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Refereed article

"Who Are *Us* and *Them* Today?" Dynamics of Korean Migrant Identity Revealed via an Online Social Movement in Germany

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Abstract
The nature of Koreans' migration to Germany has become increasingly diverse over the decades, encompassing varying age groups, purposes, socioeconomic statuses, and durations of stay. This process aligns with the concept of "superdiversity" in the landscape of international migration, eliciting the complex sociocultural transformations that lead to dynamic shifts in group identity. The paper aims to present a contemporary overview of Korean migrants' identity in Germany by examining a 2019 online social movement sparked by one German company's discriminatory television advertisement. Focus is on internal contestation over defining who the "us" are in Germany, shedding light on why a clear divide between nationalist and transnationalist identities manifested on two respective social media platforms. Thematic analysis of the online debates occurring among Koreans reveals the complex nature of group-identity formation through the five stages of the movement's lifespan, with members of each community simultaneously navigating historical and sociopolitical issues in Korea, Japan, and Germany alike. Findings resonate with numerous studies on intergroup conflict within migrant communities, particularly over the values respectively upheld by older and younger people of shared origins. Migrant identities are thus multifaceted and context-dependent, being shaped by interaction with various sociocultural groups. Ultimately, the importance of considering "superdiversity" a central framework for grasping the complexities of contemporary migrant experiences and identities is emphasized.

Keywords: Superdiversity, Korean migrants, migrant self-identity, nationalism, transnationalism, ethnic stereotype, online social movement

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Introduction

To speak of a "social movement" is to convey the collective agency of its organizers, allowing us the chance to examine those sharing a certain group identity who take far-reaching actions (Holland, Fox, and Daro 2008; Polletta and Jasper 2001; D. Snow 2001). The paper aims to provide a more thorough understanding of how Korean migrants in Germany think of themselves today, doing so by looking at the case of a recent online social movement. This campaign was initiated against Hornbach, a German DIY chain store, after the company released a television commercial in January 2020 that led to the country's East Asian migrants feeling stereotyped by one scene consciously included in the sequence. Beginning as an online petition started by a Korean doctoral student in Germany, the campaign quickly proliferated into a diverse array of on- and offline initiatives that garnered the attention of both the German and Korean media. By eventually convincing the Deutsche Werberat (German Advertising Standards Council, GASC) to official ban the commercial, the movement was deemed a success (for more details, see Park and Gerrits 2021, 2–3).

One may inquire as to why, among Germany's various Asian migrant groups, it was the Korean community that responded proactively to the incident in question and eventually took action. The focus of inquiry here is how Koreans envision themselves and how they have faced contested categorization by others in Germany. Given that all migrants inevitably encounter the categorization of "Others" in the destination society (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2016, 1123–1139), Koreans in Europe have often found themselves termed rather just "Asian," which sees the different countries and peoples of the region conflated (Bae 2020; Kowner and Demel 2012). However, Korean migrants' self-understandings do not align with such a reductive labelling. Instead, they often strive to distinguish themselves from other East Asians in the societies they belong to given the both historical and current sociocultural relations existing between the regions' respective countries — and mostly Korea, China, and Japan.[1] In addition, traditional Korean identity has highlighted its exclusiveness and single-ethnicity-oriented nationalism in general (N. Kim 2014; H. A. Kim 2020; Shin 2013). In such a context, earlier studies on Korean migrants examined their own perceived indigeneity and cultural identity in seeking to shed light on such traits (Hurh and Kim 1984; Min 1992; Yoon 2012). Likewise, when it comes to works on Korean migrant (often called "diaspora") "social movements in foreign lands," a dichotomized approach — namely investigating whether their fundamental goals are nationalist ones originating from afar in Korea or whether

1 These three nations' respective identities often carry a deeply rooted antagonism toward each other given the very different historical and sociopolitical contexts informing them. Latent Korean-Japan hostility is grounded predominantly in the former's sense of aggrievement at the latter's not fully addressed colonial rule and then Second World War history, as often concentrating on controversial gender issues like that of the "comfort women" (Seo 2017). Tensions between Korea and China, meanwhile, have recently intensified based on the two countries' unresolved diplomatic issues and conflicting political ideologies (Lew 2020).

these aspirations pertain more to circumstances in the destination country — has prevailed.

Although emigration from Korea has continued to multiply and diversify over the last few decades, such a nation-oriented identity has been questioned by the younger generations living abroad (H.-S. Lee and Kim 2014; Pyke and Dang 2003). That means the assumed traditional Korean migrant identity may no longer fully apply given how contemporaries now negotiate, cope, and shape their unique sense of belonging and self. The online social movement under study here can thus be said to be rooted in the concept of "superdiversity" (Meissner 2018; Vertovec 2007), which recognizes and celebrates individual uniqueness based on diverse factors such as ethnicity, country of origin, and family background (Vertovec 2019). The movement's collective identity was formed around the principles of inclusivity, respect, and commonality, as prioritized in the Facebook group that emerged as a key platform for organizing and mobilizing said movement. The analysis that follows will address herewith the internal clashes between a traditional identity mainly cultivated and upheld by earlier/older migrants and the more transnational, nuanced identity of later/younger migrants within the same overall group of Koreans.

The author's previous study on the Hornbach incident (Park and Gerrits 2021) focused on the different narrative expressions accompanying this controversy. Here, however, scrutiny is on the relationship between online social networks and migrant identity dynamics, as manifesting via specific platforms. Migrants sharing a single national background may still adopt multilayered transnational identities in their chosen online spaces, where they expect to find a like-minded audience. Empirical data were sourced from the posts and replies of group members interacting with each other on three online platforms, as taken to respectively represent three different types of Korean immigrant identity in Germany. Results underline the fluid nature of migrants' transnational identity formation, which reciprocally and constantly interact with others' sense of self and thus can challenge their own previously held views, too (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 1–47; Meissner 2018, 215–233).

Building on these foundations, the text data is examined from a new angle: namely that of looking at it as social inferences, with dynamic shifts in identity having potentially occurred. The previous study (Park and Gerrits 2021) provided a comparison of Koreans' evolving identities through the relevant experiences and ideas they themselves shared online via social media. The present study, rather, pinpoints the dialogue occurring between Koreans migrants in Germany, as elucidating the key facets of their upheld identities today and particularly the continual internal contestation occurring among this group at large.

The most critical voices regarding the protest movement's questionable legitimacy mostly came from Koreans themselves, giving rise to skepticism about whether their compatriots were the right people to represent those offended by Hornbach's TV advert. Over the course of the movement's lifespan (February to May 2020), the

online communities involved heavily debated both the advert and the related online activism itself. Such abundant discourses affect deliberation on a particular identity through the contestation of group members (Abdelal et al. 2006, 700–702). On top of that, two — an exclusive membership-only website and a closed Facebook group that respectively centered on Korean national identity and (East) Asian identity — out of the three online social platforms examined (the third was Twitter) served as key arenas wherein Koreans actively debated their varying understandings of who the "us" are in German society (see also, Park and Gerrits 2021, 7).

Although the movement aimed to raise greater social awareness of subtle discrimination against East Asian migrants in Germany, it encountered opposition predominantly from the aforementioned membership-only website — the most closed and least international type of platform examined here. The crucial question that arises herewith is thus: Why did this membership-only website become the primary platform for critiquing the involvement of Koreans in protests over Hornbach's commercial? Accordingly, delved into will be the accompanying narratives circulating among these Korean migrants, in seeking to unpack their dynamic self-understandings of who the "us" and "them" are in today's Germany. The core research question to be answered is: In what ways did Korean migrants in Germany identify a collective "us" and distant "them" in the course of initiating an online social movement against an East Asian-stereotyping advert broadcast in the destination society? Given the dynamic evolution of Korean migrant identity due to the increasing diversity of contemporary outflows of people from the East Asian nation, the aforementioned concept of "superdiversity" serves as the theoretical foundation for interpreting the collective identities emerging here.

The paper is structured as follows: first, it sheds light on the literature on immigrant identity through the lens of "superdiversity" in providing context to why the study particularly concerns itself with the fluid, evolving nature of Koreans in Germany' sense of self. Second, the online social movement will be examined via the qualitative thematic analysis of the empirical data (Boyatzis 1998). Third and finally, it will conclude by summarizing the implications of this study and making suggestions for further ones on Korea and Korean identities from the perspective of "superdiversity" specifically.

Theoretical Framework

First, it is essential to clarify what is meant here by migrant identity," as this term can encompass a broad range of meanings. Migrants face numerous challenges in terms of the need to revisit concepts of "us" and "them" in a destination society when undergoing the socioemotional integration process. This encompasses the respective stages of contestation, negotiation, and reconciliation vis-à-vis one's own sense of self encountered while living through a number of accompanying sociocultural difficulties perpetually (Ross 2007). Engaged with here are individual, relational, and sociostructural dimensions as well as the spatial and temporal circumstances

eventually producing a certain degree of felt belonging (Ryan 2018) — as marking an individual's positionality within the host society. Here, "positionality" refers to how a newly developed immigrant identity can resonate with own and others' definitions of who one is (Blommaert and Varis 2011; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2016b).

To grasp the diversity of migrant identities emerging via contemporary social practice, it is helpful to understand why the latest academic discussions have centered on "superdiversity." This new lens through which to understand migrant identity beyond conventional categorizations has been described as the paradigm of o "entailed variable combinations [producing] new hierarchical social positions, statuses or stratifications" (Vertovec 2019,126). This calls for scholars henceforth taking innovative approaches to migrants' sense of self and of belonging compared to in the past, as then mostly using such frames as nationality, ethnicity, or race.

Although discussions on "transnationalism" would emerge in the early years of the new century, as an alternative concept capturing the simultaneous ties between migrants' home and destination countries (Levitt and Schiller 2004; Waldinger 2015), this framework has since faced criticism for its ambivalent theoretical stance and limited ability to address the issues inherent to more conventional nation-state-based categorizations (Morawska 2014; Waldinger 2015). Transnationalism is deemed to not fully elucidate the diversity of contemporary migrant identities, seemingly often overlooking the need to challenge functional categorizations — such as ethnicity, religion, gender, and country of origin — within destination societies. Furthermore, it has been perceived to play a central role in reproducing images (on top of the existing ones) that reinforce stereotypes and hence fuel conflict between the different members of a given society (Anthias 2001; Azhar et al. 2021; Jamieson 2000).

"Superdiversity," then, constitutes a more apposite way to capture such overlooked dynamics by encompassing not only homeland-related ideational aspects but also the "multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified [nature of migrants today]" (Vertovec 2007). In other words, a turning to "superdiversity" enables scholars to acknowledge the multitude of significant conditions shaping how and with whom immigrants interact and which locales they aspire to embed their identity in. These conditions may include the aforementioned traditional categorizations as well as further constructivist elements such as own motives, intentions, and social status (McDowell 2013; Meissner 2015).

This provides a key to untangling the contested self-understandings prevailing among earlier and more recent migrants sharing the same country of origin. Migrants are comprehended and understood differently by the destination society at varying points in time; distinctive means of identity contestation thus ensue, as playing out via ongoing negotiation regarding others' beliefs as well as own aspirations vis-à-vis who one is in the new setting. This may see conflicting forms of self-identification among in-group members, holding different understandings of social belonging as a result of each individual's specific methods of identity contestation.

"Superdiversity" provides an overarching approach to interpretation of the complexity involved here, embracing different aspects like the national, transnational, and/or something beyond those and hence more individual.

As Soehl and Waldinger (2012) propose, intergenerational clashes between migrant families' respective members are often discussed in the context of time period that is, the move from the age of nationalism to that of transnationalism in recent decades. Understanding Korean nationalism — born of a particular context and being based on (fractious) relations with other East Asian countries and peoples — is, then, a vital first step here. Some studies on Korean migrants' sense of self and of belonging focusing on the disjuncture with traditional nationalism have provided evidence on how this more exclusive identity is a double standard: it negates the diversity of people's backgrounds and contradicts the inclusive social norms that the destination society generally seeks to uphold. Even though migrants living in South Korea — mostly refugees from North Korea, labor migrants from China, or marriage partners from Southeast Asia — do have legal citizenship and are not of significantly different ethnicity to the domestic populace, the socioeconomic and sociopsychological disadvantages they face in daily life have become evident in various studies (Ahn 2012; Chung 2020; S. Kim 2012). The attitude of the destination society toward migrants is reflective of current temporal, spatial, and situational dynamics, as encompassing social, political, and international dimensions.

Although major studies have attempted to identify why the Korean state's multicultural policy and institutions have seemingly fragmented in recent years, Shin rather critically visits the deeply rooted rhetoric of a "purity of blood" and "being proud of one-nation, homogeneous Korean" (2013, 369). He proposes that this norm broadly excludes people with diverse backgrounds from becoming considered "pure Koreans." Although such nationalist tendencies have faced criticisms over time, Hough (2022) asserts that there still exists a clear anti-migrant sentiment in South Korea today that transcends class-based discrimination against ethnic Koreans and others living in the country. Such an exclusive nationalism cannot be accepted in the same manner abroad, especially when it comes to a "superdiverse" society like Germany's.

Given that migrants inevitably revise their sense of self and of belonging while settling in the destination society (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2008), Korean arrivals adhering to such nationalist thought might have had to negotiate with other values and position themselves in ways whereby they felt well-grounded. Yoon (2012) details the out-migration of Koreans since the 1960s, with the majority having headed to North America in search of better opportunities. Especially in the context of social belonging, some studies have highlighted that second-generation Korean migrants in Canada or the United States struggle to position themselves within the community they belong to, rather seeking a place within diverse and transnational ones despite their parents' wish for them to keep Korean traditions and customs alive

(Jo 2017; H. Lee 2021). Regarding Germany, meanwhile, most related studies have focused on the Korean miners and nurses arriving as so-called guest workers in the 1960s. Discussed also here has been (C. Lee 2012) how ambivalence toward the host country and nostalgia for the homeland informed the decision to return in certain cases. Those exceptions aside, the number of Korean migrants living in Germany — approximately fifty thousands in 2019 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea) — has only continued to grow; nevertheless, little attention has been paid thus far to how Korean immigrants in Europe think about themselves.[2]

Migrants do not necessarily replace their original identity with a newly developed sense of self and of belonging; instead, they expand the existing layers and dimensions thereof, depending on which group of people they wish to engage with exactly at a certain time, in a certain space (Meissner 2018; Sheringham 2010; Tamaki 2011). It is natural for immigrants to actively utilize online social networks to navigate their life worlds, including gathering information about their homeland and to aid their integration in the destination society (Komito 2011; Komito and Bates 2011). Given that they must intensively weave such ties in the latter, online communities play a pivotal role here in offering access to a wider selection of social groups to which these migrants may wish to belong. Online communities not only provide pragmatic information for newcomers but also allow migrants to find and join like-minded people sharing the same interests as themselves.

In this context, the contours of these online communities may reflect the current state of members' overall in-group identity when collective action takes place and calls for solidarity (Dekker and Engbersen 2014). The Hornbach case was a compelling example of a social inference that nudged a group of Koreans to manifest their collective identity and sense of belonging at scale, as mainly led by a Facebook group made up of Korean immigrants in Germany. The previous study (Park and Gerrits 2021) highlighted the relationship between type of online platform in use and type of group identity emerging, revealing that certain kinds of the former are more effective than others in fostering solidarity and collective identity based on their openness to the public and the internationality of their audiences. In this case, the Facebook group constituted the most appropriate way to initiate a movement advocating for the rights of East Asians in Germany. Conversely, the membership-only website provided a closed and exclusive environment accessible only to those granted entry, shaping a group identity centered on Koreans — as distinct from other East Asians.

2 South Koreans living in Germany are the largest Korean immigrant group in Europe and the third-largest East Asian immigrant one in Germany next to those from China and Vietnam. There are approximately 49,700 South Koreans living in Germany, including 25,000 temporary residents and visiting international students (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2023). Over percent of them are highly educated (including digital literate) and in an age cohort that allows them to actively utilize online social networks in their everyday social lives more than peers (Mayer 2018).

Polletta and Jasper define a "social movement" as "a set of contentious performances, displays, and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others" (2001, 281). They emphasize that social movements involve collective action by ordinary individuals seeking to bring about social or political change through various forms of protest, activism, and mobilization. For a social movement to arise, a certain sociopolitical dissatisfaction must have emerged as a source of constant frustration more broadly if others are to be convinced to eventually join in (Snow and Oliver 1995; cited in Fominaya 2010, 390). It is not uncommon to find a widespread totalizing of "Asians" — particularly as intersecting with gender stereotypes like the exoticization of "Asian women" — in European media and societal practices (Azhar et al. 2021; Uchida 1998). In recent times, alongside the dramatic diffusion of social media usage, various online actions have taken place publicly against the invocation of such images in the media and in the digital world (D'Arco, Marino, and Resciniti 2019; M. Kim and Chung 2005). Those feeling offended by a particular item, likewise, may start sharing their feelings and pursue common agency in seeking to change such issues.

Polletta and Jasper (2001) also outline a comprehensive framework for understanding the formation of collective identity within the context of social movements. Their model delineates four distinct stages here: emergence; recruitment and commitment; tactical choice (decision); and success (outcome). This framework has served as the basis for subsequent research on social movements and collective identity, offering insights into the interplay of emotions and behaviors across various stages of their continued development (Hunt and Benford 2004; Mundt, Ross, and Burnett 2018). According to these two authors, "collective identity" cannot be reduced to the mere aggregation of personal ones but rather involves a temporal and purposive element that may not align with the individual. Nonetheless, they also acknowledge (2001, 285–300) that collective identity may contribute to one's own sense of self evolving.

Adopting this viewpoint, it becomes evident that the connection between individual and collective identity is more pronounced in the case to hand. Regarding "Asian women in Germany," the host society initially ascribed this demographic a collective identity, perpetuating a stereotype that those covered hereby aimed to challenge. They sought to combat this prejudice and construct a more positive identity spanning their own understandings and desires of "who we are" in German society instead. Thus, the collective identity ascribed and perpetuated by Hornbach's commercial acted as a catalyst for the examined social movement (Fominaya 2010). Given that, as noted, earlier, a social movement conveys the actual collective identity that its organizers and participants consider valid, exploring the internal narratives and conflicts of these people hence provides certain clues on how we can better understand their self-identification and sense of belonging within German society (Holland, Fox, and Daro 2008; Polletta and Jasper 2001; D. Snow 2001).

Analysis and Core Findings

Five Stages of the Movement

The analysis was carried out via the software NVivo12 with the dataset sourced, as noted, from two online social networks of Koreans in Germany: an exclusive membership-only website and a closed Facebook group, respectively. Because the existing dataset includes an extensive number of relevant postings, the analysis started with extracting those pertaining to identity conflicts among Koreans.[3] Overall, 30 postings (including their replies) were arranged according to the five stages of the movement: (1) issue emerging; (2) recruitment and commitment; (3) decision-making; (4) movement outcome (see Polletta and Jasper 2001); and, (5) aftermath. Likewise, the process of identity contestation among Korean immigrants in Germany was analyzed in the same manner (Abdelal et al. 2006).

The postings were coded via qualitative thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998; Clarke and Braun 2013; Swain 2018) to justify: (a) where the conflicts between members were ultimately situated; (b) how these conflicts affect respective Korean migrants in Germany and their coming to terms with the movement's existence and activism; and, (c) how members of these two differing groups coped with such challenges and how they shaped their sense of self within German society. While seeking answers to these questions, analysis showed that at each stage there was resonance with certain key points; it was here from which the noted deviations in opinion first began. Table 1 below thus indicates those raised at each stage, and therewith how the related narratives emerging again highlight the correlation between contestation and the social movement's development over time.

3 More recent types of social media platforms, such as Instagram and Twitter, were not included in this study as barely any relevant debates have taken place hereon between those identifying as Korean. Furthermore, the few relevant postings that would be included if examined do not even speak to the upholding of any group identity, simply showing users' personal opinions on given social issues instead. Such tendencies can be understood to be the product of these particular platforms being individual-centered in essence and thus not necessarily relating to the community level (see Park and Gerrits 2021).

Table 1: Results of Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Stages of the movement (February–June 2020)	**Critical points**		**Identity contestation (Abdelal et al. 2006)**
	Membership-only website	**Closed Facebook group**	
Stage 1) Issue emerged (late February)	- The sociocultural context in Germany treated with sarcasm and black humor - The legitimization of "who we are"	- The stereotypical image of Asian women - Significance of the issue: worth challenging?	Driver of contestation
Stage 2) Recruitment (early March)	- Heated debates about "who we are" in Germany and why this matters or not	- Provoking solidarity - Planning ongoing actions	Contestation intensified
Stage 3) Decision-making (March–April)	- How Korean nationalism constitutes "who we are"	- Embracing the identity of "Asians"	Resistance or reconciliation
Stage 4) Movement outcome (mid-April)	- Little reaction ensuing from the maintained identity of exclusively Korean	- Collective identity firmly manifested	Identity maintained or changed
Stage 5) Aftermath (late April–June)	- The politicization of the organizers as "far left"	- Keep protecting Asian rights in Germany/Europe	Reassertion of collective identity

1) Issue emerged: Driver of contestation

The following question, written in post in the closed Facebook group on March 26, 2020, led to a conversation with over 50 replies, where members shared their experiences as East Asians or East Asian women living in Germany: "Is it only me who feels offended by this?".[4] Although, as mentioned earlier, it was an online petition (with around 42,000 signatures as of March 2020) that had originally triggered the examined social movement and gained attention from the media in Germany and Korea alike, dialogues questioning the Hornbach advert's intentions had already started in said Facebook group shortly after it was broadcast. Early posts aimed to inform community members about the commercial and asked whether they themselves found the message "Smell of Spring" and the stereotypical portrayal of an East Asian woman offensive. Some replied they found the ad relatable and supported the idea that it triggered unpleasant memories. Although there was some disagreement about whether the ad intentionally discriminated against East Asian women, the main idea put forward was that this "microaggression" must be formally countered.

The issue to hand not only encouraged Koreans to share their personal thoughts and feelings but also drove contestation over "who we are" exactly in German society. Although a mood of solidarity developed among the Facebook group, on the exclusive membership-only website most reactions to such questions about feeling offended were rather skeptical. Those replying noted the importance of establishing where precisely the line between black humor and discrimination lies in Germany and Korea alike. Some brought up this company's previous ads (e.g. the one targeting older German ladies), emphasizing "this is not the only group they sarcastically interacted with in their advertisement series." This objection entails the assumption that the later and younger migrants still do not have an adequate understanding of the local sociocultural context. Most of those offering such justifications clarified how long they had lived in Germany or how they were familiar with its different cultures. One person, for example, stated: "As a Korean who has lived in Germany for more than 20 years, I can confirm that this is a typical German joke socially accepted."

Another interesting counterpoint made was the emphasis on Korean identity, particularly as distinguished from being Japanese. It was the latter who were deemed the specific target of the woman in the scene. While depicting "us" as migrants sufficiently well-integrated as to recognize and get German black humor, simultaneously a boundary was drawn whereby the in-group is exclusively Koreans — who thus did not belong in the same category as the Japanese

4 The data collected for this study are all written in Korean and analyzed accordingly. The quotes that follow are thus all the author's own translations.

2) Recruitment: Contestation intensified

The company's unwavering attitude even in the face of numerous complaints came to dismay even more people besides, with the topic to hand gaining traction across social media platforms. In the Facebook community, members shared news from various outlets (e.g. *Daily Mail* 2019; *Tagesspiegel* 2019) and their own experiences, eventually seeing this online group become the bulletin board for the movement's progress. There were also internal debates between repliers about whether banning the ad could breach the company's rights in the context of the free-market system. As online campaigns grew, from a further petition to the hashtag #ge-Hornbacht (offended by the company) trending across social media, negative reactions to those questioning the commercial's legitimacy slowly dwindled away in the Facebook group. From this point on, the group identity became solidified as "we as Asians face the same discrimination in Germany"; those who disagreed no longer actively engaged with posts.

From early March 2020, group members started moving toward offline action, including one-person protests in front of the company's retail shops and handing out flyers and leaflets to people walking in the vicinity of the latter; such deeds gained increasing attention from the media and reporters (Allen 2019; KBS News 2019; Yonhap News Agency 2019). Those leading the movement officially announced the recruitment of numerous locals wishing to participate in street protests in Berlin and Frankfurt as well as Seoul. From this point on, a separate closed Facebook group was created for official communication between the organizers alone, while regularly keeping the original group's members updated on their progress in the original location. Interestingly, the name chosen was "Metoo Koreanerinnen (Korean Women)," thus still describing themselves as Koreans while striving to protect Asian rights more broadly in this case.

The membership-only website saw intense debate, with the disagreements among repliers became increasingly heated and leading to significant antagonism. Contested here were the perceived overstepping of the mark by some bold posters (e.g. "How can these young, naïve Koreans be so enthusiastic in advocating Japanese rights while overlooking our nation's historical wounds?"), ridiculing those deemed to supported Japanese people while neglecting their own compatriots' suffering at the hands of the latter. Some even blamed the Japanese for creating their reputation for controversial sexual images, stating "what goes around comes around"; others went as far as to label Germany and Japan as the same war criminals for being insensitive to sexual discrimination against women. Such context-specific antagonism originates from historical events, as giving rise to widespread animosity toward Japan and its people that would become deeply rooted in Korean nationalism. This sentiment stems from the era of Japanese colonial rule over Korea between 1885 and 1945, as well as numerous invasions of the Peninsula between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. Ongoing cultural, political, and social tensions between the two countries, such as the "comfort women" issue and the "Dokdo/Takesima" dispute, further contribute to this hostility (for further details,

see Jonsson 2015; Seo 2017; Wiegand and Choi 2017; Iwabuchi 2019). As the tone of these debates grew increasingly aggressive and emotional, some members defended themselves by claiming their sincere concern for minority groups such as Korean migrants in German society who may not have the power to change a large company's stance on such matters as the ad in question. These heated arguments lasted about a week and only cooled off after the respective parties left their final replies, indicating the intention to "agree to disagree."

3) Decision-making: Resistance or reconciliation

At the decision-making stage, as more active and formal offline protests got underway — such as the aforementioned one-man protests in front of the company's retail stores throughout Germany, group activities via digital media, and demonstrations on the streets of several major cities —, there was a noticeable decrease in the number of relevant postings on both of the examined platforms. Concurrently, related debates were gradually becoming calmer and fewer in number. The Facebook group, however, showed firmer solidarity with continuing the on- and offline campaigns, with members' reactions remaining positive. When organizers shared the official letter they had received from the GASC approving the banning of the commercial, people celebrated the proactive engagement that had led to this outcome and expressed their gratitude toward the movement's organizers: "Proud of your brave and wise action that should pay off soon."

Hornbach's stereotyping of East Asians that Koreans wanted to combat had finally been officially addressed, resulting in victory for this minority group in speaking up for their rights and aspirations regarding life in the society. In contrast, there was a notable silence about the issue on the membership-only website, with the heated debates from the previous stage coming to a halt in the course of the active protests still ongoing. The final posting on it was a poem titled "The Sonnet for the Naive Facets of Young Koreans," which succinctly summarized one of the arguments against the movement. It suggested that young Koreans should prioritize and pay more attention to unresolved historical issues with the Japanese instead of expending their energy on supporting the latter's rights in Germany. Unlike the antagonism that had elicited numerous responses at the previous stage, reactions to the poem were relatively muted as the situation approached a positive outcome; further disputes did not arise, either.

4) Movement outcome: Identity maintained or changed

On April 15, 2020, the GASC officially announced in a letter that the TV commercial in question violated the organization's code of behavior, according to whose stipulations there should be no discrimination against a specific group of people in advertising content. As such, it would be pulled. The organizers posted a message with a copy of the letter titled "A small victory" on both of the examined platforms, emphasizing the positive outcome achieved due to their public complaints. Reactions were mixed: that is, support and congratulations were offered by the Facebook community versus very little being said on the membership-only website.

At this stage, people more selectively gathered on the respective platforms where they could find like-minded others.[5] There have been no relevant postings on the membership-only website ever since this stage, meaning ones either directly or indirectly referencing the movement. It seemed there was no longer a receptive audience there; rather, people expressed their fatigue from the heated debate that had previously played out. Naturally, further postings related to the topic have continuously appeared on the original Facebook group page. Based on the supportive mood abounding, the organizers shared their plans with that community for offline demonstrations, including street protests in front of the advertising agency's building and at the public square in Berlin, as well as some smaller demonstrations in Frankfurt. Having gained significant currency in Germany, the movement subsequently spread to other European countries where the ad continued to air on TV and online. Subsequently, Korean embassies in Europe began sending official letters of concern to the respective government organizations responsible for oversight of potential media discrimination.[6] As a result, the fervent atmosphere gradually subsided; the case appeared to have been resolved positively.

5) Aftermath: Reassertion of group identity

There were only a few minor relevant discussions on either platform for some weeks, until an organizer then posted another recruitment announcement for the upcoming protest on May 27, 2020 — approximately three months after the movement's initial founding. With appreciation to the Facebook group members who had empowered the off- and online protests, others were now encouraged to join the Europe-wide demonstrations. One of the motivations behind these further protests was the fact that some countries had decided not to ban the ad for the reason of upholding the "freedom of expression." The post in question thus reignited the issue again, albeit in different ways. There were supportive reactions from people sharing their own relevant experiences with the Hornbach commercial in the Facebook community; replies on the membership-only website, meanwhile, clearly demarcated the organizers as "Others," criticizing their overpoliticization of any viral social issue.

At this stage, the identities reasserted on both platforms were distinct: on the membership-only website, group identity was expressed as "Exclusive Korean, distinct from other East Asian nationals (especially Japanese) or orthodox Koreans with no experience in Germany, [and persons] having the desire to be seen as good migrants separate from the politically radical [young] Koreans in Germany." This sense of self resonates with a traditional and nationalist understanding of what it

5 The previous study (Park and Gerrits 2021) revealed that the more closed the platform, the more nationalistic the identities manifested on their pages are.

6 See, for instance, the official letter sent by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Germany (in Korean): https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/deko/brd/m_7200/view.do?seq=1343629&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=.

means to be Korean for all the reasons previously outlined. On the other hand, "Koreans as part of Asian migrant groups in Germany, aware of ethnic-based prejudice and discrimination, with a desire to realize equal human rights in Germany and Europe" was the prevalent identity manifesting among members of the examined Facebook community. This aligns with both their own perspectives and those of other sympathizers in German society, believing the refuting of the stereotyping of Asians to be extremely necessary to protect their social and human rights while residing in the host country.

The two different group identities emerging on these respective platforms signify how the Korean migrant in Germany experience today is moving toward being definable as "superdiverse." First, demonstrated here is the fact that the former type of transnationalism — concerning only home and destination countries — cannot fully be said to characterize contemporary migrants' sense of self in the examined context, despite their shared countries of origin and destination. They manifested a range of individually contextualized understandings of self as regards the Hornbach incident, reflecting both their own and others' views of "who we are" within German society.

Second, a Korean nationalism-based identity is less embraced (and when so, more defensively) nowadays; however, it continues to exist within some groups as part of the spectrum making up members' diverse self-understandings. Especially among those who migrated decades ago and consider the destination country a real "second hometown," upholding such nationalist thought highlights the specific sociopolitical contexts informing both their past and present life worlds. Third and finally, while highly diverse understandings of "who we are" clearly exist among these people, they should not be considered as mutually exclusive or absolute indicators serving to divide the latter into two separate groups. Migrant identity, emerging through interaction with various sociocultural groups, is multilayered, reflecting the high complexity of lived experiences (Blommaert and Varis 2011). The difference between two conflicting group identities in this case signifies the importance of individuals' own self-understandings amid such intricacy, aligning more closely with their personal aspirations and social values within their own daily environments.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the identity status of Koreans immigrants in Germany by examining their online debates around a social movement seeking to contest the ethnic stereotyping of Asians in a TV commercial. By following the timeline of the movement, illustrated was how diverging group identities formed on two different online platforms, with the witnessed variance being the result of contestation, negotiation, and reconciliation among respective members vis-à-vis their sense of self. The analysis reasserted the previous study's (Park and Gerrits 2021) finding that different types of social media platform see varying group identities emerge

depending on one's target audience, in our case leading to the formation of two distinctive forms of self-understanding among Korean immigrants in Germany.

This discovery also contributes to "superdiversity" taking on greater weight when it to comes to explaining contemporary immigrant identities, particularly concerning how nationalism and transnationalism can be shaped, contested, asserted, or resisted among a same-nation migrant group in their online social spaces. The Hornbach incident catalyzed Koreans resident in Germany sharing their own definitions of "us," resulting in a nationalism-informed identity manifesting in one place and a transnationalism-informed one in another. The membership-only website scrutinized, which used to be a more common type of online platform in the late 1990s and first decade of the new millennium, is still more popular with migrants — mostly those who came to Germany back then. These individuals reflected on the idea of "who we are" in Germany from a more orthodox point of view, parallel to their self-understanding of being exclusively Korean.

Interestingly, this identification does not necessarily conform to traditional notions of Koreanness, as advocates of it drew boundaries between themselves and those still living in the home country. They emphasized their deep empathy with German culture, even though this included overlooking somewhat prejudice against people of a similar background. This exclusive Korean-German identity provides evidence of both assimilation and long-distance nationalism, as often found to hold currency among those who integrate in places that prioritize the local over the transnational(Morawska 2014; Schiller et al. 2005). In other words, when migrants can only be one thing or the other (either loyal to the homeland or to their destination society), they themselves may shape their identity in a more exclusive manner by adopting nationalistic views from both countries.

Due to the limited information available about those posting on the membership-only website, it is not possible to determine their demographics such as exact age, duration of stay in Germany, or gender, among other things. Still, it was significant that those who strongly invoked their nationalistic ideas tended to legitimize their outlook on the basis of their age and long experience of residing in Germany: "I should be around your parents' age"; "According to my 20 years of experience in Germany"; "I am not young enough to put effort into such meaningless actions." With the study having focused on these individuals' self-understandings, the messages they shared during the course of the events playing out between February to June 2020 proved key to grasping the various elements of nationalist identity. Similar patterns of intergenerational cleavages having been noted among Koreans in the US, too (Jo 2017; H. Lee 2021).

The examined Facebook community, comprised of younger Koreans living in Germany, displayed a stronger sense of solidarity and more inclusive identity vis-à-vis other East Asian nationals — meaning those who may face similar prejudice from the host society as that which provoked the social movement this study turned to. While acknowledging themselves to be Korean, members of this community

shared the feeling of "us" with others whose positionality involves similar difficulties in the sociocultural context to hand. This group identity is thus not limited to those sharing the same country of origin but embraces transnationalism as well, making Asians' rights at large part of their activism. In other words, unlike nationalist thought, in which only the home country plays a role in shaping the collective sense of self, the values central to a more expansive and inclusive immigrant identity are informed by the later and younger generations' different life circumstances and experiences. In this way, the community in question's common interests and shared realities helped foster a strong solidarity facilitating collective action like the online movement that was scrutinized here. The nature of the interactions taking place among the Facebook group members implied their overall aspiration to integrate in the destination society but in an equal way that does not look down on certain groups of people due to the deeply rooted prejudice to be found in Germany and elsewhere.

Varying definitions of "us" and "them" thus manifested on each platform. The study found that in the movement's early stages, the definition of "us" was centered on Korean identity on both platforms, considered to be the core connection between all those coming together online in each place. Over the course of said movement's progress, however, the definition of "us" on the membership-only website remained rigid and exclusive, including only those perceived to honor Korean history and tradition, empathize with German culture, and see the national context as crucial. Among the Facebook community, on the contrary, that sense of self expanded over time to include both new and existing members of differing national backgrounds, such as second-generation Korean migrants or Germans with Korean partners and relatives. Their collective identity being rendered transnational in nature was facilitated by an openness to those supporting Korean migrants in Germany in the context of the described social movement.

However, such contestation also resulted in the marginalization of those who did not share such an understanding of "who we are." On the membership-only website, those taking on Hornbach were depicted as not valuing the national context enough, as politicizing social issues for their own benefit, and thus to be excluded from the in-group. On Facebook, ostracized were those who neither comprehended the problem to hand nor acknowledged the ad's subtle discrimination, regardless of their country of origin.

These findings align with those of other studies that have explored the issue of identity-based conflict among migrant groups from the same country of origin (Godin and Sigona 2022; H.-S. Lee and Kim 2014; Pyke and Dang 2003). Such differences may arise over each's values, often the case with older and younger groups or first and second-/third-generation migrants, respectively. "Superdiversity" proves a very useful lens through which to examine and fully grasp such points of divergence and dispute between these individuals within a given context. By doing so, scholars will be able to gain a better understanding of the complex nature of

identity formation and how it is influenced by factors such as increasingly diversified and frequent out-migration from Korea alongside the specific sociocultural environments encountered in destination society (Vertovec 2023).

It is important to note that membership of the two online platforms investigated was not mutually exclusive. In fact, many Korean migrants in Germany are registered with both communities and use them to navigate arrival and its immediate aftermath. These platforms were selectively chosen by those who wanted to connect with like-minded people on a specific issue; their sense of self is, as such, fluid, multidimensional, and prone to change depending on time, space, and occasion (Ryan 2018). That explains why the first three stages of the social movement constituted a transition period for a particular group identity to form and why the latter two stages were grounded in that new "us" now established on the respective platforms. In other words, people may choose differently in other instances. Still, it is possible to predict which type of digital platforms tend to yield more transnational and diversity-valued identities.

This study has also contributed to our improved grasping of social movements and collective identity by showing how the formation and transformation of the latter is a dynamic process shaped by the interplay between internal and external factors, including the nature of the online platforms in use, of the issue(s) at hand, and members' diverse self-understandings. Nonetheless clear limitations to the paper are evident, calling for further research henceforth. Only one social incident was focused on in examining the fluid nature of Korean migrants' own sense of self; it would be useful, then, to turn to similar occurrences elsewhere — anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example. In conclusion, what has been offered herewith is a better understanding of the identity status of Koreans worldwide today in highlighting the intersection of the intergenerational, ideological, and international transformations shaping this dynamic spectrum of self — resonating closely, as such, with the increasingly important notion of "superdiversity."

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