporic groups grows larger, often due to the day-to-day engagement with the host country’s culture. In this sense, this is a matter of culture and practise. While the generations can progress further from homeland culture, they can also maintain connections through conscious effort (Gillespie 1995). New generations born in Australia find themselves trying to balance integrating socially into Australian society, whilst trying to give attention to customs and traditions of the homeland. Somewhere within this negotiation, diasporic individuals are asked to define which are they, Australian or Ethnic? As Stuart Hall wrote:

The diaspora experience as I intent it here, is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of...diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. (1990, 235)

Asian Australians, as with many ethnically diverse immigrant descendants, are still heavily influenced by this ‘diaspora experience.’ In a modern age of technology such as the one we live in; it is important to understand that part of this diaspora experience is the engagement with diasporic media.

Diasporic Media as a Platform for Cultural Hybridity

For diasporic groups, interaction with diasporic media is vital in negotiating identity. Ola Ogunyemi suggests that diasporic media act as a ‘platform for self-expression, the representation of cultural artefacts and the contestation of negative stereotypes by migrant people’ (2015, 1). Further,

for diasporic communities, these media are used to evaluate their own orientations, connections, and understandings of homeland/ancestral cultures (Ogunyemi 2015; Georgiou 2006). Gillespie reflects this in her work around Punjabi communities in London when she emphasises the use of diasporic media within the household, not only in contexts of what content is being brought in – be it news, commercial entertainment, visual, or audio – but also how these media texts are being received, consumed, and used (1995, 13). Audiences have various degrees of engagement in influencing the media they consume, actively seeking media which can fulfil specific needs or desires (Levy and Windahl 1985). Therefore, having more diasporic media imported supplies diasporic audiences with a larger range of content to satisfy their desire for cultural connection to the homeland – especially if mainstream media is not satisfying the longing for the homeland.

The internet and globalisation have accelerated the inter-connectability of transnational media and the use of it to negotiate cultures (Gillespie 1995; Bozdog et al. 2012). Globalisation can be misunderstood as homogenisation of Western culture due largely in part to the seemingly overpowering influence and cultural levelling of the United States to the rest of the world (Wang 2007). However, several authors paint a more complex picture of globalisation. Wang explores globalisation as a power which enhances the influence and flexibility of cultural identity because ‘people are not mere objects of cultural influences, but subjects who can reject or integrate culture’ (2007, 83). Identity in a globalised world can be transformed and then performed as the subject desires. Wang argues that the more an individual is exposed to cultural influences across the globe, the more they have at their disposal to engage with their own ethnicity and culture. As he states, ‘[i]n the new era of globalisation, people become much more concerned about the uniqueness and particularity of their own culture’ (2007, 85). Presently, more Asian ethnic media is entering the Western mainstream media than in the past. Hence, there is more authentic, genuine representation of Asians than before to compete with previously existing stereotypes and prejudices (Keith 2015; Jin and Yoon 2014).

Often in the age of so much available information and cultural connection gained through technology, it is a necessary process undergone to gain knowledge of one's own connection to culture. Kraidy states that:

A focus specifically on the role of hybridity in the process of media transnationalisation is crucial in examining the implications of transnational media in constituting complex cultural identities. (2005, 366)

Cultural hybridity as a concept is centred around mixing and negotiating multiple cultures. In talking of individuals between East and West, it is an important concept to consider in the process of diaspora as it becomes increasingly popular amongst younger Asian Australian generations (Kraidy 2005; Kendall et al. 2009; Wang 2008).

Cultures are interconnected not only by nation interaction and transnational travel but also by worldwide flow of media across international borders. In Australia, the majority of imported transnational media is from the United States and the United Kingdom due to the powerful cultural influence exerted by these countries and the historical connections with the latter. It is not to say in the past Australia and the rest of the western world have shown no interest in Asian ethnic media prior to the popularisation of the internet and the rise of Hallyu (Korean Wave) popularity. Rather, prior to Hallyu, Asian cultural waves had never been able to reach full potential as a viable source of entertainment in mainstream global media the way that American entertainment has due not only to cultural and linguistic barriers, but also to the approaches used to attempt to blend the values of East and West to appeal across borders. For the most part, the Australian mainstream remains Anglo-Western and maintains a lingering reactionary attitude towards divergences from what the West views as the standard. However, as cultures change and the media becomes less focused on a Western ideal, there appears to be a change towards increasingly progressive perspectives on a 'bi-cultural identity', as SBS calls it in their study into the cultural competence of Australia in 2016.

Being able to understand bi-cultural identities as ‘an asset to be treasured and proud of in Australian society’ (Evason 2016) can be seen as a by-product of immigration and the influence of important media not so heavily reliant on the US. Audiences who experience cultural hybridity in their lives often value and desire similar diversity reflected in the media they consume. Access to diasporic media can allow for more interactions between cultures which builds towards cultural hybridity for audiences (Kim 2017; Kraidy 2005).

As the Asian population in Australia has increased, from as early as the 1980s, so has demand for Asian media. Similar to most diasporic media, the primary importers of Asian media are Asian and Asian Australian people – especially in earlier years of its importation prior to its popularisation in mainstream Western media. Diasporic media covers a broad market of content from regional journalism and news broadcasting to commercial entertainment. For the moment, to narrow the scope of research, the focus will be on the latter with interest in Asian popular music and screen (television and film) mediums. With this in mind, even in instances where there was growing interest in Asian entertainment media in the West, the access to it remained limited and was rarely shared on a national level in the same capacity in which ‘regulars’ partook in its consumption and especially not to the level in which foreign Western media (European, American, Canadian, etc.) content was enjoyed. In the last two decades, the introduction and popularisation of the internet has accelerated media intake on an unprecedented scale. Transnational media found certain barriers broken down with a realisation of the potential for global cultural exchange and cultural hybridity (Giuffre and Keith 2014; Kraidy 2005).

Outside of Australia, Asia has a strong transnational flow within the continent for sharing and exchanging popular media. In the 1980s and 1990s, Asia found itself with a strong yearning for more representation of Asian culture as it struggled to navigate the international mediascape against the Western media which dominated and mediated a majority of the international entertainment space (Kim and Kim 2011, 58). Often, this new Asian independence came from China, Japan, or

Taiwan as they were the powerhouses of film and music production (Kim and Kim 2011; Lee and Ju 2010). However, throughout the 1990s, the growing popularity of Japanese media signalled the beginning of an Asian media boom that would lead to Hallyu.

Cool Japan [クール ジャパン] and the reception of *Mukokuseki* [むこくせき]

To understand Hallyu's success it is also necessary to understand the history of previous Asian cultural waves. In particular, the successes and downfalls of the Japanese Wave, sometimes known as Ku-ru J(y)a-pan [クール ジャパン] or Cool Japan, as an Asian wave which penetrated the predominantly American or at least Anglophonic space of transnational media prior to Hallyu. Cool Japan scholarship provides valuable insight into not only how Hallyu came to gain the platform it has, but also in understanding the popular diasporic media which Asian Australians were consuming outside of Hallyu to give context to their identity formation processes. After World War II, Japan felt the tensions between itself and countries in both East and West. In the 1970s, it began to implement a political agenda to reinvent itself after observing the success of Disney-like cartoons. Japan gained cultural influence in Asia as 'cool' and 'cute', but technologically advanced (Napier 2007; Levi 2006; Iwabuchi 2002; Bryce et al. 2010). The effects of the Cool Japan wave could be seen on Australian shores during the late 1990s and early 2000s. A 2004 online article, *Found in Translation: Cool Japan*, was published in *The Age* exploring how Cool Japan had 'Australian popular culture in its grip...but it's discreet'. The unnamed author went on to say that whilst it was 'on the streets, on television, in bookstores, toy stores, electronic shops, fashion boutiques, and at the movies' it lacked large scale fanfare (The Age, 2004). Cool Japan popular media took the form of manga, anime, and video games which collected a niche following in the West. People who knew about it would find it in abundance but only in specific shops. The general

Australian public was rarely openly exposed as its main consumers were Asian international students, immigrants and their children (Baudinette 2020).

Scholarship talks about an important aspect of Cool Japan media called *mukokuseki* [むく
せき / 無国籍] and how *mukokuseki* can affect Western perceptions. Koichi Iwabuchi translates *mukokuseki* to elements of content being made to be ‘culturally odourless’ (2002, 33), often occurring when Japanese creators remove noticeable ‘Japaneseness’ from their popular content to make it more appealing to a transnational market, particularly to an American-orientated gaze. Some discourse around *mukokuseki* argues that anime and by relation, manga, derived its global success due to the mixed universal themes such as romance or a ‘chosen one’ hero, in combination with indistinct culture settings (Bryce et. al 2010; Iwabuchi 2002). *Mukokuseki* was used as an attempt at cultural negotiation or hybridisation to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western media by increasing its transnational appeal in the West (Iwabuchi 2002; 2004; Lee 2018; Adamowicz 2014). Anime such as *Pokémon* and *Sailor Moon*, two of Cool Japan’s biggest global successes, are prime examples of this cultural anonymity attempting to negotiate the Western audiences’ desire for more of the familiar disguised as fulfilling a fascination with an ‘otherness’ portrayed within animation media. Both had characters who were designed to look noticeably less Japanese in not only in their physical features (blonde hair, larger round eyes that were blue or green) but also in the way they dressed and in the portrayal of their Asian origins, which were moderated to feel closer to a Western experience (Dorman 2016; Iwabuchi 2002; 2004).

An important note should be made that due to anime and manga’s graphic form, *mukokuseki* would be easier for the producers of anime. Though other elements are equally as important to the *mukokuseki* (for example: scripts, subbing/dubbing, settings, props), the visual aspects have the flexibility to have little to no cultural ‘Asianness’. When presenting visual characters as culturally ambiguous, having the ability to draw and/or animate desired features makes the task simpler than

in the instances of a live action production where an actor would have difficulty removing their own physical attributes – and some methods to do so may be received negatively. However, we can see the themes of removal of Asianness continue in other media content, for example, in the use of Anglo-actors for Asian roles in films, also known as ‘yellow-face’. Yellow face ultimately was used to mock foreignness and appeal to white audiences.

Nonetheless, while Japanese features and culture were removed, anime often retained enough elements of Asianness to prompt interest in what was perceived as cultural unfamiliarity (Lee 2018). This allowed Western audiences to feel they were consuming an acceptable level of foreign culture (Lee 2018). One argument is that *mukokuseki* can simply be seen as a form of translation done not by the audience who requires it, but by the producers in an attempt to make it more hospitable for Western viewers (Lee 2018; Bryce et al. 2010). However, the issue here is that the relevance is not in the creator’s intent but rather with the perception by its audience which was varied and largely contextual to culture and experience around anime.

In the West, individuals who were a part of the strong cult following of anime (and some of their respective manga) who otherwise had little interaction with Japanese culture, perceived this media as a globalised cultural phenomenon where they were engaging not with a translation but an expression of realistic ‘Japaneseness’ (Van Staden 2011, 180). However, many anime fans became interested in elements of what they believed to be genuine representations of Japanese culture that were actually examples of *mukokuseki*. This is because those elements of Asian culture which were maintained to intrigue audiences were often still toned down or mutated to be acceptably foreign. Rayna Denison calls these remaining elements ‘mutated commodities’ (2010, 233). They are distorted in such a way that just enough ‘otherness’ remained to be recognisable without being something entirely unappealing to the intended international viewers. Shirahata Yōzaburō stated that ‘internationally consumed [Japanese] cultural products were not assertive in being about “authentic Japaneseness” but rather in their [Western] consumers’ tastes being their value’

(Shirahata 1996, 240). Alternatively, in Japan there was a national pride present in the concept of having media originating from Japan gaining attention in the Western – particularly the US – market. It provoked an interest in Japan and its culture, boosting tourism and international revenue (Iwabuchi 2002; Bryce et al. 2010).

This cultural odourless-ness may have had an effect on the international popularity of anime in countries such as the US, UK, and Australia. Scholarship has shown that other Asian countries were without conviction of the usefulness of *mukokuseki* as a tool for Asian acceptance, as it acted not for the benefit of Asians so much as it did for Japanese people (Russell 2017). Japanese commodities were still consumed in high quantities in Asia but there were feelings of displeasure when Asian ethnic features were maintained and at times grotesquely exaggerated for Korean or Chinese anime characters but not for Japanese ones. Some examples of popular Japanese anime which depict this include *Psycho-Pass (2012)*, who's villain is Korean with slanted, fox-like eyes often used with shadows to show deceit and his evilness; or *Maken Ki! Battling Venus [まけん き] (2011)* which had a foreign exchange student from China, Yan Min, who is the only character with, again, slanted-eyes despite being set in a Japanese high school. This character continuously wears *qipao* [旗袍] (traditional Chinese clothing) underneath her other clothing. Whilst economically the post World War II coldness between Japan and Asia had thawed and interest in Japanese cultural products was high, culturally there was tension in the ways anime and manga presented characters to make them either likeable or unappealing depending on the type of Asian they were representing.

The issue with the prominence of distorted Asianness in the West is that having mutated commodities of Asian culture assists the formation of misinformed and disrespectful ideas of Asian identity (Bow 2019). Asian cultural media could have provided not only an alternative to these images, but also a chance to teach the West what better Asian representation could have looked like. Both forms of representation have value. However, with media containing *mukokuseki* mutated

commodities no longer tried to fight against racist depiction of Asians but rather added to the distortion. It is no surprise, then, that when the West considered Asian people, they were expected to behave to reflect mutated commodities. This was then forced upon anybody who resembles the assigned racial profile. Whilst not all images are intended to be derogative, often Western representation of Asianness was due to twisted understandings of the East. We can see this not only in anime consumption but large quantities of Asian media portrayal in the West. In various countries, there have been protests around Hollywood's depictions of Asians with negative, racist and potentially harmful imagery. Just to name a few: *Sixteen Candles* (1984), *Year of the Dragon* (1985), *Rising Sun* (1993), *Mean Girls* (2004), *Gossip Girl* (2007-2012). Subsequently, Asian diasporic communities felt continuously disillusioned with the depiction of their ethnicity(s) and the stereotypes propagated in mainstream Western media. One of the most common ones is the 'Japanese school girl' where Asian girls are depicted as meek, submissive but also exotic, covertly sexual and whilst still portraying polite, dutiful mannerisms. Even today, stereotypes continue to depict Asian women as docile objects for fetishisation while Asian men as socially and/or sexually inept or they become the oriental 'Yellow Peril' villain (Iverem 1993; Aoki 1996; Anandavalli 2022; Hsu 2015).

Anime and manga were also attached to other negative terms, with its fans being seen as 'geeky' or 'socially awkward'. These forms of media were often a guilty pleasure, as though the participation and interest in Asian cultural products was at some level shameful (Schroy et al., 2016). Watching diasporic media, such as Anime, can be an opportunity to engage with Asian media and therefore culture that Asian individuals otherwise aren't engaging with outside of the household. However, with social perceptions of being 'geeky' or a novelty of foreignness, the perception of Anime in the West instead perpetuated ideas that Asian cultures were on some level still incompatible with Western society – even when it had a fanbase.

For Asian adolescents in the West, popular media representations – whether Western portrayal, or imported Asian content – are used in the formation of their Double Consciousness. Young Asians form ethnic attachments not only through hereditary connections, but also through lived culture and the society in which they participate day-to-day. When depictions of ‘Asian’ (which are fetishising or mocking in nature) are forced upon them, individuals may resent that positioning and attempt to perform actions that will contradict these perceptions (Kibria 2000). Usually this takes the shape of the over-performance of concepts aligned with being ‘of the West’ and the rejection of customs and ideas within Asian culture, whether by simply not including them as part of cultural practice or reserving them for private moments. Arnett said that “part of identity formation is thinking about the type of person you want to be” (2010, 340) and young diasporic Asians may not want to be seen as foreign within their chosen social groups. We can see this in several studies in which children of Asian descent strive to appear and be associated not with their Western selves. Whilst they are unable to change their physical appearance significantly enough, they do so through their actions and modes of cultural consumption (Kibria 2000; Chiang and Liao 2008; Smets 2018). Unfortunately, the image society places upon an individual are largely inescapable. As part of a visible minority, Asians in Australia are classified as a ‘perpetual foreigner’ in a society that emphasises whiteness as the ‘norm’. Asian Australians cannot be Australian, because they are not White, but they cannot be Asian because the depictions of Asianness they see do not reflect their own understandings of being Asian. We can see here Gilroy’s unhappy symbiosis in effect as the dual identity is formed (1993).

Hallyu [한류]

Seemingly on the tail of Cool Japan came Hallyu 韩流, a word first used by Bei Jing press in the late 1990s by merging *hanguo* 韩国 meaning South Korea in Mandarin Chinese and *liu* 流 meaning flow or trend. The term was coined to translate to ‘the Korean Wave’. Arising as part of economic development after decolonisation and a period of national unrest, Hallyu has manifested as the consumption of Korean popular culture such as food, fashion, entertainment, culture, language study, and tourism. However, it has also become associated transnationally with a reassertion of ‘Asian’ identities both socially and culturally for consumers of Asian descent (Kim and Kim 2011; Jang and Sohn 2006). Hallyu as a phenomenon tends to be investigated through specific waves of content, the largest two being: Hallyu 1.0 (South Korean films and television productions) and Hallyu 2.0 (South Korean popular music). These phases reflect Hallyu first as a re-connection to Asianness and Asian culture, and then as a form of cultural hybridity that reconciles East and West.

South Korea is arguably a culture of hybridity. Whilst its roots remain largely from Asia and China – as many Asian countries do – during the Korean War in the 1950s, Western forces became highly influential to the formation of South Korea’s social culture due to their political and military involvement. During the Second World War, Korea was under Japanese occupation which ended upon Japan’s surrender. However, due to the division of ideologies, Korea separated into North and South. Upon North Korea’s invasion into the South, the Korean War started with the Soviet Union and China backing North Korea and eventually the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) authorising the United States to assist South Korea (UNC.mil, 2021). This Western intervention, in addition to other later forms of migration both of foreigners in South Korea and Korean individuals leaving, created cultural hybridisation in Korea. Whilst still largely associated

with Asianness and Asian heritage, Korea incorporated some Western ideologies of freedom and democracy into its social system. Modern South Korea continues to negotiate its Asian culture – expressed through the Asian media they produce and consume – and the American influence of US media (Cumings 2010).

Hallyu appeared outside of South Korea in Asia as early as the late 1980s when Cool Japan was penetrating the region. However, Hallyu was not seen as a viable international media until the success of several television shows at the end of the 20th century. In fact, in the 1980s outside of South Korea it was consumed mostly by diasporic Koreans and was not seen as popular in the media. This, in some ways, was due to the tight hold the government held over South Korean media until it underwent a liberalisation process (Ganghariya and Kanozia 2020; Hong 2014). Current scholarly research into Hallyu appear to cover a broad spectrum but largely looks to investigate its growing popularity amongst other internationally successful pop culture and to understand its role as a cultural phenomenon in both Eastern and Western contexts (see Kim and Kim 2011; Ryoo 2009; Huat and Iwabuchi 2008; Chua 2012; Kim 2015). Kim Bok-rae points out that some scholarship – whether intentionally or not – presents the East as a cultural phenomenon ‘discovered by the West’ (2015, 155) and thus perpetrates notions that the East – and its media – should be positioned in relation to Western criteria. In this instance Hallyu is seen only as a phenomenon because of its recognition in Western countries. Kim argues against these perceptions and more towards a view of Hallyu as ‘not a subaltern agent of modernity, but a main agent of East Asian popular culture, in parallel with Western-orientated popular culture’ (2015, 155). Hallyu, therefore, holds value not as a novelty within an Anglophonic mediascape, but as a viable alternative to dominant international global media. K-pop and K-drama participate in cultural flows that allow not only local impact but also global acknowledgement of Asian cultures. For Asian Australian people – in particular those of young adulthood – who are between two cultures, this portrayal of Asians in

both waves of Korean media can play a fundamental role in the way in which they desire open belonging to Asian communities.

One theory to assist in understanding this process is symbolic capital and the notion of prestige (Bourdieu 1993). Yook, Yum and Kim argue that it is through symbolic capital that Hallyu gains popularity and viability, not only as a global media but also as being authentically Asian (2014). Being of Asian descent may naturally acquire symbolic capital and empowerment when media represents Asianness in a positive light. This is particularly true when considering the heavily Americanised, pro-Anglophone presence in Australian mainstream media and how it has previously portrayed Asianness (in the rare circumstances that it chose to do so), and popular Asian media. We see this in studies such as Katsumata and Iida's where Asian descended audiences in the West 'who are more frequently exposed to cultural products originating in East Asia...tend to identify themselves more strongly as "Asians" and be more sympathetic to the concept of "Asian citizenship",' (Katsumata and Iida in Katsumata 2011, 136). One popular reason for this amongst Hallyu scholars comes down to the cultural hybridity shown through Hallyu waves.

In the next section, we will look at two Hallyu 1.0 and 2.0 to see how the popular media of each wave is distinct or similar to each other in terms of consumption and appeal; concepts and ideas shared through each; and how literature has engaged with both.

Hallyu 1.0 – K-dramas: Korean Films and Television

Korean dramas, affectionately nicknamed K-dramas by fans, and Korean films begun flourishing in the late 1990s alongside the rising popularity of the internet. Until the 1990s, Korean film was still largely low-scale productions and for Korean local consumers. Darcy Paquet notes

that as Korean film begun to gain popularity in other Asian countries, Korean chaebol² [재벌] financial powerhouses such as *Samsung* begun to show interest in funding the Korean film industry (2005). This allowed production quality to begin to increase, further pushing the desirability and watchability of K-dramas outside of Korea. They found a place amongst other Asian media such as Hong Kong crime dramas, Taiwanese Dramas, China's cinema and television collection, and of course, the Japanese screen industry. Shows such as *Winter Sonata* (2002) and *My Sassy Girl* (2001) were widely watched not only for enjoyment but also as forms of nostalgia for traditionally Asian values and a re-imagining of an Asian identity (Kim and Kim 2011; Yin and Liew 2005; Jang and Sohn 2006). Thus, Hallyu 1.0 (at the time, simply Hallyu) showed its first signs as a viable media for an international market. Unlike Cool Japan which found success in its animation media, Hallyu 1.0 was majority live action and therefore could not disguise the Asianness of its actors, nor did it feel the need to as it circulated amongst its neighbouring countries.

Countries within Asia showed promising acceptance of cultural products that demonstrated historical and culturally similar backgrounds due to their desire to have some independence from Western-mediated entertainment space. In opposition to *mukokuseki*, Korean content was strongly positioned in the Korean culture, not only in language and location, but also the values and portrayal of a traditional Asian lifestyle heavy with Confucian and collectivist influence. K-dramas in particular felt like an awakening of the Asian identity due in part to the 'roughly similar demographic, social, and economic trends' (Kim and Kim, 2011, 45) popular in the shows and the sentiments connecting them to a more cultural 'Asianness' (Lee and Ju 2010). Hallyu 1.0 was subtly foreign outside of Korea whilst still embracing a common sentiment and pride of being part of Asia as a region. Whilst this can be attributed to a form of cultural proximity, Lee and Ju argue that to

² *Chaebol* [재벌] is the Korean word for a selection of families who run the large business conglomerates in South Korea. This group of families have, allegedly, immense influence on South Korea's economy and politics (Albert, 2018).

attribute it only to this factor is an oversimplification. It ignores the ways Hallyu affects the process through which Asians (not just Koreans) in the West are forming attachments to Hallyu content (2010; Yin and Liew 2005). And in large part the original interest in Hallyu 1.0 involved Koreans bringing it across as an ethnic media to remain connected to their Korean roots.

Kim and Kim persist with the notion that ‘Korean modernity’ was successful because it portrayed what at times ‘Japanese modernity’ lacked (2011, 39-41). That is, whilst Cool Japan’s attempt to unite the East with the West in their media came through as accommodation of what appeals to the Western standards, Hallyu presents a form of hybridity through negotiation of the two ideologies to appeal to a wider audience whilst still attempting to maintain a sense of authenticity that is Korean. K-dramas act as a visual engagement with traditional South Korean culture and ‘The East’, as well as introducing modern ideas of transnationality and Western influence in media. Therefore, whilst they can appeal to certain Western concepts and narratives, they still remain abundant in foreignness in the locality of their plots and stories (Madrid-Morales and Bruno 2015, 5). As Ryoo Woongjae argues, Hallyu should be understood as a phenomenon of cultural hybridisation and globalisation (2009). This, in part, can be seen as reflective of South Korean culture itself, which holds strong ties to its place within Asia as well as historical attachments to the West through intervention during and post-Korean war.

Hyejung Ju’s study around K-drama viewership pointed out that K-dramas in the 2000s begun being streamed in the US via ‘dispersed fan-based video-on-demand websites’ such as allkpop.com and DramaCrazy.net, where episodes would be uploaded with English subtitles (Ju 2020, 33). These subtitles would often be translated by the fans themselves, showing not only that the demand for K-dramas was present but also that fans were voluntarily interacting online with Hallyu as part of transnational ‘fandoms’ (a word to colloquially mean a collective of fans) which emerged as the cross-border mobility of media and cultural products increased.

However, as with Cool Japan, the initial and largest group of consumers outside of Asia remained diasporic Asians. Thus, assumptions about why Hallyu became popular came down to cultural proximity (Ju 2019; Mori 2008; Iwabuchi 2008). The appeal of K-drama was therefore explained through narratives of a ‘shared sense of Asian identity and a cultural affinity with identifiable Korean aspects of life and Eastern values’ (Mori 2008; Ju 2019). Whilst, again, cultural proximity may account for this in some way, it does not explain two important questions about the success of K-drama in the West: 1) the appeal of seeing Asian representation for Asians in the West who are in some way detached from their own Asianness, and 2) the popularity of transnational Asian media to non-Asians globally.

Others have attempted to fill this gap. Hyunji Lee investigated the ‘real fantasy’ of Korean dramas and how it acted as an answer to developing pop cosmopolitan identities (2017). Lee argues that K-drama as a genre ‘functions as a tool for fans to gain knowledge, expand their cultural views, and differentiate themselves from their local culture’ (2017, 377). For Non-Asians consuming K-dramas in the West, this is a platform to experience another culture entirely foreign to their own. However, for diasporic Asians – especially younger generations who feel separated from their Asianness and more inclined to rely on their Westernness – K-dramas acted as an ethnic media that allowed them to recognise more Confucian beliefs, traditions, and attitudes that they associate with their family and households. This ties back to Hall’s work which outlines that this is the act of re-building the ‘home’. For these younger members of the Asian diaspora, their understanding of their Asian self is built through connecting their household values to K-drama values. Other fans of Hallyu, therefore, became part of the Asian imagined community that symbolised re-connection to Asia and their own Asian culture. As one participant in Lee’s study states ‘[K-drama] makes me more hyperaware [of her own culture]’ (2017, 375). Lee calls this a development of pop cosmopolitan identities through Hallyu that ‘does not only entail the embrace, appropriation, and

adaptation of the aspects of Korean culture. It also involves the rediscovery, reinterpretation, and critical awareness of fans' local culture and media' (2017, 375).

Some authors argue that dual-identity individuals are becoming progressively more pop cosmopolitan in their seeking out of their own multiple cultures (Kim 2017; Jenkins 2006). In this instance, cultural proximity becomes celebrated because it acknowledges the differences and similarities, rather than being used as an excuse to categorise all Asian culture into a single monolithic society. And yet, within these dramas, the influence from the West is as apparent as it is in day-to-day life in South Korea, providing evidence that 'cultural products shaped by a mixture of familiar and different cultures are most easily spreadable across national borders' (Jenkins et al. 2013, 370). Asian Australians, as with other diasporic Western-Asians, are able to appreciate K-dramas as both a foreign media to analyse one's own personal cultural attachments, as well as an ethnic media to develop connection to the homeland. This gives the individual more control over their reception of cultural products and provides insight into their own awareness of their ethnic identity.

During previous Asian cultural waves, Hollywood's interest was heavily invested in the remaking of non-English content rather than investing in showing original texts with subtitles. Western remakes were seen as a more appealing option (Yu 2011). The 'Hollywood-isation' of Asian films occurs often due to language barriers and different cultural values (Kim and Kim 2011, 65-77). The perception of an inability to reconcile the two cultures deems an adaptation of the content more appropriate in comparison to translation, subtitling, and redistribution. This emerges as a trend of remaking screen productions with values, characteristics, and settings more aligned and recognisable to the West. This trend is common not only for Hallyu but across multiple Asian cultural waves and decades. For example: *Siwora/Il Mare* (South Korea, 2000) being remade into *The Lake House* (United States, 2006); *Shichinin no Samurai/The Seven Samurai* (Japan, 1954) into

The Magnificent Seven (United States, 1960); *Internal Affairs* (Hong Kong, 2002) into *The Departed* (United States, 2006).

The concept of remakes is not new nor is it unique to Hollywood – several neighbouring Asian countries often produced remakes of popular content from each other. However, their remakes were arguably adaptations of popular production, rather than reinterpretations of them. This is evident in the acknowledgement and public awareness of the original. Asian adaptations often relate to the original and will go as far as to refer to and share fandoms within the transnational mediascape. Treated as an addition to the existing film universe, often fans of the original are encouraged to watch the first and continue through the different countries' iterations of the content, for example the popular manga *Boys over Flowers* (1992) from Japan has been remade four times from Japan, Taiwan, China, Korea, with a fifth instalment entering production in 2021 set in Thailand. Though they are essentially the same characters, with the same story, fans of older versions are encouraged to embrace the story through the lens of a different culture. The aim is as much about remaking the story for economic profit as it is about allowing long-time fans to feel they are re-living the joy of the familiar narrative and introducing new fans to the thrill of a beloved story. Though each rendition has its unique elements from each other and certain artistic decisions are made to keep the new version from appearing stale, the remakes are often praised for attempting to keep the essence of the story alive. So why, when it is adapted in the West, do these Western translations do it differently?

One common explanation lies in the translation between collectivistic values of the East that directly competes with the individualistic views perpetuated in the West. Simply put, cultural aspects sometimes translate as disingenuous, almost comic in nature. A prime example of this is the coverage of the news of the popular Hallyu zombie thriller, *Train to Busan* (2016) possibly being given a US remake. With the success of the original transnationally, many fans expressed their disbelief on social media platforms. It was evident not only that there lacked interest in remaking

the story in a more American fashion, but many resorted to mockery and openly rejected the idea of a remake because it was seen as undervaluing the importance of the Asian essence that made it popular originally. Online voices shared their distaste for a remake, stating that remaking this cherished story, which centres around Confucian ideas of family and society above the self, would be ‘spoon-feeding’ American audiences the content, and that it would be a cheapened version of a beloved film (McKay 2021; Lau 2021). This attitude reflects the scholarship surrounding the reception of *mukokuseki* in that it feels disrespectful of Asian culture because it is catering to the Western audience to make Asianness acceptable. The general consensus appeared to be that Hollywood remaking such a popular Korean film was not only laughable to its audience, but a perversion of the original text. Further, this was seen as a cynical attempt to ride the popularity of Hallyu as it continues to gain success through accomplishments such as that of Bong Joon-Ho’s *Parasite* (2019) at the 2020 Oscars and the global obsession with Netflix’s K-drama horror *Squid Game* (2021).

Hallyu 2.0 – K-pop: Music and Idols

Towards the end of the 2000s a second wave of Hallyu began to emerge through a different medium of entertainment – music. Hallyu 2.0 has become synonymous with the parts of Hallyu surrounding K-pop and Korean Idols (the name for Korean mainstream musicians who are usually part of music groups – though solo K-pop Idols are also popular). It is important to note that Hallyu 2.0 did not signify a decline in Hallyu 1.0 but instead fit seamlessly alongside its counterpart and acted as a ‘boost’ rather than a revival. Hallyu now had multiple entry points that often crossed over and encouraged a deeper engagement with Korean media. Individuals would become interested in a boy group, which would lead them to another group, who had a member who was in a popular show, and with this snowballing effect, individuals would become ensnared within Hallyu. Hallyu

2.0 also built upon the formation of larger fandoms through the incorporation of the internet as a method of direct interaction between Idols and fans for more intimate engagement between content and consumer (Kim 2015, 157; Jin 2012; Jin 2013). While Cool Japan was competing to be seen on western television and cinema screens, the internet has provided Hallyu with a globally accessible platform that does not require Western programmers to approve their existence in the Western mediascape. Utilising YouTube, Twitter, WeVerse, vLive, and a variety of other online streaming services, Hallyu has flourished in the age of technology where online content continues to be a valid and overpowering source of content for identity formation and negotiation (Jin, 2021, Bok-rae 2015, Boman, 2020).

Hallyu 2.0's popularity first began showing true promise in the West as part of mainstream media when South Korean artist Psy's global hit *Gangnam Style* made waves in 2012, breaking viewing records on YouTube and becoming a household-known tune. Even after the success of *Gangnam Style*, Hong argued that 'Koreans would never...believe their music will take up significant market share in the United States or western Europe' (2014, 5). This was primarily true until 2016 when the band Bangtan Seonyeondan [탄소년단] 'BTS' began appearing in the US and Global music charts. As of August 2023, some of their most impressive western achievements include 6 American Music Awards (AMA), 9 Billboard Music Awards (BMA), 8 E! People's Choice Awards, 8 iHeartRadio Music Awards, 7 Teen Choice Awards, 4 No.1 Billboard Chart hits. They are also Grammy-Nominated and Brit Award-Nominated with 24 Music World Records (33 in total across their career) and 26 Guinness World Records. In Asia, they are even more popular and have achieved 19 Gaon Chart Music Awards, 33 Mnet Asian Music Awards, 20 Japan Gold Disc Awards, and more.

Rarely does Hallyu 2.0 scholarship go without mentioning BTS due to their influence and impact on the Western music industry's acknowledgement of Asian identity and pop music. Some

scholars argue that the band has recreated the image of Asian success on a global scale (Lee and Ju 2020; Liu 2020; Suryani 2019; Putri and Mintarsih 2020). Other groups have since emerged as part of the Hallyu 2.0 wave. Girl group Blackpink became the first K-pop group to perform at US-based Coachella, one of the biggest music festivals in the world. K-pop has become integrated into the American music scene and therefore is reaching people across the western world. However, generic mainstream media has not always been accepting of K-pop's success, usually approaching it with suspicion, and confusion over its attractiveness to audiences (Yoon 2018; 2022; Anderson 2014; Choi 2015; Howard 2013).

As with Hallyu 1.0, the appeal of K-pop at first was connected to its 'otherness' in the context of Western Media. Asian representation in the American music industry remains lacking and the charm of boy groups (e.g. One Direction) still retains its appeal. As such, groups such as BTS were categorised as an ethnic alternative or were dismissed with confusion. Sarah Keith suggests in her article '*Popular Music and Korean Learning: K-pop in Australia*' that further research is required into understanding the appeal of K-pop in 'its otherness, or in its resonance with Asian cultural values and identities?' (2019, 1). Giuffre and Keith suggest Hallyu and K-pop allow individuals to maintain this connection by way of using 'the interchangeability of K-pop with a broader Asian appeal' due to the hybridity characteristic of the media (Giuffre and Keith 2014, 15). Individuals attempting to create and balance cultural hybridity within themselves connect with the sense of comfort and relation they feel from an Asian media that appears to be acceptable in the West without feeling it must erase its own Asianness to appease the Western gaze (Keith, 2019). In an Anglophonic Australia that emphasises the mutualism of Asian cultures, Hallyu acts as a compromise of being able to acknowledge the similarities and affinity Asian individuals feel with Korean culture in a way that enables them to reflect upon their own culture, rather than feel their culture has become synonymous with whichever Asian culture is popular at that moment.

K-pop scholarship emphasises the genre's ability to merge the gap between Eastern and Western cultures particularly in its musicality, use of language, and global influence. Across the K-pop genre one could find American hip hop, British alternative, Chinese, Latin American, and a variety of other cultural music influences within the instruments, styles, and genres of musical performance. In early renditions of K-pop, what is called 1st generation K-pop (1990s-2000s), often there would be an integration of other Asian languages or 'versions' of songs sung in different languages to appeal to a variety of other countries, primarily Japan and China as they were the catered international audiences of the time (Yoon, 2018).

However, as more Western countries become interested, the regularity of mixing English words into Korean lyrics has become common practice within K-pop. In a socio-cultural context, placing 'borrowed words' (foreign language words directly placed into a language, e.g. Computer into keom-pyu-toh 컴퓨터) or even simply using entire English sentences between Korean lyrics, shows the extent to which cultural hybridisation is employed within K-pop to generate connectivity internationally (Jin and Ryoo 2012). In early stages of K-pop's popularity, when it remained focused mostly in Asian audiences, Idols would sing entirely Chinese or Japanese songs for their audiences. Now we have groups such as BTS creating entirely English songs (e.g., *Dynamite*, *Butter*) to cater to their Western audiences. Madrid-Morales and Bruno argue that this shows Hallyu acts as works of cultural hybridity that are used to challenge 'tenets of cultural imperialism' (2015, 5). Further, Hallyu has received success in return due to K-pop's ability to appropriately modify and merge cultural elements of both the East and the West to create new products for a third space that appeals for different audiences in different cultural settings (Jin 2013; Jin and Ryoo 2012).

Interestingly, K-pop places value on transcending borders by having its performers appeal to a variety of cultures rather than just the West. Music groups commonly have members divided up to hybridise the experience of consuming the media. Groups feel both Korean and like a local export

because of how multicultural members within the group are portrayed (Lie 2015). Performers are often multi-lingual, multicultural, and open about it. While all members will speak and sing in Korean, there are ‘lines’³ that will consist of members of the group who come from other countries and will speak other languages. This is a strategic device to appeal to many other countries and cultures and is embraced as part of the transnationality of K-pop. Idol groups will usually have multiple bilingual members to reach as broad an audience as possible. Often, their music will reflect this diversity as will their fashion and group image.

On top of this is an online engagement in which Idols employ ‘posting’ culture to engage with fans on a seemingly intimate level. As Hallyu 2.0 continued to develop through the introduction of the 3.0 (K-culture) and 4.0 (K-style) waves, the elements of technology which emerged during these later waves became invaluable to engaging fans with K-Pop and its Idols. Specialised apps created solely for Idols to interact with fans such as WeVerse and vLive are extremely popular in K-pop to continuously cultivate the feeling of connection within fandom culture. These apps have become instrumental in solidifying paths of connection between Idol and fan, as well as fan and fandom. Fans are able to watch ‘lives’ of their Idols talking to the screen like a video call or post on public message boards in ways that mimicked Facebook friends connecting with each other. For diasporic individuals specifically, this brings them closer to an Asian community that they may lack in their social interactions day-to-day as they can interact with both Idols and other fans (Song 2021; Lie 2015; Kim 2017; Yoon 2018; Jin and Yoon 2014). Choi calls this a multi-vocal aspect of ‘post-’ diasporic selves that is intertwined with negotiation and understanding one’s transnational identity. Whilst the use of ‘post’ should perhaps be used with hesitancy here because it may suggest moving beyond being part of the diaspora, which the Asian individuals of interest to this thesis are not, it is an interesting argument to consider. Diasporic

³ Lines are a term used to divide and categorise members into sub-groups within the larger group, e.g. the ‘vocal line’ will consist of all the singers in the group while the ‘rap line’ will be the rappers. This is not limited to only musical lines, there are also ‘dance line’, ‘Chinese line’, ‘Japanese line’, etc.

identity requires consideration of hybridity as an important aspect of building identity. Korean media as ethnic media present cultural hybridity as a valid form of being that not only works but has global recognition (Choi 2012).

This use of Hallyu and cultural negotiation offers a way for diasporic Asian audiences in the West to find elements that satisfy a desire for the authentic Asianness. As K-pop and K-dramas gain success they provide a form of symbolic capital (Yoo et al. 2014; Keith 2019; Giuffre and Keith 2014). Diasporic individuals interacting with these media may use them as ethnic media to validate their own desires and need for clarification and validity in being of both East and West, rather than feeling their own two-ness requires a separation of the two selves. This is assisted further by K-pop and Hallyu as it also impacts Western society's perceptions of Asians as heterogeneous and has worked to remove harmful stereotyped views of Asian cultures. Jenkins states that transcultural flows of popular culture inspire new forms of global consciousness and cultural competency (2006, 156; Jenkins 2009; Black, 2009). We can see this in the mediated perception of Asians not as stereotypes that project ideas of the 'model minority' or a meek or 'yellow peril' but rather as complex individuals of unique cultures (Jo and Mast 1993; Mok and Morris 2010; Keith 2019). The shame of being a fan of Asian media has begun to disappear and instead has gained capital. SBS PopAsia, one of Australia's first Asian media dedicated channels stated on Hallyu's impact within Australia,

[Australian] dominant broadcast media have historically drawn primarily on Western content, presenting an overwhelming Anglo-Australia depiction of Australia. SBS PopAsia's work [in sharing Hallyu means] ...it is now cool to be Asian. (Giuffre and Keith, 2014: 89)

Asian Australians are encouraged now to practise and partake in acts of 'Asianness' in addition to their 'Australianness' to form dual-ethnic identities as the Asian identity in Australia begins to gain positive recognition. By viewing Hallyu as a diasporic media, it could provide insight into how dual

identity Asian Australians are able to use it to negotiate a hybrid ethnic identity as both Australian and Asian in contrast to past iterations of incompatibility between the two. In this way, individuals use Hallyu as a facilitator for the process of diaspora to form dual-ethnic identity rather than as a way of emphasising the separation of two consciousnesses.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The Narrative Approach

This project aims to analyse how Asian Australian individuals engage with Hallyu in Australia, and to consider how Hallyu is used as a facilitator for negotiation of a fluid dual identity. In studying identity, it is important to understand that individuals often create and tell their lives in ‘storied terms’ (McAdams 2001; Hammack 2006). This means when applying a narrative approach to interviews such as this, both interviewer and interviewee must engage in a process together to explore the meaning of the stories told (Santos and Umana-Taylor, 2015). This was important when partaking in these interviews as it meant individuals evaluating their own experiences was as important as the interviewer evaluating them. Both the participant and I were part of the conversation to understand the ‘storied terms’ through which they were constructing and understanding their own identity.

However, this process also meant that trust and a sense of safety had to be established between the participant and myself to move forward. This largely was established through two things: 1) the position I, the interviewer, was coming from and occupied, and 2) ensuring that sufficient time was spent within the interview for the participant to feel comfortable enough to discuss intimate narratives from their lives. The former will be discussed further towards the end of this chapter, and the latter was addressed by having longer interviews held in a more relaxed conversation-like environment.

For this thesis, I sought participants’ narratives in relation to Hallyu and cultural interactions. The interviews examined how they were able to ‘make sense of personal experience in relation to culturally and historically specific discourses, and how they draw on, resist, and/or transform those discourses as they narrate their selves, experiences, and realities’ (Denzin and

Lincoln 2005, 658). This encompasses factors such as how these individuals define Hallyu; how their own interest in Hallyu has influenced their consumption, experiences, and views of ‘Asian culture’ in Australia; and how it affected interpretations of their cultural identities. I believe applying these methods and concepts to this study enables insight into the nature of identity not simply as a monolithic label but as a fluid positioning influenced by fluctuating attachments and experiences around culture, ethnicity, race, nation, self, and heritage.

My Methods

The primary method of data collection was a 1–2-hour in-depth interview and ethnographic observation session between myself and participants. The first part was the most focused and time-consuming portion, with each interview being semi-structured. Whilst there were some pre-designed questions to assist in guiding the interviewer and to ensure general themes were discussed, for the most part what was desired was a more natural flowing conversation. This more casual method of approaching the interviews was designed to allow for a relaxed atmosphere and for follow-up questions based on answers. Rather than being restricted by a structured interview, it was important to allow the participant to pick and choose the narrative they shared, rather than finding an answer to a question. This required a balance between allowing the interviewee to control the conversation and ensuring specific areas of interest were engaged with.

Whilst building the interview guiding questions, it was important that the interviews be conducted in an open and fluid format. This meant that participants were often encouraged to lead the conversation to focus on what they felt was important and relevant to discuss. The area of discussions focused on their home life; their connection to home, homeland, and Australia; and, of course, to Hallyu content. The aim was to discover the elements of Hallyu media that participants use within the process of understanding and negotiating their sense of selves. The interviewer’s

intent was to analyse the participants' methods of experiencing diaspora through Hallyu. Hence, the interview investigated Hallyu 1.0 and 2.0 as these are media generated for traditional consumption, i.e. through television and music. However, the interviewer was open to participants bringing in Hallyu 3.0 and 4.0 – what was valuable was what the participant felt they wanted to focus on, as this showed what they valued and used in their personal process of diaspora.

This thesis required ethics approval as it involved speaking with individuals and entering their homes. The process required thinking beyond the interviews and considering the implications and reservations of participants who chose to partake. As part of the ethics application, it was agreed that interviewees would be given full anonymity to protect their identities. Therefore, whilst information such as ages, city of living, and ethnicities were collected, all identifying information has been removed from this thesis and research. This was decided through the ethics process as no identifiable information was necessary to be able to investigate, and anonymity gave interviewees who felt hesitancy in participating peace of mind and safety in deciding to participate.

Nine interviews were performed and analysed throughout a period of six months. Eight were conducted through face-to-face interviews within the homes of the participant and one participant was interviewed over Zoom due to Covid -19 restrictions. The reason for this was to give interviewees a feeling of comfort in a familiar environment, as well as to allow access to physical Hallyu merchandise or cultural products the participant wished to share as well as to give the interviewee the ability to perform observational ethnography after each interview. This latter aspect will be discussed further into the chapter.

Interview guiding questions were created and categorised into two separate groups with similar but not identical questions for Korean Australians and non-Korean Asian Australians. This was done to acknowledge that whilst there may be shared or common elements between the participants' different Asian cultures, they are still different. Therefore, whilst an Asian Australian

of non-Korean descent may feel connected to Hallyu media, they may not relate their narratives to their own personal hereditary culture in the way a Korean-Australian may. Thus, again, whilst the questions were similar in nature, they were given different considerations to reflect the respect for the culture of the participants as well as the culture of Hallyu. The guiding questions can be found in Appendix 1.

Further, after each interview, I undertook observational research in the homes of participants. This included asking the participants if they were comfortable showing me their Hallyu products, or in some cases allowing me into a new space such as a study or bedroom to view any Hallyu cultural products they owned. This allowed a chance for untapped narratives to come forth about the depth of engagement participants had with Hallyu. It was important for the interviewer to have a chance to observe the household and participants within the household engaging with Hallyu. This stemmed from an understanding that Asian cultures deeply value the household's internal culture and seeing interviewees within their own space gave additional understandings to what Hallyu meant to them, as well as how they interacted with Hallyu.

Data Sampling and Locations

Interviewees were selected from a pool of interested potential participants and were recruited through two methods. The first was through Hallyu fan clubs, relevant University clubs, and the use of promotional material such as flyers posted around public spaces such as Universities and Chinatown Adelaide. The second method was through personal connections and snowballing. Personal connections were contacted with care to ensure they did not feel compelled to take part, ensuring that the participation, non-participation, or withdrawal had no impact on prior relationships.

There was a set of criteria then created to allow the selection of the nine participants.

1. Selected participants had to be aged between eighteen and thirty years of age at the time of the interview. This was because I was interested in individuals who are within the typical audience of Hallyu content but are old enough to have sufficient skills of reflection. Additionally, they needed to be 1.5 to 3rd generation Asian Australians to fit within the focus of this study. A range of between those years was selected with the youngest interviewee being nineteen, and the oldest thirty.

2. To build upon the previous criteria point, whilst the initial sampling allowed from 1.5 to 3rd generation immigrants, all participants were either 1.5 or 2nd generation. Only two participants were part of the 1.5 generation (meaning they were born overseas) but both migrated to Australia with their parents before the age of 2 and considered themselves part of the 2nd generation based on their own experiences.

3. Participants needed to have one parent who is Asian. It was important when selecting participants that a range of views were gathered to give a broader understanding of different perspectives within the Asian Australian diaspora. Hence of the nine participants, there was a range of Asian heritage from East, South-East, and South Asian homelands.

4. Participants must identify as a consumer of Hallyu media products – primarily K-dramas and/or K-pop.

5. Finally, participants need a sufficient level of understanding of spoken English to engage in the interview.

Participants were sourced from both Adelaide and Brisbane in an attempt to broaden the variety of individual experiences. Brisbane has a large Asian immigrant population and therefore their community intensity is stronger. The likelihood of participants engaging not only with Asian

culture but other Asians in social contexts is higher and therefore the ease of access to Hallyu may be different to that of somebody who lives in a lower Asian population intensity, such as Adelaide. For this reason, Brisbane was chosen as a secondary location for recruitment due to its higher Asian population intensity. Due to the interviewer and university being located in Adelaide, recruitment in Brisbane was performed with difficulty as online resources and snowball recruitment were the only forms of contact. Of the nine interviewees, three were from Brisbane and the rest were from Adelaide.

Challenges in Recruitment

In regard to the final participant pool, it is to be noted that no males reached out to be a part of the study. Whilst a more even gender pool was sought, the lack of response and interest in participating could have stemmed from two things: the imbalance of male interest in Hallyu, or the lack of male willingness in admitting interest in Hallyu. Whilst there is potential that less males are interested in Hallyu than their female counterparts, data from the interviewees suggests this is limited as an explanatory factor, as interviewees spoke of fellow Hallyu fans including brothers and male friends. A lack of male willingness to admit interest in Hallyu could stem from perceptions of what Australian society aligns with Hallyu content – particularly K-pop. Often, K-pop is placed within the genre of boy bands and comes with a misinformed image of lacking masculinity or being something for females only (Lee, Lee and Park 2020). Whilst South Korea has begun to subvert ideas of ‘hard’ masculinity by allowing its Idols and male fans to engage with ‘soft’ masculinity, there is perhaps still a way to go before this mindset crosses to the West (Stolze 2021).

Additionally, in travelling across interstate borders, COVID-19 restrictions caused several setbacks in travelling to Brisbane to interview participants. The final trip was shorter than planned and hence, time to recruit and interview was shorter than desired. Additionally, one Adelaide

interview also had to be re-organised due the participant catching COVID-19. This interview proceeded on Zoom two weeks after diagnosis and hence their observation session was attempted via camera but did not provide the same level observation due to the inability to be in the participant's home in person.

Participant Pool

PSEUDONYM	LOCATION	AGE	HOW WAS OBSERVATION CONDUCTION	ETHNICITY (as interviewees described themselves)	PARENTS' ETHNICITY	DATE OF INTERVIEW
Alice	Adelaide	21	In Person	Singaporean (- British) Australian	Singaporean Chinese and British English (Caucasian)	31/03/2022
Blue	Adelaide	22	Via Zoom	Hong-Kong Australian	Hong-Kong Chinese and White Australian	07/04/2022
Clover	Adelaide	29	In Person	Chinese Australian	Chinese	15/04/2022
Daisy	Adelaide	19	In Person	Chinese Singaporean-Malay-Burmese Australian, 'Mixed-Chinese' Australian	Chinese Singaporean and Malay Burmese	21/04/2022
Ella	Adelaide	24	In Person	Sri Lankan Australian	Sri Lankan	09/04/2022
Flora	Adelaide	30	In Person	Japanese Australian	Japanese and	07/04/2022

					Australian	
Georgie	Brisbane	27	In Person	Hong-Kong Australian	Hong-Kong Chinese	08/06/2022
Hannah	Brisbane	26	In Person	Taiwanese Australian	Taiwanese	10/06/2022
Ivy	Brisbane	26	In Person	Korean Australian	Korean	09/06/2022

Table 1: Summary of Participants information.

Data Analysis

All interviews were voice recorded and then transcribed. Each transcription was then broken down in narratives relating to the four themes of the sociological theory as outlined by Syed and Azmita (2008). This theory outlines how retelling ‘life narratives’ brings awareness to the desires and needs of individuals undergoing a process of identity formation relating to themes of ethnicity, dual-identity, and racial and cultural identities. These authors categorised qualitative data into four ‘narrative themes’ in relation to the negotiation and understanding of one’s identity to allow for clearer analysis.

1. **Experiences of Prejudice:** narratives relating to prejudice, racism, discrimination, or oppression.

2. **Connection to Culture:** feelings of connection, closeness, and belonging to their ethnic/cultural background

3. **Awareness of Difference:** times in which one becomes aware that they were ethnically, culturally and/or racially different from those in their own and/or other ethnic groups.

4. **Awareness of Under-Representation:** times in which one was in the numerical minority in a particular context (including awareness within media consumed)

I was open to all four themes being present in the interviews as there is the understanding that often these themes crossover within narratives rather than being wholly separated. When creating the guiding questions for interviews, I used the themes to build the initial questions about Hallyu, culture and identity. I aimed for the interviewees to simply tell their narratives in relation to Hallyu and the experiences of growing up Asian Australian with an open mind that all four would likely be present.

Upon completion of transcribing, I looked to tie together narratives within these four themes that:

1) used Hallyu to connect to culture – both Australian and Asian cultures – whether this is the form of re-connecting a culture through awareness of similarities between cultures and Hallyu content, or through another unforeseen form.

2) engaged with Hallyu in ways that enabled an awareness of one's own identity and what that looked like for dual identities negotiating the tension of a double consciousness.

3) and how Hallyu was seen as a facilitator for understanding the fluidity of diasporic identity and how it affects individuals' process of diaspora as something that is ongoing and changing as the culture engaged with also changes.

Syed and Azmita (2008) suggest that by considering these themes when investigating ethnic identity, researchers are able to gain insight into how ethnic identity develops, the role of context and the complexity of ethnic identity (2008, 1012-1027). Using this theory as a framework for interviews allowed my inquiries to focus on more specific moments and instances of Hallyu engagement and how it relates to ethnic identity awareness, development, and changes of perception. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stipulate that focusing on narrative inquiry allows researchers to 'make sense of personal experience in relation to culturally and historically specific

discourses, and how [participants] draw on, resist, and/or transform those discourses as they narrate their selves, experiences, and realities' (2005, 658).

The researcher in relation to the Project

Ruth Arber emphasises that narrative researchers 'must properly define the place from which we speak, the person we are, and the way we might affect, or be affected by, the interpretations inscribed within ethnographic texts' (2000, 46). To ensure clarity of potential subjective preconceptions I believe it's important to place myself within the boundaries of this study. I am 2nd generation (as the first Australian-born child to immigrants of mixed Asian-European descent). My appearance places me of obvious Asian descent whilst my upbringing was based almost entirely within Australian society – I would regularly fly to both homelands of my parents throughout childhood. I am also a fan of Hallyu content in my personal time. I am aware that to potential participants I, too, am an Asian Australian who experiences and undergoes processes of diaspora and has engaged with Hallyu on a personal level. Maria Elisa Hollero points out that the researcher's story 'is ultimately connected to the stories of those who willingly share' and therefore the researcher is 'an insider looking inwards' (2007: 82). With this in mind, however, I intended to follow and conduct interviews and observations with 'conscious partiality' (Mies cited in Hollero, 2007: 82) which aims not to influence data or analysis with my own opinions but rather to allow empathy with interviewees. This will strengthen this study through the promotion of openness and a mutual understanding between researcher and participant.

Maria Mies states that partial identification with the research subject has replaced neutrality and indifference to the subject (1983). This is because conscious partiality, according to Joke Schrijvers, allows for a conscious process of creating a space for discussion due to both the researcher and research subject being aware of the power difference and dynamics instead of being

restricted by them (Schrijvers 1997). The dialogue is enriched by an exchange that contributes 'socially situated, contextualised knowledge which is more explicitly inter-subjective and dynamic' (Schrijvers 1997, 22). Because I partially identify with the group of Asian Australian participants, my own experiences provided a sense of empathy and understanding with participants which enriched the conversation and encouraged narratives that otherwise may not have been shared. This resulted in a unique and dynamic series of interviews to analyse.

CHAPTER 3: THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING ASIAN AUSTRALIAN

Belonging to the Asian Diaspora in Australia

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census Cultural Diversity Data Summary, the proportion of the population with Asian ancestry is approximately 17.4% (2022, Table 4) – almost a fifth of the population. A minority of such size has a significant impact on Australia’s diversity and culture, and it is the young adults of these communities being referred to when this thesis speaks of young Asian Australians growing up and experiencing the effects of Hallyu. To better understand how Hallyu affects them, it is essential to be aware of where and how they grew up in Australia. As with most migrant minorities, the highest population density is located in Australian capital cities, the top 3 being Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane (Megalogenis 2019, 73). As these populations grow, the internal flow of cultural exchange strengthens to meet a growing demand for the services they provide, creating an ‘ethnic economy’ based within the ethnic community. The evidence of this presence in Australia is clear in the abundance of Asian food available – to name just a few: Japanese sushi bars, Korean barbeque, Chinese take-away, or franchised bubble tea shops. Often, these services open to cater to the demand from their ethnic community based in a specific local area (usually named a Chinatown), before continuing to expand and grow as the demand does.

However, this ethnic economy encompasses more than many Australians may realise, e.g. grocery stores, retail shopping, Asian-specific hairdressers, conveniences stores, arcades, etc. Whilst originally these small enclaves consisted of smaller populations, now they can be several suburbs large. For example, Brisbane has what the *Brisbane Times* called ‘Brisbane’s Asian Heart’, a collection of approximately seven suburbs reaching from Sunnybank to Calamvale that sees a high population density of Asian residents living, building, and caring for the area (Moore 2014). Colloquially, the Sunnybank Hills area has even become known as ‘the new Chinatown’ due to the

number of Asian members within the community. These suburbs and areas are rich with cultural ‘flavour’ in the products, practises, and services shared amongst its residents – Asian or not Asian.

Comparatively, despite having a smaller Asian population density, this is also reflected in Adelaide’s own Chinatown which consists of several blocks of the central business district. These communities play a large role in the dissemination of popular Asian culture regardless of community size. Asian stores – not just Korean ones – often play K-pop as background music or use K-dramas or music videos on TV screens for entertainment. The Asian diasporic young adults, as well as their friends and family, who frequent these establishments engage with these cultural products and build cultural practices from their interactions with the Hallyu content presented to them. Often, this can be as simple as downloading the song playing and sharing it with friends. Whilst Hallyu is used to cater to the tastes of these individuals, it also acts to supply young diasporic Asians with an idea of what is popular in Asia. This is essentially a form of cultural exchange which enables young Asian Australians to feel they are part of the Asian global community and to feel up to date with Asian popular media despite being in Australia. For diasporic individuals this can be an invaluable method of bridging the gap between themselves and Asia.

As previously mentioned in the review of diaspora literature, Cohen’s diasporic criteria listed five types of diasporas: exile-victim diaspora, labour diaspora, trading diaspora, imperial-victim diaspora, and de-territorialised diaspora linked to chain migration (1997; 2007). Based on the accounts of most interviewees, this typology is still relevant. The prospect of better work, better lives, and a sense of the West being free are often sold to migrants both currently and within the last three decades which was the time period in which most interviewees’ families migrated. The majority agreed that their families migrated for better career opportunities and better living conditions – with just one case stating it was for a different kind of trade and opportunity: love. These were also the dreams and values installed into Asian Australian children as well as the

responsibility of taking all the opportunities available to them now that they were growing up in Australia.

The Asian Australians interviewed for this thesis were all either born in Australia or moved to Australia between 1990 and 2000 under the age of 2 and thus were raised in a post- 'White-Australia' policy era. This was also a time of increased multiculturalism through diversity acceptance and opportunity. It was these ideas that were often presented to the rest of the world and were large contributors to many immigrants looking to leave their home countries. One interviewee, a twenty-nine-year-old Chinese Australian, spoke about how she understood her family's reasons for coming to Australia as depending heavily on her father's struggles to manage the expectations and social relationships in China needed to get ahead in ones' career. He believed moving to Australia would offer his daughter what this participant called the 'Western ideals' – equal possibilities for career and lifestyle. This mentality echoed across the majority of interviewees' understandings of why their families settled in Australia. Another participant, a thirty-year-old Japanese Australian, had parents who tried living in both Japan and Australia before deciding Australia would provide more opportunities for their family and be more accepting of a mixed child. Twenty-six-year-old Taiwanese Australian, Hannah, similarly understood her parents immigrated for better opportunities, further believing this led to her mother being insistent on Hannah excelling academically. Another participant related and called this having an Asian 'Tiger Mum'⁴. Most participants agreed that their own parents were very invested in their children taking the opportunity Australian society would provide them regardless of what industry this was in. Scholarship on Australian multiculturalism suggests that migrants generally come to Australia with the intention of taking full advantage of the Australian lifestyle, education, and career pathways

⁴ Tiger Mum is an expression amongst Asian communities that represents a mother (though a Tiger Dad is also an expression), who employs a strict parenting style that makes their child work hard at not only school but activities such as music or debate, in order to be successful. It originates from a perceived style of parenting in China and East Asia.

(Davidson, Murray and Schweitzer 2008). However, multiculturalism does not always equate to multicultural belonging, nor does it mean acceptance without prejudice. As a part of their own process of diaspora, the Asian Australians interviewed in this study were negotiating a tension between both being Australian and not being Australian because they were Asian.

Interviewees felt that their acceptance in Australia was symbolic, and there was a level of awareness that it was more of a tolerance at times. Elsa Koleth says that these experiences bring into question whether Australian multiculturalism should be considered 'conditional', meaning migrants, and by extension their descendants, are accepted so long as the terms of integration are imposed upon them (2015, 248). Whilst first generation migrants feel multiculturalism is a chance for them to create a new place for their families within the host society, later generations can feel it acts as a barrier that separates them from being fully part of the larger community (Fleras 2022; Saunders 2013). This can often emerge as micro-aggression and experiences of prejudice that emphasise individual's awareness of their differences from 'real' members of the host society (Syed and Azmita 2008). These events or moments shape identity by fostering a sense of separation from the dominant community – White Australians – and the creation of a minority identity. Such processes and experiences were evident amongst participants in this study, who discussed them through emotional responses (anger, disbelief, hurt) and through a recognition of being externally identified as Asian before or even instead of Australian. This understanding that Australian society saw them as Other is foundational in seeing how their Double Consciousness' formed – whilst they saw themselves as Australian, society told participants they were Asian. Daisy, a nineteen-year-old Mixed-Chinese Australian, recounted one moment that stood out to her from her childhood,

I remember getting almost – I got really, really angry. I was, like, 15 maybe, and my stepcousin, he does motor bike racing and so we were out somewhere that way at one of those...racetracks. And some old white man walked past me – I was with my stepsister, and he just went 'Ni-Hao', and I was like, what did you say? My sister was like, no, don't get

into it...I remember just after what happened, I was like, what if I wasn't even Chinese and he just said that, like how offensive?

Rather than 'outwardly racist', she describes her experiences in Australia as 'a sort of intrinsic racism'. As she says, it is these kinds of interactions that feel harder to rebuke compared to overt racism such as telling an Asian person to leave Australia, because it is 'small things that you feel really uncomfortable to actually bring up...like your teacher mixes you and the other Asian girl who looks nothing like you, your names up, or they're like "oh, you're sisters".'

Participants are aware that they are seen as minorities and are considered separate from the default White Australian not only because in most cases their appearance is eclipsed by their Asian features, but also because their Eastern culture appears different and incompatible with being Australian, even if they feel they are Australian. The majority of interviewees, when asked if they felt they were seen as Australian, answered with some variation of 'yes, but...' indicating that often they felt there were barriers that kept them from feeling fully accepted as being 'truly' Australian. Participants' with 'yes' answers were hesitant and were followed with a cognisance that physical appearance and/or misunderstanding of their cultural traditions continue to separate them from their White counterparts.

Twenty-nine-year-old Chinese Australian, Clover, who left China when she was just two years old, stated that she was often questioned about how authentic her own Australianness was by other Australians, making her feel it was 'like you're not really in the in-group despite having lived here most of my life'. Ella, a twenty-four-year-old Sri Lankan Australian, said that she didn't feel she was accepted as Australian because 'as soon as they see us, our colour and things like that, there is a certain level of segregation in their minds, I believe'. Ella's answer stood out amongst other interviewees not only because she was the sole interviewee who openly stated she did not believe Asian Australians were seen as Australian, but also due to her assertion in her feelings. Interestingly,

when asked to expand on why she felt this way, Ella's reasoning matched those of most other interviewees – appearance and cultural misunderstandings that lead to judgement. Overall, participants showed that there is ambiguity in whether they feel they are seen as belonging to Australia as much as they feel they should and do belong to Australia.

Asian Ethnicity as a Role

Interviewees were aware that they were seen and categorised as a racialized group by others, but this echoes through their own stories to show they, too, had internalised these views in the process of their Double Consciousness formation. For example, when sharing narratives and stories participants would refer to non-Asian people as 'Australian' or by other non-racialised descriptors such as 'classmates' or 'my stepsister'. Asian individuals, on the other hand, were referred to as a 'Korean friend' or 'Chinese kids and other Asian kids'. One interviewee emphasised their friend's whiteness by describing them as 'very Australian'. This selective ethnic labelling reflects the internalised agenda of racialisation by Australian society. When surrounded by White-dominant culture – where White people are considered the default or 'true' Australians – minority groups also consume and perpetuate that society's perceptions because they live within that social environment. Participants that felt they were Australian were also internally aware that because they are Asian, they may get treated differently to White Australians who rarely had their 'Australianness' questioned. Often this otherness and sense of being racialised manifested early with interviewees feeling that the Asian cultural aspects that they were associated with would often hinder their journey to acceptance during their school years. Flora, a thirty-year-old Japanese Australian stated that,

Growing up maybe [in] primary school, early high school, there was that feeling of wanting to fit in and to kind of – not really deny – but just kind of leave the Japanese-ness aside or leave it at home and to just try to fit in with what everyone else was doing.

Alice, twenty-one-year-old Singaporean-British Australian, felt the need to justify her own experience as an Australian at an early age due to her appearance,

I looked really Asian and so everyone was constantly assuming that I wasn't Australian. And so a part of me was like if I get into Asian content, it's just gonna almost prove them right. In a sense, yeah, it very much felt like I had to kind of prove that I was Australian so I had to be into more Australian, like Western culture.

Both participants highlighted the work they thought that many participants underwent to try to 'fit in' and the importance of the cultural products they were bringing into Western social circles. Ella, twenty-four-year-old Sri Lankan Australian, further believed that this continues into adulthood and that her present experiences still involve frustration over her attempts to adjust to Australian society: 'Like, it's most of the time what we are doing is we are trying to adjust to their culture and sometimes you're like, why are we doing that? That's because we wanna fit in.' This, too, can be an extension of Kibria's 'white phase', in that interviewees desired to be culturally 'white' to be allowed to belong.

When negotiating what degree of Asianness is okay and how much Australianness is enough, Asian Australians also have to negotiate what 'Asian' means to them through the lens of Western society. The concept of Asians – East, South-East, South, etc. - is a concept born and cultivated by the West. People in Asia do not recognise themselves as a collective category such as 'East-Asian'. People in Asian countries think of themselves as 'Chinese', 'Korean', 'Thai' as interviewees with family still in Asia explained. Generalised Asianness is placed upon participants by the external Western gaze because they are in the West. However, the Western gaze comes

without the contexts of differing agendas, cultures and politics of Asian countries that are more obviously distinct from within Asia than from Western countries such as Australia, even when there are large Asian diasporas. Asian diasporic individuals lack an immersive experience of Asian culture the way that people within Asian societies do. Megalogenis highlights Sinarayan Ray in that ‘Asia is not one...its people are Chinese, Indian, or Indonesian but “they are hardly Asians”,’ (Ray cited in Megalogenis 2019, 5; Acharya, 2010). For the participants in this thesis, when asked how they would describe their own ethnic identity, many drew on their ethnic heritage, such as Chinese-Australian, Singaporean-Australian, Japanese-Australian. These labels act as a push back against ‘Asianness’, which acts as an ambiguous umbrella term. However, this can be difficult to maintain when trying to describe complex heritage and identity. Instead, participants often chose a simplified version or revert back to Asian for ease. For example, Daisy who is specifically of Chinese Singaporean, Malay-Burmese descent when asked how she would describe her identity to others said,

I guess I just say I’m Asian. I don’t really know what to say even to other people. I don’t know what to define myself as, because I feel like, even when I say...when I just say I’m Chinese to make it easier, I’m not really just Chinese.

While Daisy settled on the label of Mixed-Chinese Asian when asked, it’s noted that each interviewee, regardless of how they replied to this question, when referred to as Asian or Asian Australian agreed that it was a label they accepted even if it was not their preferred one. Participants agreed that with that label came a shared sense of being Asian in the West that non-Asians and even Asians within Asia did not understand. For these diasporic Asian individuals, their labels and experience of ‘Asianness’ come through as the perceptions of themselves built by Western society.

Even when growing up alongside ‘Australian’ peers, interviewees felt that being Asian was to be ‘other’, a feeling consistently reinforced by both their social circles as well as Australian

society. This alienation often cultivated their desires to fit into a collective whilst also fostering an internal tension between wanting to integrate into the host society, and also appease household attitudes of maintaining traditions. Asian households highly value family and tradition but these cultural practices were seen as a barrier because of how Australian peers perceived them as different. Asian diasporic people are often racially aligned together because of social perception (Lee and Ramakrishnan 2019). Twenty-nine-year-old Clover stated that while she did have ‘some Caucasian friends’, most of her close friendships were with other Asian people. She believes this is because there are ‘shared experiences’ between Asians as they are racialised together.

Because I think growing up, we’ve all had the same sort of experiences because when we are discriminated against, we’re often discriminated against based on the fact of being Asian rather than the individual ethnicities. I think there’s just...people are always going to make slanty eye comments...So yeah, but also not just the negative discriminatory things but I think East Asian cultures share a lot of similarities as well. So, I think, especially in Adelaide where comparatively we have a bit more Asians now, but growing up there weren't as many Asians and I think you do feel a bit more solidarity with your other Asians.

Another interviewee, Daisy, explains constantly being grouped together due to Eastern cultures appearing similar from a Western lens because they are distinctly different from the West.

It's hard for Australians to distinguish between the different countries and that we are all different and I feel like they all kind of just see us. They honestly mostly lump us as Chinese. So I think that's one of the hardest things actually differentiating different cultures within the umbrella title of Asia, Asian.

This inability of the West to differentiate between types of Asians came up again and again when interviewees described their experiences of feeling Asian in the West. Ivy, a twenty-six-year-old Korean Australian, who reflected that she was friends with mostly other Asian people and felt it

made it easier for her to connect with them because they would ‘get’ things like her family and traditions. Due to this, they reiterated that they shared ‘something’ with other diasporic Asian people because they all had similar narratives.

In scholarship using Syed and Azmita’s narrative themes, narratives of being ‘lumped together’ as Asian would often be categorised within Awareness of Differences or Experiences of Prejudice due to their exclusion from the majority. However, it can be looked at from a different perspective by considering it as a narrative of Connection to Culture – in that these participants feel there is a shared culture between themselves and other diasporic Asians. As participant Clover said, it comes from ‘not just the negative discriminatory things but I think East Asian cultures share a lot of similarities as well’. Connection to Culture as an ethnic narrative theme is outlined by Syed and Azmita (2008) as having feelings of connection, closeness, and belonging tied to cultures, notably not a singular culture. Participants saw both the externalised sense of what an Asian person was through the lenses of Australian society, but still carried with them a more internalised understanding that Asian people share certain values and cultural practises across Eastern cultures that differ from Western ones. This, then, creates a shared process of negotiating one’s Asian heritage with the experience of growing up in Australia. Interviewees were asked if there was a shared ‘Asianness’ in Australia and there was a unanimous answer of yes. When asked to elaborate, participants said that there were feelings of shared connection, of mutual closeness to similar cultures that they felt could be shared regardless of individual cultural ancestry. For example, Alice, a twenty-one-year-old Singaporean-British Australian, said:

In a way, a lot of Asian cultures do have a lot of similarities things in terms of like hierarchies and just because a lot of them came from the same place. So there are a lot of similarities and so it is easier to ‘get’ like general Asian concepts if you are part of it.

Similarly, Daisy, a nineteen-year-old Mixed-Chinese Australian said:

It's like a weird Asian wide thing. Like there are just certain values and um, yeah, certain values that I feel all Asians just have an understanding of, and I think that's how we, like, connect. Like one of my coworkers at work, she's Korean and we've become really close. And I think we like some things...we just have an understanding of each other. it doesn't really matter, like where you're from. There's just some things that you're just like, oh, I feel that too.

Interviewees' understandings of this diasporic Asian culture came from feelings of solidarity amongst Asians in the West because it was something both parties 'get' – something intrinsic that comes from being in touch with an Asian culture and being part of what Benedict Anderson would label the 'imagined community' (1983).

The participants highlight the importance of connection between ethnicities placed under the catch-all term of Asian. The theory of Double Consciousness can be applied to the process of diaspora undergone by these Asian Australians, as they also understand their identities based on ancestry and through the negotiation of Asian cultural identity in Australia. However, a shared culture negotiated between Asian identities to acknowledge the shared experience of being Asian in the West is also present. Thus, while understanding their own ethnic ties to a specific culture and country, part of their ethnic identification process is identifying with 'Asian'. This negotiation of the specific and the more general is reflected by Daisy, who says, 'I grew up in Australia's predominantly white society. I think I grew up without that sense of being Chinese. I knew being Asian. It's different.' It is perhaps for this reason that, as mentioned earlier, individuals interviewed for this thesis felt the umbrella term, Asian, suited them as well as their own ethnic labels. These individuals form ethnic attachments to a 'mutual Asianness' in addition to individual cultures whilst undergoing diaspora. They are creating and understanding their identity by relating narratives from their lives to not only countries of origin (e.g. being Chinese or Japanese), but also to Asian and commonalities Asian individuals share, regardless of their ancestry.

Another important factor to consider that emphasises commonalities is the relevance of physical appearance for Asian Australians as a catalyst for segregation in the theme of prejudice, difference, and under-representation. How much individuals felt included in either Asian communities or Australian communities often largely involved the physical aspect of having Eastern features, as Fortier proposes. A few interviewees were considered partially or completely 'white-passing', a phrase meaning when a member of a minority with ties to racial and ethnic features looks more (not always completely) Caucasian and can therefore get away with appearing as one of the White-dominant community in the West. At least half of the interviewees were completely not white-passing, the rest sat somewhere in between. Blue, a Hong-Kong Australian noted that as someone who was more white-passing, she felt that whilst other Asian people accepted her as part of the Asian community, it was more so non-Asians that excluded her.

I'm Hong Kong-Australian is what I would say. And it's quite funny though because if I talk about my background and like when I would say that I am an 'other-Australian', Australians don't really acknowledge it, but Asian Australians do. I think, I do think as well, that a lot of White Australians are afraid to put the label of Asian on someone who doesn't look Asian.

Whereas I suspect that other people who look Asian are less worried.

Blue sits outside of a neatly categorised system of racialisation because she doesn't look 'Asian' but isn't 'fully Australian', so White people do not know how to categorise her and therefore exclude her completely. This highlights the distinction between the factors considered by the external gaze – society – and the internal gaze when constructing who fits under the term 'Asian'. Ivy, Korean Australian, and Hannah, Taiwanese Australian, made similar comments that they could never not be seen as Asian due to physical features - as Hannah stated that 'my eyes give me away, people see that before they hear my [Australian] accent'. Whilst most Asian individuals are unable to separate themselves from having Asian features, there is a common thread of negotiating between being Asian and Australian: physically, culturally, and emotionally.

In the next chapter, I turn to a discussion of how participants engage with each of the Hallyu waves. I do so with the understanding of how interviewees experienced growing up as a part of the Asian diaspora in Australia, and how they understand Asianness in the West from their experiences. The following section looks to explore how the introduction of Hallyu into their media consumption effected and challenged not only local and global perceptions on Asianness, but also their own understanding of their Asian identity and what they believe this means for a future Asian Australian community.

CHAPTER 4: HEURISTIC HALLYU, A DEVICE FOR IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

Investigating Hallyu 1.0: K-dramas reconnecting Diasporic Asians to Asia

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is evident that participants experience a sense of being recognised as Asian above most other ethnic labels. They are often made aware of this racialisation by late childhood and internalise these perceptions wherein they are ethnic subjects within a larger, white-dominated society. Whilst Hallyu is hardly the first instance of Asian media that young diasporic Asians see or hear, the Korean Wave can be seen as offering a new cultural text that does not require validation from a Western gaze. This is particularly the case for Hallyu 1.0, media made within Asia with the intent of being primarily for Asian people. Media plays a crucial role in shaping the perception of Whiteness as the default in the West – whether that content originates from Australia, the US, the UK, or even Canada – media texts that are consumed continue to perpetuate Whiteness as the norm (Yoon 2022). This not only comes in the form of having White performers portraying the majority of roles in media, but also includes the control of what and how much ethnic representation exists in the West.

Interviewees were all too aware of the lack of Asian representation or simply Asian presence in their daily media. It was often not until participants were a bit older (usually early high school) that they began to notice that the media they consumed had few characters who looked or had similar cultural ties to them. This often reinforced the ‘otherness’ of being Asian. Flora, a thirty-year-old Japanese Australian, further pointed out that what was shown in the West was limited or distorted.

There wasn’t that much when I was growing up, there was like the one thing I remember was specifically on SBS, there used to be *Iron Chef*. I think they still do it but yeah, that was

one of the only things...But there really, there wasn't the representation, there wasn't really that kind of-yeah, now it's everywhere, you can watch whatever you want on Netflix but at the time it was very limited. And so I think people didn't really know very much about the [Asian] culture or they saw only a very weird part of it.

Flora further critiques the range of media available, recounting SBS showing a stereotyped version of the 'crazy Japanese game show' such as *Takeshi's Castle (1986 – 1990)*, which didn't represent the true range of Japanese entertainment. In her early years in Australia, despite enjoying these shows with her mother, Flora intentionally separated herself from popular Japanese media outside of the household out of fear of mockery and judgement. This was common amongst interviewees, with most unable to think of examples of Asian media that they actively consumed when younger. Clover, a twenty-nine-year-old Chinese Australian, struggled to think of the media she consumed as a teenager that even had notable Asian characters in it.

Growing up it was- uh, I'm trying to think of any Asian characters on any TV shows. I mean, *Mulan* was a big thing...As a teenager I was big into *Lord of the Rings*, then I had a big Jane Austen novel phase. Obviously no Asian's there. Um, so yeah, growing up there's no Asian representation at all.

The one media with Asian representation mentioned – *Mulan (1998)* – has been criticised by some (though not all) Asians in the West as tokenization of a treasured Chinese legend because it is forced to accommodate to Western criteria (Chen, Chen and Yang 2021; Zhao, Ang and Haw, 2022). Diasporic Asians are then told they don't need to ask for more Asian representation because a 'token' film like *Mulan (2020)* have been made. Often, this tends to be the issue with Asian presence in Western media – characters are used as the 'token Asian' in an ensemble whilst often being portrayed through stereotypes. What 'type' of Asian they are appearing to be of lesser importance. Simply including them seems to justify the perpetuation of White dominance as a

cultural frame because it puts diasporic Asians into categorised boxes that Western society can accept, whilst still maintaining that their foreignness separates them from the dominant White society (Yoon 2022; Li and Nicholson 2021). These portrayals often are reduced to three stereotypes: the yellow peril, the meek Asian, and the model minority. Asians are sneaky, untrustworthy but they are also inferior, weak, and most importantly foreign. Each of these models acts to ‘other’ and reduce Asians in the West in comparison to their White counterparts. Daisy, nineteen-year-old Mixed-Chinese Australian, recounts that she finds that this is the biggest barrier Hallyu and Hallyu fans face,

Because, you know, the Western mindset, they believe they’re superior to any other culture. Especially in the US, they have that sort of mindset. But even that segment on, what was it, what’s the TV it’s on? Channel 7? They had a clip of V and they added coughing over it.

The clip in question was taken from the 64th Annual Grammy Awards, in which a member of the K-pop group BTS, V, was filmed pretending to sing into an imaginary microphone. The Australian news show, *The Project*, edited a coughing sound over the clip as if to imply he was spreading the COVID-19 virus at the event (Murray 2022). Mindsets such as these emphasise the underlying inferiority and threat of Asian people to the West (Lyman 2000). Furthermore, these displays in national television in Australia can have negative impacts on Asian Australian young adults who watch such programs. For Daisy, she felt reaffirmed in her beliefs that Australian media lacks respect for Hallyu – and for Asian people by extension.

Westerners have always viewed that they’re superior, but in particular to Asians...there’s just the sort of treatment? Asians, we’re subservient and we’re small. Like the men are skinny and can’t do much. The women are stereotyped into roles of subservience to people. And it’s just like, we are not like that and it’s just what you are making of us.

Many of the Asian Australians interviewed for this thesis said they felt the experience of being forced into these stereotypes – particularly whilst at school. Any form of Asian cultural practise was seen as weird, embarrassing, and not ‘normal’ compared White cultural practises. They conformed to the practises of the dominant group – one participant highlighted Easter as an example – whilst reserving their own practises for the household. Interviewees listed several things that they felt needed to be kept away from their social groups – food, behaviours, and traditions. This internalisation of things that participants tied to their cultural identity taught them to also see themselves as not part of the ‘in-group’ in Australia. However, the majority of Asian Australians interviewed saw Hallyu as a shifting point in which Asian diasporic individuals were offered an opportunity to explore a part of Asia through Hallyu media without feeling they had to simultaneously consult a Western perception of said media because it was not made by or for the West.

When asked about Hallyu’s first wave, Hallyu 1.0, the most common media named was Korean Dramas nicknamed K-dramas, followed by Korean movies, Korean streaming (e.g. personal vlogging), and then only a small portion of interviewees listing Korean game or variety shows. These Korean screen products vary in not only genre, but in length and platform. K-dramas appeared to be the leading source of Korean screen media consumed by those interviewed. This was consistent with other scholarship (see Ju 2020; 2021). When participants were asked to name Hallyu 1.0 content, two titles were prevalent: *Parasite* (2019) and *Squid Game* (2021) and yet neither of these two products featured in any of the interviewees’ introduction into the world of Korean screen – though every participant had seen at least one. Alice, a twenty-one-year-old Singaporean-British Australia, stated that whilst she couldn’t remember exactly what K-drama attracted her at first, one of the things that sets them apart from Western content is the comedy of K-dramas, even when they were melodramas.

I feel like with K-drama comedy is a bit more like expressive. They have a lot more emotions in them. And a lot of, you know, Western comedy is very...intellectual, sort of? And I quite like just the way they talk and interact with each other.

Alice explains that the emotional engagement in romance-comedies suits her better than Western romances. Similarly, Ella, a twenty-four-year-old Sri Lankan Australian, explained that her preference for Korean romance dramas over Western ones was due to her relating to conservative nature of romance that matched her own culture.

One thing is that the way that the characters are portrayed. In a way it's much different to how we see it in America and Western in culture [or] entertainment. I mean, everything is a bit more, it's like they take a minute to think before they do something. Whereas here, everything is very openly shown. For example, a kiss, okay? It's just, it's a very random thing. You see it on the street and then, like, on a TV show, it's literally nothing. But then, for K-dramas, that first kiss itself, it takes so much time to build up and there's just a lot of emotion that's, you know, portrayed and I think in a way it's because our Asian cultures – we kind of match on that level of how we're uncertain whether it's okay to do something like that.

These cultural proximities were what attracted most of the interviewees to Korean television. They could relate their own experiences and understandings of diasporic Asianness to the values displayed in the dramas. Such proximity has often been accredited as a major contribution to the international success of K-dramas amongst young Asian adults (Ju 2019; Huat and Iwabuchi 2008). There is a sense of satisfaction at the shared emotional understanding of what is happening within the narratives of these dramas. For participants, it is not only the act of noting the proximity of Korean culture and ones' own Asian culture, but also the way they contrast how well they are able to relate to Korean culture in comparison to how they feel they have previously related to Western

culture as it is displayed in Western dramas. Interviewees often describe watching K-dramas as a source of comfort whether seeing well-known Asian family dynamics, work attitudes, or simply a preference for Korean content editing and narrative. This reflects work on other global Asian diasporas such as Gillespie's work in London (1995) which iterates how important use of television media is to connecting diasporas to homelands even on a broader, continental scale.

Blue, a twenty-two-year-old Hong-Kong Australian, included that she felt there was a freeing aspect to K-dramas that encouraged her to stop thinking too hard about things and that she would struggle to find English-spoken content that would do the same thing for her.

I feel like [Korean] content that's geared to adults, it's allowed to be cute. It's allowed to be silly. It's allowed to be. Whereas I don't think a lot of English-speaking content for adults really is that.

Korean screen content allows Asian Australians to immerse themselves in the imagined homeland. In this instance, Asia is the desired place where they can connect their feelings and understandings of aspects of culture that have proximity to the Asian world they see within Korean television. And whilst the interviewees acknowledge there is a distinct Koreanness to K-dramas – e.g., food or traditional clothing – it did not deter them from seeking and finding things to connect with that felt shareable between Asian people. Clover, a twenty-nine-year-old Chinese Australian, explained that part of the reason she got into K-dramas was because of the excitement she felt when she found similarities between her own culture and Korean culture, such as festivals like *Chuseok* 추석 and *Zhong Qiu Jie* 中秋節 (in English, the Mid-Autumn Festival) which is celebrated across many Asian countries and cultures. She pointed out that 'some of the cultural stuff there is crossover with my own culture' which she takes note of when she watches K-dramas because she can form a more intimate understanding of events such as traditions and festivals because she performs them (or similar executions) too. Twenty-six-year-old Korean Australian, Ivy, explain that she felt a great

pride in Korean culture being able to ‘represent Asia on this next level – it’s not just for Koreans, even though it is about Korea’.

Negotiating Asian TV

The majority of those interviewed agreed that Hallyu was not their first introduction to Asian media within the household. Several participants noted they had lots of experience with Asian media from their parents or extended family. Some of the most common media included the local news of their parent’s homelands (e.g., Hong-Kong, Singapore, Korean), or dramas from their parent’s homelands (e.g., Chinese dramas, Japanese anime or games shows). The Japanese content was the only Asian content prior to Hallyu that consumers felt they had seen outside of the household. This is likely an outcome of the Cool Japan wave. Very few participants found themselves attracted to these Asian media, particularly when compared to the way they have become attached to Hallyu. The only exception to this was two specific mentions of anime by participants who said they were still interested in anime though not to the extent they were now invested in Hallyu, and the one Korean Australian participant who was introduced to K-dramas from her parents’ generation. When asked to compare their consumption of Hallyu to Western content consumed, participants either split their time evenly between Hallyu and Western media or preferred more Eastern content. Clover, a twenty-nine-year-old Chinese Australian, revealed that the ‘vast majority of the content I consume is from Asia’ and that a reason for this is her inability to relate to a lot of the content produced in the West.

I consume Western content as well but, I dunno, I guess there are aspects of Western media that I feel I can’t really relate to...do you know what I mean? For example, some of my friends are watching Euphoria. Which is what I understand to be about like partying and taking drugs. I don’t really get that. I can’t really, don’t really see the appeal.

Instead, Clover found herself going back to Chinese television and novels. While Chinese television was played in the household as a child, she recalled her major interests in Asian media being anime during high school and an interest in the Chinese musician Jay Chou. During high school, Clover shared anime with her school friends, leaning into the stereotype of ‘Asian anime nerd’ and acting as her school’s ‘anime distributor’. She noted that she would share mostly dubbed content (dubbing being shows re-recorded with English-speaking voice actors in comparison to subbing which is adding translated subtitles to a show and leaving the original language spoken) and that there was a smaller community of interest. However, engaging with Hallyu reignited Clover’s interest in Chinese dramas, to the point that she now consumes Korean and Chinese dramas more than any Western content. Clover used Hallyu as a facilitator for understanding and re-connecting to certain aspects of her own Asianness and culture, rather than seeking understanding through Western portrayals of Asianness.

Similarly, Alice, a twenty-one-year-old Singaporean-British Australian also stated that Korean dramas had led to an interest in Chinese dramas, though she had not had any previous interest in them when they were played in the household by her mother during early childhood. Alice became accustomed to the styles and culture of Korean dramas and Hallyu and found herself recognising similarities that she wished to explore further in cultural content even closer to her own culture. She described this as a personal experience,

I wanted to look more into, you know, my own heritage instead of just that of Korean. And so I did kind of jump to a lot more Chinese [dramas] cause there’s not as many Singaporean [laughs]. I developed more of an interest on my own. Before [when] seeing anime and manga, a lot of that stuff was kind of...the Asianness of it felt weird or it had been removed. With Korean dramas, they don’t remove the Korean from it. They’ve very much unapologetically Korean. This is Korean culture and, you know, Korean language, like it –

they didn't seem as like ashamed in any way of having their own culture. And that kind of made me feel like I should be more proud of my own heritage.

Connecting to her own heritage became increasingly important for Alice as she indulged in more Asian television, with Hallyu being an integral part of this process. Acting as an instigator, Hallyu led to Alice pursuing a deeper connection to her own culture by understanding what she was relating to on a cultural level with Hallyu – and later Chinese dramas – but was feeling disconnecting from with anime, though she enjoyed it narratively. This is discussed earlier in the thesis in relation to anime's *mukokuseki*, in which anime creators would remove 'Asianness' from their work to attempt to appease Western criteria of acceptable Asianness. However, this perpetuated both harmful stereotypes and ideas that Asianness needed to be removed or toned down or else it would be seen as incompatible with being accepted in the West. This resonates with what Alice says in regard to the 'Asianness' feeling weird or being removed in anime, unlike in K-dramas within which Koreanness is embraced. Alice chose to use K-dramas over anime to make connections between herself and the Asian cultural values present in Hallyu. Despite them being different cultures, there were shared values present that Alice could understand from her own cultural experiences. The role of Hallyu media in Alice's cultural identity formation was therefore an indispensable component in the journey of reconnecting to her Singaporean heritage.

Other participants appear relatively divided when asked what Asian media they had consumed before Hallyu and the effect Hallyu had on their levels of consumption. Flora, a thirty-year-old Japanese Australian, had often engaged with Japanese variety shows but preferred to enjoy them within the comforts of her home with her Japanese mother instead of with friends even when others around her showed interest in anime. She reflected upon anime's popularity during her high school years,

I've never been a huge anime person and there's always been people around me who are interested in Japanese culture but they're mostly anime people. And so, um, there weren't that many people around me with my particular interest which is more like comedy and variety shows. And so, it was mostly just like me [and] mother, or just myself.

As Flora consumed more K-dramas she found that what interested her was the similarity to the J-dramas that she had already been consuming. She further noted that there were things about K-dramas that she felt she could 'handle' because she'd been exposed to J-dramas first. These were aspects that she felt more Westernised Asians or non-Asians would find 'cringey', such as the slow-motion repetition of scenes at the beginning and end of episodes.

I know there's a thing my partner – he's white – he can't deal with the, the repetitive...like you will repeat the same move over and over again from different reaction points and that is something he just can't handle. Whereas I'm much more used to it and I see it more from a Japanese variety show perspective.

Flora uses these distinct stylistic aspects of K-dramas to re-affirm her understanding of Japanese content, allowing her to feel she 'gets' it in a way non-Asian individuals such as her partner simply don't because they are not part of the Asian community. It reiterates the concept that there are just certain things about Asian media that Asian individuals – diasporic or not – feel they share. They are part of their own 'in-group' built from cultural awareness and similarity. It reinforces a sense of belonging to the group even if there is distance between here and there. If Westerners are unable to understand, it is because they do not understand the 'charm' of these dramas (Lee 2018).

Some interviewees such as Daisy and Blue, who had Singaporean-Malaysian and Hong Kong TV, respectively, played in the household from a young age, found that their consumption of Hallyu content had not affected or sparked interest in other Asian content at all. Rather, they simply consumed an equal amount of Western and Korean content. Daisy stated that unlike K-pop, which

had largely dominated what she was listening to on a daily basis, K-dramas were less all-consuming, and she simply watched what interested her. Further, Hallyu hadn't motivated her to search for other Asian content when looking for new shows. Instead, Daisy explained that her interest in K-dramas came from the positive effect content like *Squid Game* or *Parasite* appeared to be having on the Western mediascape and the recognition of Asian identities in film.

I've read a lot of things about, you know, some of those [American] awards are rigged and stuff and for them [Hallyu artists] to actually win awards is a big step for not just the Asian community but people of colour because it's like you never see that sort of representation in media. And for something like that, most people in the Western society would snub their noses. That they actually really enjoyed it, that shows that we are just as good as you guys are.

She wished that these successes would lead to more awareness of how Asian content can be as interesting, can compete on a global scale and doesn't require Westernisation to be good.

There's movies that actually Western media have taken and they've made it into their own adaptations and then you don't realise that actually came from an Asian, like Korean media, came from Japanese or Thailand or something like that and you guys are just copying it. They're taking credit for something that wasn't their original idea in the first place.

This was echoed across the participants interviewed as they felt that it was due time that Asian cinema and television got its recognition in the West. Respondents highlighted the phenomena of *Squid Game's* success in the West as another instance of showing that Asian narratives can be 'interesting' and 'relatable' whilst still remaining intrinsically Asian. Many interviewees used expressions like 'finally' or 'about time' for Asian representation in Hollywood. In particular, the inclusion of popular Asian media like Hallyu in the West showed that Asian representation could be done without treating Asian people as diversity tokens and rather as equals. This ties into a lot of

Giuffre and Keith's theories about how Hallyu provides opportunity for cultural hybridity because, whilst it does not have to conform to suit a Western gaze, it can still feel relatable and closes the gap between Western and Eastern ideals (2014).

Family and Hallyu

Some interviewees found that Hallyu led to stronger engagement with family members. Both Daisy and Alice discussed watching K-dramas with their parents. For Alice, a twenty-one-year-old Singaporean-British Australian, there was a sense of pride that she could share this with her Singaporean mum. She explained that while her mother used to watch more Chinese dramas she had started 'really coming into K-dramas' and Alice now felt she could talk to her about it. Alice's parents (notably including her British father) had also begun listening to K-pop around the house and so it felt like Hallyu had begun to be a source of connection to bridge the gap between generations and cultures as it was something relatable to both parents and daughter. For twenty-six-year-old Taiwanese Australian, Hannah, it was a bonding experience for herself and her siblings who otherwise had very few things in common and since growing older spent less time together.

Every time a new comeback⁵ happens, I text my brother and we talk about the music video, uh, the dancing, uh, that kind of thing. We make time because we both, both really like it...

This was not the case for all interviewees, however. Flora, a thirty-year-old Japanese Australian, explained that her Japanese mother had not engaged with Hallyu and explained that she could not understand Flora's interest in it.

⁵Comeback is the name for when a K-pop artist or group 'returns' with a new single or album. It relates to the idea that they are 'coming back' to the spotlight with new music.

My mum has that, you know, it's the sense of K-pop is different and other. So there's a sense. I'm sure there's a sense of: um, why K-pop? Why not, you know, any Japanese idol groups and stuff?

The question of whether an individual would get into Hallyu/Korean content in place of one's personal ethnic media largely appeared to come down to the exportation of Hallyu and the increasing growth of popularity in the West. Whilst other ethnic medias were either less available outside of the household, Hallyu offered not only accessibility and symbolic Western capital with its increasing popularity, but also a culture of hybridity that bridged the gaps between the East and West. It did so in such a way that young diasporic adults engaging with it felt it was more acceptable in the West than previous Asian content they had interacted with.

Considering Hallyu 2.0: Re-imagining the Third Space through K-pop

Asian Australians engage with K-pop through the lens of their own unique context of being literate across a range of cultures. Looking at Hallyu audiences, Asian Australians fit into a unique category in that they are foreign consumers as Australians, whilst still seeing and experiencing cultural connections to Asian cultures that can create feelings of connection to Hallyu. However, it would also not be quite right to simply define them as solely part of international Asian audiences (re: Hallyu fans in Asian countries) due to their experiences of living in the West. Therefore, their unique placement provides an incomparable lens through which to observe and understand Hallyu as a hybrid media for diasporic Asian individuals. By the time K-pop's popularity in the West began to rise, it had already established a fan-base in Asia that had spread to the diaspora in Asian communities globally. Several interviewees in this thesis remembered hearing songs or of Idols (the Korean word used to describe K-pop artists) in the 2000s, with groups such as the Wonder Girls or Big Bang/G-Dragon receiving the most mentions. However, for the majority it was not until the

group BTS [방탄소년단] began to gain traction that they were truly pulled into the world of K-pop.

In fact, every single interviewee listed BTS within their top 3 K-pop groups.

Traditional Dress in K-pop

Twenty-nine-year-old Chinese Australian, Clover, when thinking about what she admired about K-pop, recalled her response to the pride with which K-pop Idols represent Korea.

I remember we saw BTS wear, like, their traditional clothing on... Jimmy Fallon maybe? And at the time I was thinking how we would want to dress for our things...it makes me wish I graduated in something like that. I remember growing up, I always associated Chinese traditional dress with *qipao*, but I don't like *qipao* as much as the *hanfu*⁶. *Hanfu* was just so much prettier.

Clover further stated that seeing Idols wearing *hanbok*⁷ [한복] while performing brought out a desire to reconnect with her own traditional Chinese clothing, *hanfu* [汉服].

It absolutely makes me want to go to China and dress in *hanfu*...*hanfu* is...you do see people in China who wear *hanfu* in the streets and I would love to do that but I feel like it would just not be as accepted in Australia society like they have.

⁶*Qipao* 旗袍 (sometimes known as *Cheongsam* 长衫) is a Chinese long form-fitted dress inspired by the ethnic clothing of the Manchu people, made popular in the 1920's – 1940's in the West. *Hanfu* 汉服 is the traditional ethnic clothing worn by Han Chinese people and has inspired many neighbouring cultures' traditional clothing.

⁷*Hanbok* 한복 is the traditional ethnic clothing of Korean people and is still worn in modern-day South Korea.

The fact that BTS (and other idol groups such as Blackpink or Oneus) wear both modernised and traditional *hanbok* stirred in participants feelings of desire to be as proud in one's own culture. Whilst Clover does say that her preference for *hanfu* comes from its 'prettier' design, later whilst describing the differences between K-dramas and her newer interest in Chinese dramas she includes *hanfu* as a factor of cultural connection for the latter.

It has made me culturally more connected. I'm like oh they're just drinking roots soup - reminds me of my mum. You know, when they use terms of endearment towards other characters, and wear *hanfu*. I dunno, it's just you have connections a bit more having grown up in that kind of culture.

The distinction between *qipao* – notably, a dress re-designed considerably late in Chinese history and distorted to suit a more Western-desirable silhouette – and the *hanfu* can be rather telling in the desire to connect and showcase a heritage of inherently Eastern traditions that has not been altered or judged by the West, nor rely on a Western approval to be seen as positive. Another participant, Georgie, a twenty-seven-year-old Hong-Kong Australian, also noted that as a student of fashion, seeing K-pop Idols wearing traditional clothing or use traditional instruments in their music videos made her want to invest more time incorporating her own traditional clothing into her work. In this way, Clover and Georgie shows that K-pop's image as being proudly Korean where Idols are wearing *hanbok*, can be used by diasporic Asians to inspire re-evaluation of their own feelings towards their own cultural traditional clothing and customs. Further, Clover underwent a renegotiation of how she viewed wearing traditional clothing as an act of showing pride in being Asian through seeing Idols do so. This was a process of comparison and negotiation of what she felt was an expression of pride and how far she could take this 'act of culture' to feel comfortable for her own situation. Whilst she said that she was impressed by BTS' decision to openly wear *hanbok* on an American late-night show, her internal negotiating settled on 'going to China' rather than wearing her *hanfu* in her country of residence. Clover's interest in going to China to wear *hanfu*

where it would be accepted rather than wear it in Australia also reflects an internalised fear that proudly showing and engaging with one's Eastern heritage may still be rejected in Western society – even when Idols are shown great support. Whilst she may be more open to her own Asianness, the desire for acceptance in Australia continues to remain a concern.

Hybridity through K-pop Music

Diasporic Koreans and other diasporic Asians contributed to the initial spread of K-pop via being accustomed to listening to, and engaging with, media in multiple languages. The Asian mediascape encompassed several languages and cultures – e.g., Thai soap operas, J-pop, Hong Kong crime dramas – even before South Korea's media had really begun to establish itself. Though K-pop stands for Korean Pop Music, scholarship debates what exactly the 'K' continues to mean as the Korean Wave pushes further into the West's mediascape (Lie 2012). K-pop as a genre is arguably vague as it encompasses a vast collection of sounds, rhythms, and musicality, demonstrating how mixed K-pop music is. When interviewees were asked what about the K-pop genre drew them in, the majority explained that considering it a genre in the way Western music categorises genres was not accurate. Rather, the strongest appeal of K-pop was that it pulled musical inspiration and aesthetic style from a variety of other genres. Daisy, a nineteen-year-old Mixed-Chinese Australian, explained that it was the mixture of styles that gave K-pop its uniqueness,

Most K-pop artists will try different styles of music. And then, even within one album, it's not all the same. I mean, they might have a sad album, but not all of them sound similar. And I feel like in Western music, you kind of have, if it's the title track, all the other songs are similar vibe. But you get really a lot of diversity within K-pop as well. So I really like that. So it's not even then - saying I listen to K-pop, there isn't like a specific genre because every song is so different.

Hence, while the genre continues to be seen as distinctly ‘Korean’, it is largely a genre of hybridity – taking in styles of the West and the East to create eye-catching, ear-catching products that can appeal to many individuals’ tastes (Jung 2010). Many interviewees described the music of K-pop as unique from mainstream Western music because of its hybridity, whilst sharing aspects recognisable from other popular genres – especially when incorporating traditional Asian instruments that were rarely used in any other genres. Often K-pop can feel ‘foreign’ due to the language barrier in the West, while simultaneously sounding familiar due to many of its musical influences coming from Western or recognisable international genres (e.g., Hip-hop, Latin music). Participants agreed that musically, K-pop as a genre could not be confined to a neat box because of the diversity of its influences. These diasporic Asian individuals felt a kinship to the notion that K-pop – like themselves – is a mix of influences and aesthetics from both the East and the West. Scholarship around ‘third space’ and Asians in the West both promote the idea that elements of building one’s third space revolve around finding things that satisfy the desire for both cultures (Bhandari 2020; Bhabha 1994; Li 2013; Jin and Ryoo 2012). K-pop as a bridge between East and West creates a happy symbiosis of the dual-selves, in opposition to Gilroy’s unhappy symbiosis which formed from tension between two (1993). Participants were able to use K-pop as a fundamental building block in their third space.

Additionally, as groups such as BTS and Blackpink continue their journey of success in the West, their incorporation of not only Western style music and looks but also language has been noted as bridging the gap between the East and the West’s music industries (Octaviani and Yamin 2020). Twenty-two-year-old Hong-Kong Australian, Blue, admitted it wasn’t until she heard BTS’ first English single, *Dynamite*, that she looked into the group – initially unaware the song was even K-pop. This raises with a larger question of whether participants saw K-pop as still being distinctly Korean – especially as more of the industry began to engage with multi-lingual, multi-ethnic influences and audiences. For the most part, participants agreed it was, highlighting K-pop’s

dedication to continuing to praise and spread Korean culture regardless of how much inspiration and engagement K-pop had with other cultures and languages.

Language: A Tool for Connection

Of the Asian Australians interviewed, approximately half spoke their ethnic language – particularly around the house – whilst the other half only spoke English. The reasoning for the loss of language for the latter group varied from having a Caucasian parent/stepparent in the house who also only spoke English to their parents' desire to assimilate to Australia by using English in the household. Monolingual Daisy spoke about her family's early attempts to maintain Chinese in the household,

My dad used to try and send me and my sister to Chinese school...it wasn't really effective because he didn't come back to Australia a lot. So we never like- like I wasn't interested in Chinese. I know Chinese is really hard though. It wasn't really offered at my school. I was like year six and they started doing some Chinese lessons, but it wasn't very good. I'm sad. Like I wish – and I've talked to my sister about this as well because we always make the jokes like, 'oh, when you don't know Chinese but you know more Japanese than Chinese'. You're like, this is awkward. I've always kind of felt sad I didn't get to learn...

This sentiment is echoed by other interviewees who did not speak their ethnic language and felt their loss of ethnic language was 'awkward', 'sad', or 'embarrassing'. Several of these interviewees had, however, begun to pick up Korean as a second language after beginning to consume Hallyu. A common reason for deciding to pick up the language was to be able to understand the Idols who most commonly speak Korean during live events. Whilst English subtitles could aid in pre-recorded or old events that had been 'subbed', being able to understand even in part what idol groups spoke

about during live interactions could for diasporic Asians feel like being able to share and connect with both them and even other K-pop fans. Participants who picked up Korean did so with at least one friend or with a group, citing that it was generally an activity done to feel closer to the Idols, music, and culture but also something that could be done together.

Several monolingual interviewees found that learning Korean was easier not only because of the language structure but also because now Korean is filtered throughout their daily lives as they actively consume K-pop songs and K-dramas. Daisy noted that learning Korean was something she initially started with her friends as a fun group activity, ‘cause me and one of my friends, we really wanna go to Korea together... we were kind of like, let's start learning Korean!’. However, none of these participants fully learnt Korean and all saw themselves as monolingual. Therefore, learning Korean appeared to be a more informal language acquisition formed through the consumption of Hallyu, rather than an academic investment. For diasporic Asians, because they are not surrounded by their Asian cultures outside of the household, community and support of a group can be beneficial to the development of traditions, customs, and especially, language. However, these communities may encompass Asians (and often non-Asian participants) of multiple ethnic backgrounds and therefore, languages. Whilst they may not share a common hereditary language, their common interest in Hallyu inevitably supplies them a secondary language (the first being English as the shared Australian language) through which their interests are shared, and they can feel they are a part of something. Similarly, the other English-only speaking interviewees found that their interaction with Korean through listening to K-pop as their majority or even sole genre of music meant they had begun to naturally pick-up phrases and words that inspired them to look at the Korean language as a potential study opportunity. However, often it was with other ‘K-pop friends’ that they finally began studying earnestly.

With interviewees who spoke a second language, it was almost entirely learnt through interactions with their parents and grandparents and acted as the primary language of

communication in the household. Compared to English-only speaking participants, less bilingual participants had begun to learn Korean in a structured capacity. Clover, who spoke Mandarin with her family since childhood, found the most she did was pick up a few common words and phrases or found herself naturally learning honorifics such as '*hyung*' (term for a male's older male close friend/sibling) because she, too, understood its significance from her similar Chinese honorifics. Clover felt that while she naturally picked up on some Korean, she did not feel the need to learn the language as she 'got' it already and felt she could continue to engage with content through subtitles and translations.

Other interviewees had different reactions and found that the similarities between their Asian language and Korean sparked an interest in furthering their language education. Flora, who spoke Japanese as a second language, found that the two languages were extremely similar and therefore her Japanese knowledge acted as a bridge to Korean as a language – making picking up the language easier for herself. Comparatively, the bilingual individuals who were studying Korean felt happy to approach their study as a solo task compared to their monolingual counterparts who often specified that they liked or needed the support of a group to motivate and assist them. This may be that ethnic language used around the household is one of the strongest and clearest connections to a homeland culture diasporic Asian Australians can have. Language as a form of communication and connection can be invaluable because it maintains the inclusion of one as part of the ethnic community even if they are diasporic. For those who already spoke their ethnic language, the desire for connection in such a way may have already been fulfilled and perhaps required less support from external communities, whereas those who were disconnected from their homeland languages felt that Korean – which they were interacting with on a daily basis – could be used to strengthen the connection between themselves and Hallyu media.

K-pop and Sharing Asian Values

Sharing feelings and culture with Idols appeared to be an important part of participants' experiences of K-pop. Several interviewees emphasised that they felt some K-pop songs carried Asian mentalities that could not always be found in Western music. Clover, a twenty-nine-year-old Chinese Australian, recalled one song that stuck out to her in such a way.

Hyun of Shinee, he did a solo song...he has a song called like *End of a Day* and it's like a ballad, but it's like a very comforting kind of song. It's kind of like, you know, at the end of the day, he's like you've worked hard. I don't know how to say that in Korean but like in east Asian languages there are equivalents. So in Chinese, there's like, you know, when *Ni Xin Ku Le* [你辛苦了] which means like you've done well, it's the same, it's like you've worked hard and then Japanese, there's like a similar sort of phrase, like thank you for your hard work...it would be unusual for like a Western artist to release a song like that, you know? But like, I guess there's this like east Asian mentality and the song is about like, you know, you've done a hard day's work. Thank you for your work, you know, that kind of sentiment.

Clover identified heavily with many of the messages shared within Korean songs even though at first, she could not understand the Korean lyrics and had to look up the translations. Upon doing so, she, like many other interviewees, felt she could share something with certain Korean concepts such as with the song above in a way that non-Asians would not be able to do. One participant, Ella, said that interacting with Hallyu often felt like an act of seeking something out inherently to connect to Asia.

That [Hallyu] is me connecting back to Asia. Maybe subconsciously we just don't realise it. We like it. But then there's an underlying reason of why we are so connected to it, you know?

Though Ella struggled to clearly put into words these concepts or what the ‘underlying reason’ was, she felt it was shared amongst Asians in a unique way because of their similarities and cultural understandings. Being exposed to Hallyu content allowed interviewees to feel they were reconnecting with Asian values. However, this connection could at times feel like engaging with a general Asianness rather than a specific culture tied to the homeland. Daisy describes it as a different way of getting closer to her ‘Asian identity’ rather than a ‘Chinese identity’.

Um, I think being exposed to just an Asian culture makes me feel close, I guess. Just because I think I didn't get a lot growing up and now that's like something that I'm really interested in it's nice to get to know about it. Because I've never... I've never really been interested in Chinese culture as much as like other cultures, which I feel like, thinking back on it, it's a bit strange, and I probably should be more invested, interested in my own culture as well, but because I enjoy Korean culture and Hallyu culture, like that's what makes it more enjoyable?...Besides, like, me, my identity being...part of my background being Chinese, I've never been really interested in stuff besides food or my family. So I guess in a way, this is another way of me getting closer to my Asian identity.

Daisy further highlighted the fact that often Asian Australians’ connections to Asian culture are tied heavily into food and the family/household, but Hallyu has provided an opportunity for individuals to explore an Asian identity outside of these earlier limited boundaries. However, it is also noteworthy that there is still a level of interaction with her specific Asian identity that she felt she lacked, ‘I probably should be more invested, interested in my own culture as well’. Interestingly, Daisy shifts between addressing Korean, Chinese and Asian connections in regard to herself and Hallyu, reflecting this multi-layered understanding of what Asian identity looks like for a young individual in the West.

There are bits of Hallyu that speak more to a Korean audience while other parts may resonate with a more general Asian audience, and this may be different for different individuals. Hallyu solidified Daisy's connection to feeling Asian, but she often acknowledged that she was not Korean and therefore there were elements within Hallyu that felt inherently for Korean audiences that did not apply to her as someone with a Chinese heritage. This suggests that for Daisy, her Asian identity and her Chinese identity can exist separately and part of her personal process of diaspora is understanding what media satisfy different aspects of her identity. This was not consistent amongst interviewees as others found Hallyu content was used to engage with Asianness and ethnicity – such as in the case of Clover seeing Korean *hanbok* sparking her own interest in Chinese *hanfu*. Alternatively for twenty-six-year-old Korean Australian, Ivy, her Korean identity directly tied into Hallyu culture being Korean culture. In the process of ethnic negotiation, participants chose for themselves what parts of, and in what ways, Hallyu could be used to facilitate an understanding of their own Asianness and ethnic identity, without seeking the approval of the West's perception of what an Asian person is.

Fear of being a 'Koreaboo'

However, with this negotiation of one's place within the collective Asian, and in the context of this distinction between 'being Asian' and 'being Korean', there was a common thread of Asians who were not of Korean descent fearing they would be seen as 'Koreaboo'. Koreaboo is a word derived from the term 'Weeaboo' which was originally a term used to describe overzealous anime and Japanese entertainment fans, particularly from the West. Koreaboos are Hallyu fans (Asian or otherwise) who have taken their interest in Hallyu beyond what most fans view as acceptable, often edging into cultural appropriation or denouncing their own identity to fake being Korean. What constitutes as 'too far' for a fan to become a Koreaboo appears to depend on a level of obsession

often attached to terms such as unhealthy or obsessive, to levels of xenophilia and xenophobia wherein they internalise racism against their own ethnicity and idealise Korea. Fans of Hallyu take issue with Koreaboos, as it is seen as fetishising being Korean and Korean culture because it is currently popular (Lynch, 2021). Interviewees believed Koreaboos lacked respect for Korean people and culture. Flora, a thirty-year old Japanese Australian, said she often worried about being seen as a Koreaboo having experienced being on the other side of the fetishisation from Weeaboos. Sometimes going by her middle name – a Japanese name – Flora stated that due to her more white-passing features people believed it was an Asian name she had given to herself to appear more Asian than she actually was. This often manifested in Flora adding qualifiers throughout her interview, such as ‘but I’m not Korean’. This pattern occurred frequently across many of the Asian Australians interviewed, particularly when asked about pride felt in the Asian representation during Hallyu winning Western awards.

Many interviewees felt the need to clarify that whilst they felt pride and joy in the accomplishments of Hallyu content, it came from being Asian, enjoying the content, and valuing Asian acknowledgement in the West and not from attempting to claim being Korean or having Korean national pride when they were not ancestrally connected to Korea. Interviewees, when sharing how their use of Hallyu facilitated feelings of connection to being part of the collective of Asia, emphasise that they found fetishisation of Korean people and culture unacceptable. This seemed to derive from an understanding that a consequence of Asian media becoming popular was a fetishisation of Asianness due to the pre-existing Orientalism present in the West. Their only response to this was to distance themselves from infringing on Korean culture in that same way, and to admit this could be a downside to Hallyu’s rise. It was important to participants that they acknowledged the issue and did not allow themselves to fetishise Koreanness if they themselves were not Korean and instead to be proud in the similarities their own Asianness provided to Hallyu.

K-pop as the new ‘Cool’ media

In attempting to solidify their own ethnic identity and combat the stigma placed upon them from the Western perception of what ‘Asianness’ was, participants associated themselves with a positive Asian representation that could stand in parallel to the Anglo-White West. Several interviewees acknowledged that Hallyu had contributed to a positive image of being Asian. It had gained symbolic capital in being the ‘cool media’ that could inspire Asian Australians to ‘come out’ as Asian. Daisy highlighted that ‘in a way it’s still an Asian representation that we’ve never really had. And to have that, you know, spread its influence, being like we are cool. Yeah, we are cool. We can do cool things.’ The ‘we’ to which Daisy refers are Asian people, culture, and media. When discussing her interactions with K-pop, she refers to herself as a ‘K-pop oldie’, a term used by several interviewees who had gotten into K-pop in its earlier stages of exportation. Newer fans called themselves ‘newbies’. These labels were used like badges of honour in showcasing ethnic pride and how early they had begun to engage with Hallyu – especially K-pop. These badges were not often used in conjunction with K-dramas it seemed, as it was more about acknowledging the monumental power K-pop had in sharing Hallyu with the world. The idea behind ‘oldie’ being the inclination that they had gotten into K-pop before it was cool. Georgie, a twenty-seven-year-old Hong-Kong Australian, noted that friends who were getting into K-pop now were impressed that she had first engaged with K-pop in 2012 when her favourite group, EXO, was popular, but because of how long she had been interested in the media she described it as ‘I feel like I’ve always liked it’. Interviewees who had spent longer being Hallyu fans seemed to have an awareness of how ‘hyped’ fans could get and noted that often they had a heightened period of obsession with K-pop before it had settled. This was not to say that their love or level of interaction had decreased – though for some it had as they had gotten older, left school and entered the workforce, formed relationships, etc. - but rather that K-pop tended to draw individuals in with multiple forms of engagement in platforms, styles, and various media in an almost overwhelming fashion.

Clover, another K-pop oldie, stated that nowadays because K-pop was so popular, 'it's hot now. I think it gets, just gotten so, like everyone has so much content! Like how can I possible catch up?' Yet with so much available content, it allowed for the majority of interviewees to continue to engage with K-pop daily. Whilst K-pop stands for Korean pop music, in actuality it encompasses communities and engagements beyond just the music. Interviewees listed not only music but Idols' personalities as large contributors to their engagement through online platforms both Western (Instagram, Twitter) and Eastern, such as Weibo (Chinese social media), vLive (Idol live streaming app), or WeVerse (Idol message board app). Apps created for idol-fan interactions (e.g. vLive and WeVerse) were often used for tools of engagement to allow fans to feel they were keeping up with the most recent news whilst also feeling they had personal pathways of communication with their Idols. Flora, a Japanese Australian, explained that these forms of fan-service were understood by her more in line with Japanese levels of patronage,

I think that it makes sense to me on a Japanese level, I guess, rather than like an Australian level. That sense of trying to connect with fans so that you create a connection and that you can kind of hold onto them as fans. Essentially that, to me, makes a lot of sense in terms of the culture of Japanese patronage almost.

The usage of these apps largely satisfied interviewees' desires to feel connected to Idols in a, as Flora puts it, patronage-style para-social manner. They were able to feel closer to their Idols and having specific apps designated to fans of K-pop felt unique.

These apps became important third spaces for participants to explore their love of Hallyu with like-minded fans on a global scale. Alice, Singaporean-British Australian, recalls that largely these online platforms are also where she builds her communities.

[I don't engage] as much person to person, a lot on like the internet. So like a lot of the times you'll be able to join like group chats and whatnot. Where, you know, it's for fans of this sort

of thing. And so it's quite fun. It feels a bit like a community sort of thing of like, you can kind of get together and, you know, you share the same interests.

K-pop and Idol culture not only appears angled toward cultivating these relationships between Idols and fans, but also amongst fans. For example, WeVerse has community pages in which fans engage with each other more so than with Idols. This allows fans of K-pop to feel they are building a community they can interact with. Most of the interviewees engaged with these communities of K-pop fans either online or in-person and often felt that Asianness was encouraged and celebrated rather than being seen as a barrier to overcome to achieve social acceptance.

Physical Engagement and K-pop Merchandise

K-pop music and music videos were described as 'vibrant' and 'colourful'. A common highlight to interviewees were the elaborate dance choreography performed. These choreographies were often some of the first things mentioned when asked what it was about K-pop that first drew those interviewed in. 30% of the participants said that part of their interaction with Hallyu involved being dedicated to learning, recreating, and performing dance covers of K-pop groups. One interviewee, Daisy, states that one of the most important things she has gotten out of K-pop was a re-ignited love for dancing,

So I used to dance as a kid. And then I was introduced to K-pop...I've started dancing again. Like I just like the way it makes me feel in comparison to other genres, because, you know, the performance aspect of K-pop is so captivating and so intriguing. And then when you know the dance as well, it just makes it so much more fun to listen to in a way. Like you're like, oh, I can like have fun and dance the moves like they do. And it kind of just makes me feel good.

Daisy associated dance with being ‘a big part of who I am now’ and explained that most of her social community was associated with K-pop dance. Posting covers of their favourite groups online, she found that other K-pop fans gathered to support this hobby. For Daisy, this use of Hallyu to serve as a creative outlet from childhood emphasises the flexibility of how Hallyu can facilitate the expression of one’s own identity as well as the gathering of like-minded people online that can further re-affirm the actions of the diasporic individual. Similarly, another interviewee, Clover, explained that her love for Hallyu gave her a place to use her art skills as well as a way to create in-person events for communities of K-pop fans to gather.

We’ve got a Facebook group for BTS fans [in Adelaide] and they used to do bubble tea events. That’s where I got this necklace [shows a BTS pendant necklace she is wearing] ...I do fan art [and] I used to give out like little prints, um, during the bubble tea events, because the bubble tea events were often like tied to member's birthdays.

‘Fan Art’ is a term used by creators of both traditional art and digital art in the K-pop community (and other fan communities) to describe art depicting subjects from the content of interest. Clover specialises in digital and hand-drawn recreations of some of her favourite K-pop Idols which she displayed proudly on her walls around her study. It shows a clear dedication to using her artistic talents towards Hallyu and how Hallyu has in turn given her an outlet to express herself through art. Henry Jenkins’ work around participatory culture offers an insight into the importance of fan engagement. Jenkins highlights that artistic expression centred around cultural products, when accepted by the community, cements the creator’s place in the ‘fandom community’ because they are seen as participating in the cultural practise (Jenkins & Bertozzi, 2008, pp171-198; Jenkins, 1992).

In participatory culture, there is an emphasis on how fans celebrate the way in which content can be used in conjunction with their own artistic talent for cultural productivity. They feel like part of the narrative of these cultural products, strengthening the relationship between fan and media.

Furthermore, these communities encourage each other to produce and consume other fan arts to continue to build an online portfolio of fandom praise and talent from around the world. This online sharing becomes integral to the feeling of acceptance and recognition of their place in the community. These online art pieces can begin to then take up physical space to reflect the importance of such spaces. For example, during Clover's interview, she invited the interviewer into her study room which had been converted into a room for her displays and online art surrounding K-pop, K-dramas, and other Asian media. This outlet also displayed a physical representation of Clover building her own third space consisting of all the different media she used to facilitate and satisfy her desires for culture through a variety of media which centred around her interest in Hallyu. This is a prime example of how central the online networks of Hallyu can be as it provides opportunity for Asian individuals to use participation in Hallyu as a cultural practise. The fandom is an Asian community within which the Asian individual sharing, building and experiencing their third space can feel they belong and thrive as someone with Asian heritage.

Clover's study showed other forms of engagement that matched other interviewees in the form of collectables, albums, and other merchandise. Clover's study included a display cabinet of mini action figures, her favourite K-pop albums and collectors' cards. Similar to the concept of baseball cards, the K-pop industry produces solo and group member ID-sized cards with unique photographs of different Idols. K-pop fans regularly collect and trade these cards, with some being considered rare or more desirable depending on group and solo member popularity. Participants often outlined how it felt like a game all collectors were playing together, rather than it being a solo mission to collect sets for oneself. Often these cards were cared for with great effort, either kept safe in what's called a photo-card album – a specialised folder with sized slots for cards to be kept and preserved in – or placed in safe displays around interviewee's home.

After each interview, the ethnographic sessions were done with the interviewees in which their spaces of Hallyu memorabilia and merchandise were examined. It was often found that

participants collected similar albums in sets as well as indulging in other K-pop specific merchandise such as *eunwonbongs* [응원봉] a.k.a. ‘lightsticks’ in English which is the word all participants used except for the Korean Australian participant. Lightsticks which are specially designed, handheld, light-up devices which Bluetooth connected into WeVerse-like apps to sync the light patterns with music videos. Clover’s own lightsticks were lined in a glass display for safety. She explained that she wanted to use them at concerts, as they are often used to connect to the stage, so participants feel involved within the concert itself rather than just as passive viewers. The excitement of this thought caused several participants to explain with great passion the thought of being so immersed in the experience of K-pop – regardless of whether they had actually ever participated in such an event or not. This thorough immersion shows the importance these young diasporic adults place on feeling part of the group and being able to be allowed to pursue Hallyu through physical displays of engagement. Whilst most participants kept their K-pop merchandise in personal spaces such as bedrooms or personal studies, one participant who lived alone had hers set up in her living room which could be viewed from most places in the home. She explained that she enjoyed being able to see her collection whenever she wanted and that it brought her feelings of happiness and comfort to see what she had been able to collect. Again, this shows that whilst K-pop is about enjoyment, it brings feelings of being part of something bigger, the comfort of feeling there are communities to which one belongs, communities that once perhaps may have been kept hidden or restricted to specific social circles can now be openly and proudly shared. The engagement with these merchandise and memorabilia spaces often revolved less around individual satisfaction and ownership, and more towards asserting oneself as part of the collective fandom.

Western Approval vs Positive Western Attention

Whilst participants increasingly wished to explore their ethnic identities as they aged, Hallyu offered an alternative form of ethnic media through which they were able to engage with Asianness in a way that did not require approval from the Western gaze. However, the Asian Australians interviewed for this research did appear to still seek broad Western attention in a way that satisfied their transnational identities and their desire to see how Asianness continues to be responded to in the West. Whilst the majority appeared to not require the approval of the West – with several interviewees noting that they felt there were still connotations of Hallyu being just a niche Asian media – they were aware of the West’s interest in Hallyu and the positive attachments that had begun to emerge in relation to it. Interviewees sometimes seemed to contradict themselves in jumping back and forth between whether or not Hallyu was accepted or not in Western mainstream media and appeared to settle on it largely being a mixed response that opened Asians in the West up to both being associated with Korean media which was ‘cool’ and ‘eye-catching’ but also to potential ridicule. This reflects an inherent tension between the complex identities of the individual’s Double Consciousness and formation of their dual identity. Where the Asian identity may want to explore and share the connection it has found in Hallyu, the Australian identity still worries about the perception of Western society. Many interviewees expressed that the unapologetic pride and confidence of particularly K-pop Idols such as BTS or Blackpink to continue to showcase their music and performances in the West encouraged fans to do the same. Daisy describes the transition she had in regard to her own dance covers of K-pop.

I think, towards when I started first dancing to K-pop, I think I felt a bit embarrassed cause if anyone asked oh, what do you dance? It's like, oh, Korean music. Like what's that? I went to a private, predominantly white school. So it was a bit like, ugh. I never really told anyone. I think now I'm actually really proud of it. It's a big part of who I am now.

Another participant, Clover, reflected upon the difference in responses she felt herself and her younger brother – also a fan of K-pop – had in sharing their taste of music during school years. From her own high school experience, she explains she often expected responses such as ‘um, why does he look like a girl?’ before expanding that,

I don't know. I wouldn't say like any of them [her school friends] like commented on the music, know what I mean? I think there is probably a changing perspective...I guess I have a younger brother...Actually his friends are a lot more open to it. He's got a few friends who listen to K-pop as well, who aren't Asian. I think there is a bit more acceptance to, you know, try things from a different culture in his generation.

This idea that K-pop is now more shareable and accepted amongst young Australians, was strongly supported by the Asian Australians interviewed – both those who were a bit older and those who had only left their schools years recently. K-pop has a ‘coolness’ to it, giving it symbolic capital and a platform to become acceptable in the West and deserving of recognition.

Interviewees, whilst describing their opinions of how K-pop is viewed, often described them narratively through their own stages of growing up. For most of the Asian Australians interviewed, the progression of K-pop's success happened between mid to late high school and into young adulthood. There was a shared sense that as K-pop grows more popular, there is an increased validation in the media they consume and their desire for more Asian media like it. In particular, the interviewees who were fans of groups such as BTS, who faced so much criticism from the West at first but are now considered one of the most popular boy bands, reaffirmed that choosing to be a fan was a ‘good’ choice.

I do feel happy with [BTS' success] because I think I started listening to BTS when they were the '*danger*' era⁸, so they weren't that popular at that stage and so it's seeing them grow. But it definitely, you know, there's a lot of antis⁹ for BTS because of their popularity, but their popularity wasn't taken for granted. It wasn't just given to them. They worked for it. So it makes me happy to see that from where they started now, they're really successful and it shows like that their hard work pays off.

Whilst this is a positive sentiment, there is a level of participants 'buying into' the myth of the self-made pop star that many celebrities – and their companies – seek to create. It is a capitalist narrative of hard work and talent always paying off to inspire audiences to support pop stars through the 'underdog' lens. As with all fame and publicity, there is a level of glamour, however, largely interviewees felt that compared to mainstream American pop stars for example, K-pop groups such as BTS have had to face genuine hardships when approaching the Western mediascape due to their Asianness. This has therefore earned them praise amongst their fans – both new and old.

Whilst participants such as Daisy, nineteen-year-old Mixed-Chinese Australian, spoke about 'seeing them grow' it is important to note that during this time, she too was growing into an adult. In this way, young diasporic individuals growing up with Hallyu are using it to re-affirm their connections to Asia. They are connected to Asia because they consume Asian culture through the medium of music and television. When their Idols struggle against the view of the West, diasporic Asians feel kinship because it is the same judgements, images, and perspectives placed upon them. Seeing BTS succeed despite these hurdles can inspire Asian Australians to work towards doing the same because they are shown there can be a positive 'payoff'. They see themselves in these Idols

⁸Eras are a term used to describe a period of time when K-pop artists release new music. It uses the title track or album name, in this instance the song 'Danger'. The BTS 'Danger era' refers to August-September 2014.

⁹Antis is a shortened version of Anti-Fans, a term to describe people who actively oppose and hate certain artists, performers, or groups.

because Idols become real people facing the same discrimination they have dealt with for a significant portion of their lives. This creates a dual narrative – the capitalist aspect of selling the underdog narrative to fans, and the genuine challenges Idols and the K-pop genre have had to overcome to gain recognition and success. Fans feel pride in K-pop for gaining success because it did so despite the hardships.

K-pop is a valuable medium within Hallyu when considering the real people that fans are attaching to, especially as other Hallyu content can have a certain distance and feel less personal. When a K-drama is criticised for being un-relatable to the West, whilst one may take offence at the accusation against Korean culture, there are no individuals in particular being targeted. Alternatively, K-pop Idols are often under attack as well as their content. For example, when K-pop is criticised through a racial lens, it is not simply that the music is un-relatable, but the boys are also ‘too feminine’. An explanation for why Asian Australians feel kinship with Idols could come from the sense of shared community built between Asians in the West. Fans are made to feel they are part of an Idols’ world as shown through the features of the apps used in K-pop to bridge the gap between performer and fan. In addition, seeing Idols facing the same racialisation Asian fans experience can bring the idol down to a level of ordinariness – they are now the same as other Asian individuals in the West rather than protected by being on a ‘fame’ pedestal. When Idols share the same struggles as diasporic individuals it can feel as if they share their achievements as well. Similar to the way in which, for example, a Chinese Australian is able relate to a Korean Australian through Hallyu because of their mutual understanding of experience and similar culture; an Asian Australian may feel they can relate to a Korean idol because of that same shared experience. The ‘self-made’ narrative is, therefore, read through an ethnic/racial lens.

A similar parallel can be drawn even between the manufacturing of these K-pop groups. What makes K-pop Korean is arguable and as the industry strives to be more appealing to international audiences, they have often looked to include more diverse Asians within their ranks.

One interviewee, Alice, points out that seeing Australian Idols such as Felix from Stray Kids brought surprising joy because she felt the connection of feeling he ‘could be like me’. Similarly, another interviewee pointed out that one of her favourite groups, Blackpink, is composed of diasporic Asians too. Of the four members, two are diasporic Koreans from Australia and New Zealand, one is a Thai member, and just one is Korean from Korea. Several K-pop groups such as Twice, NCT, and Enhyphen have followed this diversifying of Idols to seek out Asians from not only Asian countries such as Japan, Thailand, and China, but also the United States, Canada, and Australia. Whilst the image of K-pop is still largely based around East Asianness, one of the largest audiences is diasporic Asians in the West. Interviewees acknowledged that seeing diverse Asianness has encouraged them to seek out similarities between themselves and the Idols they follow. K-pop showcases a cast of diverse Asians that bring in their own cultural influences and ethnic heritages that adds to its hybridity. When these Idols are then promoted and receive success in the West, Asian Australians who have felt connection and belonging as fans often feel they too benefit from that symbolic capital that is gained by being Asian – as diverse as that term is allowed to be.

CONCLUSION

Transnational pop culture media in Australia – especially media in a non-English language – inevitably involves forms of translation and negotiation. International Hallyu fans understand this on both a technical and cultural level, and yet it is clear it continues to resonate globally with millions of individuals. This is clearly reflected in the qualitative interviews completed for this thesis. There is a strong and dedicated community of diasporic Asians using Hallyu to progress the ongoing process of negotiation, of understanding their place between the East and the West.

The use of digital platforms obviously has enabled the participants a range of methods to reconnect with culture that, in previous diasporic generations, could feel distant and unreachable. It is not a new discovery that online platforms such as those created for Idols, or the ability of fans to translate and upload K-dramas for the masses have enabled a world in which it is easier for Hallyu fans such as those interviewed in this thesis to access the Hallyu world. Instead, it is valuable to see the way those undergoing important cultural, ethnic, and racial identity negotiations are using the platforms and medias at their disposal to create fluid identities. The everyday experience of using the internet and a global mediascape to re-evaluate Asian heritage and connection is shown in this thesis to be enriched by Eastern media becoming recognised in the West.

Individuals showed that whilst they were engaging with Hallyu 1.0 and 2.0, aspects of Hallyu 3.0 and 4.0 – specifically around online platforms - were invaluable to them due to the cultural networks created where they were able to connect and engage with other fans of Hallyu. These web-communities emphasised the emotional contracts participants had with the Hallyu entertainment as it allowed them a third space to feel not only validated in their enjoyment but also validated their use of Hallyu as a cultural practice where they could engage with Asian communities and cultures to appease their dual-self's desire for Asia and Asianness. Participants overwhelmingly

experienced home and homeland by drawing on heritage, shared experiences, and feeling a closeness to Hallyu through media rituals and community.

Being part of a diaspora no longer only refers to personal migration but now incorporates large communities of people who maintain connections to a homeland and the host society. Diaspora is concerned with creating belonging and the 'home' by intertwining multiple cultures and experience. It is a process undergone by selecting cultural products and practices to engage with which allow one to create, re-create, and practise connection to multiple places. For later generations, this can be difficult as the 'homing desire' Brah speaks of comes not from having left a place, but having not been to a place that remains highly influential to one's family and values (Brah 1996). Individuals imagine and build, through experiences and points of attachment (Hall 1994), their own understandings of who they are. This process involves ethnic, racial, and national attachments that formulate the essences of identity as a position somewhere between them all.

Again, I return to Hall's statement that 'diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing themselves anew, through transformation and difference' (1990, 235). This reflects the quintessential idea that identity is fluid and constantly evolving with changing context and cultures. This thesis has shown the Asian Australians interviewed have reconceptualised Hallyu as a source of entertainment and as a heuristic device through which a shift has been facilitated in how Asianness is perceived. It, too, has provided the participants an opportunity to engage with transnational media through different mediums and lenses while negotiating their identity.

Reconceptualising Hallyu

Though Hallyu perhaps began as an ethnic media, created by and for Korean communities, it has transcended this as both a transnational and diasporic source of media. In contrast to Cool

Japan's *mukokuseki*, Hallyu is heavily involved in maintaining and sharing Korean culture, whilst still appealing to both Western and Eastern audiences. It also acted as a successful alternative to an increasingly Western-dominant anglophonic global mediascape. Its popularity continues to influence the media created. For example, since 2020 there has been a noticeable increase in Hollywood productions with Asian leads. Productions have seen titles such as *Minari* (2020), *The Half of It* (2020), *Over the Moon* (2020), *Shang-Chi and the Legends of the Ten Rings* (2021), *Turning Red* (2022), *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2023), *Raya and the Last Dragon* (2021) all telling either powerful Asian stories and/or featuring talented Asian leads. Hallyu's interaction with the West is changing the perception of Asian media and Asian personalities in it. There are more Asian representations, stories and people present in Western-created content, and the availability on global streaming services of K-dramas, K-pop, and other Asian content continues to increase.

Hallyu as a transnational media has grown with the increased access of technology – in its circumstances, the access of music and television/film through online streaming platforms, subscriptions bases, and easier access to translation and a global fanbase. Hallyu has worked with the tide of technology to emphasise its own appeal, rather than simply allowing technology to carry Hallyu across borders. Interviewees showed a high use of streaming platforms, dedicated Hallyu apps, and online shopping to remain active participants which allowed them to feel they were part of the bigger movement that is the Hallyu wave. K-dramas are seen as openly sharing and celebrating Korean culture and Eastern values that can be shared amongst many Asian cultures. Because it is not intending to conform to Western criteria, Hallyu fans feel proud and connected on a more personal level. This, too, can relate to K-pop songs that talk about specific Eastern values, such as those brought up by participant Clover, a Chinese Australian. When these shows and films then go on to gain recognition and awards in the West, Hallyu fans also feel satisfaction and pride. This is notable because it's not always pride in the content – some participants felt pride in awards

won by content they had not seen or listened to personally - but emotional investment in the symbolic capital gained for Asian representation.

In reconceptualising Hallyu not just as a source of entertainment (though it still is) many participants reconceptualised their own relationship to Hallyu as a means in which they were practising Asian culture. By consuming an Asian cultural product regularly, they felt they were satisfying their Asian identity's desires. However, many participants felt Hallyu was more accepted in the West now compared to previous Asian media they had interacted with and thus, its consumption did not create conflict by being in the West. Further, it inspired hope that this would continue to bridge the gap and strengthen a more multicultural, accepting mediascape where they could see more Asian media gain recognition – particularly amongst a younger generation emerging.

It must be acknowledged that whilst Hallyu is a transnational media, it is also created by and for Korean society first and foremost but in recent years has increasingly catered to a more international audience. The Korean government does benefit from Hallyu, and contributes time, effort, and money into the 'soft power' Hallyu provides South Korea with – particularly economic and financial gain, as well as tourism. Interviewees, however, did not appear to feel they were receiving Korean propaganda or even seem aware that Korean government was pushing Hallyu internationally. Rather, what was acknowledged was the pride in Korea, Koreanness, and the Asianness of Korean culture. Hallyu provided a platform that a diverse audience could draw different meanings from depending on their own multifaceted experiences. Each participant saw and used Hallyu to satisfy different desires. Whilst Yoon suggested that Hallyu was perhaps being de-nationalised (2020, 136-138), participants indicated that they felt it was still strongly Korean and that they were able to engage with it without undervaluing the role of Hallyu as both a Korean and Asian product.

Instead, it's unapologetic insistence as a cultural product of South Korea inspired many interviewees to generate their own ways of thinking and engaging with Asian culture both from their own homeland and outside of it. This highlights the imagination and deep understanding of the essence of what being Asian meant to participants and how they could facilitate a connection to Asia. Importantly, Hallyu is seen as a transnational Asian media that negotiates with Western criteria instead of adhering to it. Hallyu is in a transitional space between being a transnational, ethnic, and diasporic media and hence, this in-between status resonates with a variety of different fans who choose what elements are for enjoyment and what can be used to negotiate and understand identity. Rather than solely being media from Asia for *there* or a media being pushed for *here*, Hallyu has allowed for fluid movement between the two as if there two were points on a spectrum. Looking at their identity in this manner, allowed for a third space where different cultural products – both Hallyu and Western-based media – could be hand-picked to satisfy different elements of dual-identities to enrich a complex identity that negotiated tension into hybridity. This in-and-of-itself can be a new cultural movement of identities being formed in a multicultural environment in Australia, one that reflects its multicultural citizens more thoroughly than looking at it through a White-dominant lens. Hallyu requires no approval of Western criteria because it wasn't made by or for the West. Instead, it feels like it is broadening the Western gaze to other cultures and media that are equally as good as the West's content.

It is not to say Hallyu is without its flaws, it's rigorous K-pop training and pushing of celebrity physical limits has been highly critiqued as both bad for Idols involved and fans fantasising about being like their favourite Idols (Yoon 2022). Like all entertainment industries, Hallyu also intends to make profit and is not free from spreading negative messaging or problematic practices. However, this does not necessarily influence the ways in which Asian Australians such as the participants of this project engage with Hallyu. Rather, it is the ways in which these individuals choose to engage with transnational media such as Hallyu as diasporic media that creates meaning.

Diasporic individuals draw then from their own experiences and their positions as both from *here* and *there* to give Hallyu its status as a facilitator.

Through this thesis, Hallyu has been looked at as a cultural practise, something to be not just engaged with but used and reflected upon by individuals. It can be seen that these nine Asian Australians who previously performed cultural connection through activities such as shopping in Chinatown with parents or meeting with family for traditions and celebrations. Hallyu 1.0 and 2.0 may exist as Korean films, K-dramas, and K-pop, but when engaged by these fans, expanded into other activities such as dance clubs or language-learning groups. It becomes a collection of practices surrounding media content. Therefore, we can consider Hallyu a gateway to other Asian media for some participants. Being able to relate to and negotiate elements of Hallyu is an important part for these Asian Australians as it allowed them to connect to elements found in homeland content – particularly it seemed for a few of the Chinese Australian interviewees. This allowed for new cultural practices of engaging with a range of Asian media to that can satisfy the desire for the homeland. Being able to trial and test Hallyu was part of the process of diaspora for the participants.

New Perception of Asianness

Whilst ‘Asian’ has been used as a monolithic term to group together an otherwise extremely diverse group of people, it has also created a strong community of cultures which share values, experiences, and perhaps an ‘essence’ that is understood as being ‘of Asia’. Collectively, the Asian Australians interviewed do not represent a homogenous representation of all Asian Australians, but rather are used to investigate the potential of Hallyu as a heuristic device. This thesis also showed that individuals were in control of how much and what Hallyu could and was used in their process of identity negotiation. For some, Hallyu being consumed weekly or in parallel to Western content

satisfied their desires and needs. Others consumed Hallyu on a daily basis and solely consumed Eastern content because they connected and desired more Hallyu content to fulfill their needs. This shows that Hallyu is still a device, and it is the participants' decisions that give Hallyu its meaning.

To follow concepts from the previous section, engaging with Hallyu as a cultural practice – and the activities which fall under Hallyu that are not simply Hallyu 1.0 and 2.0 content, e.g. dance clubs, art creation, has re-invigorated fans to engage with the elements of Hallyu that resonate with them and those around them that also engage with Hallyu. Interviews reflected a strong desire to feel connected to an Asian community that understood their own feelings of disconnect from the homeland and Eastern values. Later generations' disconnection, however, felt distinct from older immigrant generations because they were desiring the homeland without desiring a *return* to it. This communal feeling was shared but also satisfied by engaging with Hallyu. By becoming part of a community that engaged with Hallyu, they felt that they were understood by other Hallyu fans and that they belonged. Hallyu, whilst something that can be engaged with independently, is also something that is participated in together. Whether it was watching/listening together, learning the Korean language, or engaging with Hallyu related activities such as dance or art, like many cultural traditional practices, the community around Hallyu is extremely important and is shared as a culture. It becomes something outside of the family household where people can engage with cultural products, become part of a community, and feel they belong because they are accepted.

Amongst participants, there was still a lot of hesitation in saying that Asian people and culture were fully accepted within Australian society. When speaking solely on their experiences of being seen as Asian, it appeared to feel like a role which participants were either choosing to step into or being given by others. This self-awareness, however, emphasises their Double Consciousnesses working to understand what they were seeing themselves as, and what others were seeing them as. However, there were feelings that Hallyu was making this better. Participants by and large felt Hallyu was making being Asian cool within the mainstream mindset – particularly

for younger people who are consuming it. This change in perception could provide an alternative to the 'white phase' many of the participants experienced when they felt they could not be accepted as Australian because their media and culture was too foreign. Having Hallyu as mainstream provides positive symbolic capital for the overall perception of Asianness. It is a positive step in acknowledging and respecting Asian culture in the West. Like all things, it is not perfect, it certainly has negative attachments too. There is an awareness that fetishisation of Asian media is still a trend, as we see with participants worries of 'Koreaboos' or racism against Hallyu and Asian people in response to Hallyu's rise in popularity. Hallyu is bringing awareness these negative things too.

For many of the interviewees, the awareness that they were ethnically, racially, and culturally different to many of their peers occurred at some point from their early teenage years. From that point, they were constantly attempting to negotiate and understand what their dual identity could look like. Hallyu, however, as its own multi-platform, multifaceted form of media, has provided an example of what such negotiation could be, whilst also providing a variety of options for how the negation can be done with the available content. Many interviewees found that it represented a complex form of cultural hybridity that allowed them to engage with Asian media in such a way that they were negotiating their dual selves in a new and stimulating manner. Asian Australians can negotiate a complex dual identity that integrates both Western and Eastern influence, and in Australian society, also be able to comfortably engage with Asian cultural products. Hallyu has presented an environment that has shown that while there is still a path ahead in terms of the full acceptance of Asian people in the West, participants felt that they were not having to choose one identity over the other. Rather, they could move back and forth, creating a third space to exist somewhere in between that satisfies the dual selves. The reception of Hallyu brings confidence in their ability to negotiate cultures and to be accepted by both the internal self,

and the external self because the opinions of society on the Double Consciousness are gaining positivity.

Opportunity for Further Research

Elements of further discussion were touched upon both within interviewees and in analysis that could provide further research but simply fell beyond the limitations of this thesis. In particular, I would've liked to expand on the gender roles and ideologies explored within Hallyu in regard to portrayals of 'soft masculinity' and the empowerment of female icons and Idols within the phenomenon. This remained difficult when during participant recruitment there was no male interest. Whilst lightly touched upon, there is opportunity for scholarship to investigate an additional level of identity: the changing perceptions of gender identity within Asian Australians engaging with Hallyu content. Scholars such as Ann-Gee Lee, Min Joo Lee, and Sofia Murell have begun to engage with such topics but the effect on Asian Australian perceptions, and further in Australian social perceptions of these subjects, has briefly been examined, if at all. Whilst it was considered, it simply wasn't within the parameters of this thesis to be able to truly delve into such concepts due to word count and time allowed for candidature. Additionally, this research could be replicated with alternative, modern media being created, for example, content creators on YouTube or Tik Tok.

Another further point of research which could arise from this thesis as a foundation is Hallyu as a facilitator for the negotiation of culture amongst non-Asian Australians and multicultural Australian culture. The implications of the popularisation of non-Anglo Western media could be further investigated with Hallyu as a primary study. Where diaspora is socially defined, are diasporic Australians consuming Hallyu part of a larger “media diaspora” in which their consumption of global media can play a part in the creation of a global identity that connects Asian-

Australians to Asian-Americans or to Asian-Europeans, or even to Australian immigrants around the world? Again, whilst it could be a valuable discussion about media's global relationship to the diasporic experience, it was beyond the parameters of this thesis to investigate.

Summary

This thesis has shown how identity is no longer tied to strict absolutist ideas of nationality, race, ethnicity, or even culture. With transnational movements on a global scale increasing and the rich but elaborate exchange of culture in an age of technology, identity has adapted to become something multifaceted that can evolve with context, time, and negotiation. Most of the interviewees spent some of their formative years (teenage through to twenties) immersed in the Hallyu world whether through K-dramas, K-pop or other Hallyu waves and place great value in the lessons it has taught them and the ways in which it has allowed them to engage with Korean culture, Asian values, and a community built around sharing cultural products and practises. Having Korean media entering the West and receiving praise, encourages Asian Australians to explore how their ties to homeland and to Australia can be used to build their own version of the 'home'. Through Hallyu, not only have participants' internal perceptions of what it means to be an Asian and Western person begun to shift, but the external perception of Western society has been perceived by interviewees to also be changing. Whilst it may be slow, being Asian is no longer only tied to images of Yellow Peril, Japanese school girls, and the model minority. Instead, it can be cool and complex, its individuals' cultures are becoming acknowledged as unique and different, though they share some quintessential values and history.

This thesis reveals how important it is to look at Hallyu beyond being just a global phenomenon but as a facilitator to change in perceptions both in and around Asian identity at local, national, and international levels. Hallyu is driven by Asian Australian fans as a vehicle of

investigation into how Asian media supplies them with tools and opportunities to connect to modern Asian culture. By doing so, these individuals negotiate their dual identities in a way that allows them to create meaningful connection and find a new hybrid identity build from acknowledging both their Eastern and Western selves. This new identity no longer needs to follow absolutist concepts of race tied to nation, but rather expands the definition to include more diverse diasporic experiences based on the fluidity of culture and popular media.

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Siwora / Il Mare (2000). Blue Cinema; Dream Venture Capital. Sidus Pictures. UniKorea

Pictures.

Sixteen Candles (1984). Universal Pictures; Channel Productions

Squid Game (2021). Siren Pictures Inc. Netflix.

The Departed (2006). Plan B Entertainment; Initial Entertainment Group; Vertigo Entertain-

ment; Media Asia Films. Warner Bros Pictures.

Takeshi's Castle (1986). Tokyo Broadcasting System.

The Half of It (2020). Likely Story. Netflix.

The Lake House (2006). Village Roadshow Pictures; Vertigo Entertainment; Sidus Pictures.

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The Lord of the Rings (2001-2003). New Line Cinema. WingNut Films.

The Magnificent Seven (1960). The Mirisch Company. Alpha Productions. United Artists.

The Project (2009). Roving Enterprises.

Train to Busan (2016). Next Entertainment World; RedPeter Film.

Turning Red (2022) Walt Disney Pictures; Pixar Animation Studios. Walt Disney Studios

Motion Pictures

Winter Sonata (2002). Pan Entertainment.

Year of the Dragon (1985). Dino De Laurentiis Company. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

APPENDIX 1

For Non-Korean Asian Participants: Interview Guiding Questions

FOCUS AREA	QUESTIONS / PROBES
<p>Study and Participant Introduction</p>	<p>Demographics: Age, Gender, City,</p>
<p>Hallyu</p>	<p>Have you heard of the word, Hallyu, before?</p> <p>In your own words, can you describe what Hallyu is?</p> <p>Tell me a little bit about the Hallyu you consume, what do you enjoy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why? • When and how you were first introduced? • How regularly would you say you consume this content? How do you consume it? <p>How has Hallyu impacted what you watch/what you listen to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you think of any impacts Hallyu has had beyond this? Tell me more about that. <p>How do you feel your knowledge on Korean culture has changed since getting into Hallyu?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How about other Asian cultures?
<p>Community</p>	<p>Do you watch/listen/talk about Hallyu with other people? Who and in what ways?</p> <p>How do you think other people in your life respond/feel about Hallyu and your consumption of it? E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends • Family

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • Other fans <p>How does it feel when you engage with someone over Hallyu?</p> <p>How important is it for you to feel you have other people to interact with Hallyu with? Why?</p> <p>In what ways, if any, do you feel Hallyu has its own community?</p> <p>Has there been an occasion when something Hallyu has appeared somewhere you didn't expect? Tell me more about that.</p> <p>How do you feel when you see Hallyu gaining popularity in the West?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it important to you that it does? <p>How do you think the West/Australia sees Hallyu?</p> <p>Are you proud of Hallyu's achievements? Why?</p>
<p>Identity / Belonging</p>	<p>How would you define your identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel you are seen as Australian? Why? • What does it mean to you to be seen as Australian? <p>In your own words, could you describe your relationship with Asia?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family traditions • What does it mean to you to be seen as Asian? <p>In your own words, could you tell me how you think Asians and/or Asian cultures are seen in Australia?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How, if at all, do you feel this is changing with popular Hallyu content getting recognition? <p>Do you think Hallyu has affected your relationship with being Asian?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you expand on that? How? <p>What interactions with Asian media did you have before Hallyu?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about now? <p>What are your thoughts if somebody were to associate you being Asian with (Hallyu product they consume)? E.g. wow, you look like Korea idol or actor?</p> <p>How, if at all, does Hallyu facilitate a sense of belonging to Asia, to [Homeland]?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further, in your own words can you describe how that belonging has felt being in the Diaspora? / Is it important to feel connected to Asia? <p>How, if at all, has it effected your sense of belonging in Australia?</p>
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For Korean Participants: Interview Guiding Questions

FOCUS AREA	QUESTIONS / PROBES
Study and Participant	Demographics: Age, Gender, City,
Introduction	
Hallyu	<p>Have you heard of the word, Hallyu, before?</p> <p>In your own words, can you describe what Hallyu is?</p> <p>Tell me a little bit about the Hallyu you consume, what do you enjoy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why? • When and how you were first introduced? • How regularly would you say you consume this content? How do you consume it? <p>How has Hallyu impacted what you watch/what you listen to?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you think of any impacts Hallyu has had beyond this? Tell me more about that. <p>How do you feel your knowledge on Korean culture has changed since getting into Hallyu?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How about those around you?
Community	<p>Do you watch/listen/talk about Hallyu with other people? Who and in what ways?</p> <p>How do you think other people in your life respond/feel about Hallyu and your consumption of it? E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends • Family • Media • Other fans <p>How does it feel when you engage with someone over Hallyu?</p> <p>How important is it for you to feel you have other people to interact with Hallyu with? Why?</p> <p>In what ways, if any, do you feel Hallyu has its own community?</p> <p>Has there been an occasion when something Hallyu has appeared somewhere you didn't expect? Tell me more about that.</p> <p>How do you feel when you see Hallyu gaining popularity in the West?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it important to you that it does? <p>How do you think the West/Australia sees Hallyu?</p> <p>Are you proud of Hallyu's achievements? Why?</p>
Identity / Belonging	<p>How would you define your identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel you are seen as Australian? Why?

- What does it mean to you to be seen as Australian?

In your own words, could you describe your relationship with Asia?

- Family traditions
- What does it mean to you to be seen as Asian?
- What does it mean for you to be seen as Korean?

In your own words, could you tell me how you think Asians and/or Asian cultures are seen in Australia?

- How, if at all, do you feel this is changing with popular Hallyu content getting recognition?

Do you think Hallyu has affected your relationship with being Asian?

- Can you expand on that? How?
- Do you think it has affected your relationship with being Korean?

What interactions with Asian media did you have before Hallyu?

What are your thoughts if somebody were to associate you being Korean with (Hallyu product they consume)?

What are your thoughts on somebody compares other Asian cultural products to Hallyu?

How, if at all, does Hallyu facilitate a sense of belonging to Asia, to Korea?

- Further, in your own words can you describe how that belonging has felt being in the Diaspora? / Is it important to feel connected to Asia and Korea?

How, if at all, has it effected your sense of belonging in Australia?