Migrants' Identity and Sense of Belonging in the Digital Age:

Sociopolitical Challenges Encountered in Social Integration Today

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As I look back to 2018, on the cusp of diving into this Ph.D. journey, I believed I was ready to face trials and tribulations of leaving behind a stable job and embarking on this adventurous path.

Now I realized that I wasn't. Perhaps no one truly can be. The challenges ahead of Ph.D. journey are unpredictable; whatever one expects, it most likely presents much more (or much less) than that.

Throughout these years, I have witnessed, both in myself and in my fellow colleagues, various difficulties, physical and psychological hardships, and unexpected frustrations beyond our control. For this reason, I am profoundly grateful to have completed this journey. I want to assure those who had to postpone or step away from their own paths that they are no less courageous or capable. Sometimes, life simply takes unexpected turns, and we just live with them.

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여보, 오빠, 사랑해. 고마워. 미친 것 같은 나의 6 년을 묵묵히 옆에서 참아주고 응원해주고 들어주고 함께 이겨내 줘서. 우리 앞으로도 잘 살아보자 – 당분간 모험은 자제하면서…ㅎ

이든아, 사랑해. 너 덕분에 버텼어. 이든이가 엄마 논문 대신 쓰겠다며 안겨올 때마다, 엄만 정말로 이든이가 써준다고 느꼈어.

엄마, 아빠, 가족 여러분, 항상 사랑하고 감사합니다.

Finally, this dissertation is not a testament to my personal glory. It is rather a humble dedication to all those who have left their comfort zones and loved ones, cultivating new lives in foreign lands. To those on the move– courageously, vigorously, or desperately – this work is for you.

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Framework Paper

I. Introduction

1. Study Background and Problem Statements

This framework paper introduces a cumulative dissertation comprising four articles[1], each delving into social integration issues at different scales of society from the perspective of migrants in the digital age. The central focus is on migrants' identity and sense of belonging, key elements in addressing the sociopolitical constraints they face and redefining social integration in today's diverse society.

The impetus for this dissertation was questioning what identity and belonging mean for migrants in realizing social integration today. As migrants forge a new life in a foreign land, they continuously contest and negotiate their social, economic, political, and relational positions. In this process, migrants learn both how the destination society perceives them and how they aspire to be seen by others, an exchange that collectively shapes their identity (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Abdelal et al. 2006). Fundamentally, a "sense of belonging" refers to an individual's self-identification of their positionality and their feeling of being part of the "we" within certain groups of people, organizations, or spaces (J. C. Turner et al. 1987; Abrams et al. 1990; Caldas-Coulthard and Iedema 2008). This is a natural socioemotional process for any member of society but particularly matters for migrants, as they experience it more intensely within the initial years of settling in their new residences. For this reason, they become more socioemotionally dependent on how they are perceived and treated by the destination society than native inhabitants (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2008). Therefore, migrants may consider their sense of belonging as an indicator of whether society includes them in the collective "us" or a distant "them," and of their overall satisfaction with migration to their destination societies (Abdelal et al. 2006; Amit and Bar-Lev 2015; Youkhana 2015).

The significance of migrants' identity and sense of belonging is amplified with the swiftly changing nature of today's complex society. People are increasingly relocating due to rapid technological advances that have transformed the entire landscape of contemporary migration.

[1] Two of them have been published, and the remaining two are under review at the time of this submission.

Digital technology, in particular, has played a pivotal role in driving major changes in type, pattern, and amount of international migration, impacting not only institutional frameworks but also individual and relational dimensions of migration (Castells 2004; De Haas, Castles, and Miller 2019; McAuliffe 2021). Digital technology also provides diverse social platforms where users are active agents who cultivate and share information, foster mutual interactions, and enrich human networks (Nedelcu 2012; Lim, Bork-Hüffer, and Yeoh 2016). Indeed, the evolution of digital technology has altered the nature of traditional communities, as individuals are treated as unique and discrete entities rather than as integral members of larger social groups (McAuliffe 2021). Digital platforms have introduced alternative ways for migrants to actively create their own networks, namely by connecting with people who share similar interests as well as by maintaining links with compatriots. In this way, migrants are able to construct their own identity and sense of belonging according to their aspirations and connections with different social networks, rather than conform to the labels imposed on them by their destination societies (Vertovec 2023). Given that digital platforms enable users to interact with various groups of people, they allow migrants to share abundant information, including their thoughts and feelings about the sociopolitical topics that concern them. In turn, migrants as active participants in creating digital social networks simultaneously configure the technology to better accommodate their needs and desires. In this context, digital technology can provide interactive platforms where the up-to-date landscape of contemporary migration is vigorously presented, as well as ample opportunity to observe how both digital platforms and migrants themselves have coevolved under the increasingly diversifying circumstances during the last few decades (Dekker and Engbersen 2014).

The vast transformation and complexification of international migration can be explained by the concept of superdiversity, which emphasizes the importance of fostering migrants' sense of belonging to facilitate social integration in the destination society (Vertovec 2007, 2023; Meissner 2015). Scholars who support the idea of superdiversity generally call for greater recognition of migrants' individual characteristics, which cannot be represented by conventional and essentialist categories such as nationality, ethnicity, class, and sexuality (Anthias 2001; Yuval-Davis 2006; Youkhana 2015). The definitions of these sociocultural and ethnoracial categories are determined by the destination nation-states and often align with so-called "Western binary thinking" (Schiller 2020). Such conventional inherited or attribute-based categories are crucial elements to constitute the social position of migrants, often resulting in static, prejudiced, and disadvantaging in the destination society (Wessendorf and

Phillimore 2019). Not only do these categories fail to capture the different dimensions of migrants that exist today, but they also tend to perpetuate biased images that reinforce societal stereotypes, leading to discriminatory practices and social stratification (Anthias 2001; McDowell 2008). Recent global challenges, including the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Elias et al. 2021; Tessler et al. 2020) and increasing tensions over security in international relations, have contributed to the dramatic resurgence of anti-immigrant sentiment (van Heerden et al. 2014). This trend has coincided with the rise of right-wing populism, often linked to the question of migrants' "deservingness" to be accepted into their destination society (Wodak, Khosravinik, and Mral 2013). Particularly in public and media discourse, anti-migrant sentiments serve to stigmatize migrants as "outgroup threats" to the livelihoods of native citizens, overshadowing the socioeconomic contributions of migrants and their efforts to integrate into the destination society (Eberl et al. 2018; Farris and Silber Mohamed 2018).

These sociopolitical issues significantly affect migrants' social integration across individual, relational, and societal (institutional) levels of society. At the individual level, they amplify alienating attitudes towards migrant individuals within the same society, prompting questions of who they are and where they (should) belong/un-belong. Consequently, migrants grapple with numerous challenges in their daily lives due to this precarious sense of identity and belonging, complicating their integration into a new society further (Wodak, Khosravinik, and Mral 2013; Amit and Bar-Lev 2015). Given the fluid nature of the sense of belonging, the influence of the negative discourses on migrants becomes more evident at the relational level. Considering the super-diversified migration types and patterns prevalent today, these discourses contribute to intra- and inter-group conflicts stemming from divergent perceptions of group identity among migrants and others. These conflicts often lead to social, political, and emotional cleavages and tensions within and between migrant communities and related groups (Pyke and Dang 2003; Soehl and Waldinger 2012; Baldassar, Pyke, and Ben-Moshe 2017).

At an institutional level, these developments underscore the pressing need for destination nation-states to restructure the institutional system and mitigate further sociopolitical conflicts. At present, some scholars criticize the one-way policy approach of European destination countries, which fails to reflect migrants' diverse features and needs and instead is solely designed for the nation-states' purpose of managing and controlling the migrants (Meissner 2018a; Breugel and Scholten 2020). Many Western European countries promoting migration

have long been seeking to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of their institutional systems for minorities including migrants, and in particular to reflect the superdiversity of contemporary migration and migrants (Geldof 2016; Phillimore, Sigona, and Tonkiss 2020; Vertovec 2023). One of the most visible developments has been the digitalization of the relevant institutions, which has helped to increase the efficiency of states in managing and controlling migrants. However, the digitalization of institutions has been criticized for failing to provide migrants with access to necessary public services and for leaving them to deal with the emerging problems in their daily lives on their own (Brom and Besters 2010; Gil-Garcia and Garcia-Garcia 2019; Sourbati and Loos 2019). As a result, critical components of migrants' well-being, such as their socioeconomic opportunities and human rights protections, are often overlooked, ultimately hindering their sense of belonging in their destination societies.

In light of these sociopolitical challenges, this dissertation contends that former conventional frameworks fall short in addressing the multifaceted sociopolitical issues spanning various strata of society. Unlike assimilationist and essentialist paradigms of the past, superdiversity underscores the critical need to recognize and understand the heterogeneity among migrant individuals (Crul 2016). As a point of departure, this dissertation advocates for a novel perspective on social integration among migrants that focuses on their identity and sense of belonging through the lens of superdiversity and values the unique context of migrant individuals and the fluid nature of their sense of belonging in the digital age. As such, migrants are no longer viewed as passive objects to be managed and controlled, but rather as active participants in shaping their social integration alongside other members of the destination society (Crul 2016; Meissner 2018b).

2. Research Question and Design

As an active participant myself in the global migration trends of the past two decades, I have been drawn to academic endeavors that amplify migrants' voices within the sociopolitical discourses of receiving societies. Such endeavors not only raise awareness of those at the center of this issue who are nonetheless significantly understudied, but also delve into the concept of contemporary social integration. By addressing the ever-widening sociopolitical divides among people from diverse backgrounds, this dissertation seeks to bridge gaps and promote inclusivity.

This intellectual journey has led me to explore the times, places, and circumstances in which I

have experienced exclusion, discrimination, and prejudice from the societies in which I have recently settled. These reflections have contributed to a comprehensive understanding of my evolving identity in relation to both my own and other's perceptions of who I am within these varied societies. This self-awareness has extended to my sense of belonging to the communities that surround me. It is informed by my interactions with the people I encounter in everyday life, the narratives that dominate public and media discourse, and the categorizations imposed on me by public institutions. Together, these elements shape the consensus about my position in this society and ultimately determine whether I am regarded as part of the collective "us" or am relegated to the category of "them." These insights, aligned with ongoing academic discussions, form the fundamental research question for this dissertation as follows:

RQ: How do migrants shape their identity and sense of belonging in the digital age when encountering sociopolitical challenges in their destination societies?

In order to systematically address this question, the dissertation undertakes a detailed exploration of migrants' identity and sense of belonging and the associated challenges at three distinct societal levels: the institutional (macro), the relational (meso), and the individual (micro). The details of each level are explained below through sub-questions. Table 1 shows how these levels are interconnected and respectively addressed by the four articles in this dissertation.

Table 1. Overview of Research Design[2]

Central RQ: How do migrants shape their identity and sense of belonging in the digital age when encountering sociopolitical challenges in their destination societies?			
Sub-Question	**Societal Level**	**Research Focus**	**Studied in**
1. How does migrants' sense of belonging affect their identity contestation when encountering incongruent categorizations?	Individual	The role of the sense of belonging dealing with incongruent categorizations imposed by the destination society	Study 1: Exploring the Role of Sense of Belonging in Response to Ethnic Stereotypes: A Case of Koreans in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic
2. How do migrants from the same country identify the collective "us" and distant "them"?	Relational	Within-group identity conflicts prevalent in their online communities	Study 2: "Who Are Us and Them Today?" Dynamics of Korean Migrants' Identity in Their Online Social Movement in Germany
3. How do migrants' identities and online social platforms affect each other?		Distinct identity manifestations on different types of online social networks	Study 3: How Migrants Manifest Transnational Identity Through Online Social Networks: Comparative Findings from a Case of Koreans in Germany
4. How do the digitalization of public services and migrants' sense of belonging affect each other?	Institutional	Public service digital accessibility from migrants' perspectives and its influence on their sense of belonging	Study 4: The Impact of Digitalising Public Services on Migrants' Sense of Belonging – A fsQCA Analysis of Highly Skilled Migrants in Germany and the Netherlands

The four articles are organized in a bottom-up structure, beginning with an exploration in Study 1 at the individual level: migrants' various sense of belonging and identity contestation.

Sub-question (SQ) 1: How does migrants' sense of belonging affect their identity contestation when encountering incongruent categorizations?

Study 1 lays the groundwork for understanding migrants' identity and sense of belonging in a superdiverse context, by focusing on their identity contestation process upon encountering incongruent categorizations imposed by society. Specifically, the article thoroughly traces the various results of migrants' identity contestation, highlighting the discrepancy between the categories through which they aspire to be seen and the categories through which others understand them. The analysis focuses on the dynamic shifts in migrants' strategies when faced with incongruent categorization during the COVID-19 pandemic, depending on the varying

[2] Study 3 and Study 4 were written in British-English, following the technical guidelines of the journal

degrees of their sense of belonging. The article illustrates how various levels of migrants' sense of belonging dispose them to be either resilient or vulnerable against incongruent categorizations based on their ethnicity and nationality. The article also demonstrates how such categorizations perpetuate a divisive "us" versus "them" narrative, fostering the alienation of migrants.

SQ2: How do migrants from the same country identify the collective "us" and distant "them"?

While issues surrounding migrants' sense of belonging are often viewed through the lens of migrants versus others in the destination society, SQ2 proposes a shift in focus to the within-group divisions among migrants from the same country. This perspective highlights the fluid and evolving nature of migrants' self-identifications. Study 2 suggests that migrant communities are the primary actors experiencing profound identity transformations due to the increasing complexity of migration. The article presents the contemporary dynamics of Korean migrants' identity in Germany by analyzing discussions in an online social movement, initiated by Koreans in Germany against an advertisement from a German company that exacerbated ethnic stereotypes of East Asians. Focusing on their struggle to define "us" and "them," the article delves into the internal conflicts within Korean communities, uncovering the fundamental causes for the cleavage between nationalist and transnationalist group identities, formed in their exclusive membership community and Facebook group community, respectively.

SQ3: How do migrants' identities and online social platforms affect each other?

Study 3 explores SQ3 by describing how migrants manifest their identity and belonging by choosing to participate in different types of online social networks. It aims to reveal the relationship between these networks and migrants' multifaceted transnational identities. To this end, the article presents a comparative case study of the same online social movement as the one studied in Study 2, but with a different perspective, instead considering the social inference in it as *pars pro toto.* Rather than focusing on internal conflicts among Korean migrants themselves, this article centers on the diversity of identity manifestation across three distinct types of online social networks. Each social network caters to different audiences and fosters certain degrees of transnational/national identities. Particularly, the article examines the interactive and coevolving natures of online social networks and their members, delineating how these networks range from fully closed, semi-closed, and to fully open to the public, each

type shaping the way migrants project their group identities in national-oriented, East Asian-oriented, or fully transnational contexts.

SQ4: How do the digitalization of public services and migrants' sense of belonging affect each other?

Study 4 delves into the institutional aspects pertinent to migrants' sense of belonging, ranging from their initial arrival at the border of the destination country to their attainment of long-term residency rights. It particularly focuses on the early to mid-stages of migration when migrants struggle with various unfamiliar aspects of the institutional system, such as public services, administrative procedures, and interaction with government officials. This phase is also crucial in determining migrants' socioeconomic standings, as it delineates the legal boundaries of their rights to access various opportunities, thus affecting their sense of belonging. Study 4 provides evidence to assert that migrants' perceptions of the institutional system are important, as they indicate a nuanced reflection on the value that the institutional system attaches to migrants within the destination society. Digitalization emerged as a crucial tool in this context, facilitating migrant access to the necessary public services by mitigating certain sociocultural barriers, which often complicate the offline access such as language proficiency and the familiarity to the bureaucratic process. Moreover, the study revealed that highly skilled migrants, who possess the capability to choose their migration destinations, exhibited higher expectations for inclusive institutions through digitalization, whereas inadequate institutional inclusivity may hinder their sense of belonging (Steinmann 2019; Gil-Garcia and Garcia-Garcia 2019; Safarov 2021). Consequently, social integration at the institutional level hinges on how relevant institutions and social systems appreciate the value of migrants and actively promote their sense of belonging through welcoming and considerate circumstances, especially via more inclusive digitalization initiatives.

This framework paper consists of the following four sections: firstly, it dives into the literature on migrant identity and their sense of belonging, aiming to elucidate their significant roles in social integration in today's digital age. Secondly, it presents the analytical framework of this research, including an explanation of why a case-based comparative approach targeting certain populations was taken, as well as a brief introduction to each method utilized in the four articles. Next, it discusses the findings from each article and examines their overall implications, especially in how they answer the central research question. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the contributions of this dissertation across empirical, theoretical, and normative dimensions as well as avenues for future research.

II. Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature on migrant identity and their sense of belonging in a superdiverse contemporary society that is experiencing ever-increasing migration. It extends this review to the current sociopolitical issues that reinforce social divisions among people from diverse backgrounds. It also discusses the evolving concept of social integration and underlines why the superdiversity perspective, as an individual-centered approach that also values diversity, is the most appropriate framework for addressing the abovementioned social issues. Finally, the chapter highlights the role of digital technology today, particularly in migrants' social networking and in institutional environments that affect migrants' sense of belonging.

1. Migrant Identity and Sense of Belonging in a Superdiverse Society

The concept of superdiversity, coined by Vertovec (2007), suggests that diversification or complexification is a common feature of contemporary migration; it describes migrants as "multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socioeconomically differentiated and legally stratified" (1024). In this context, Blommaert and Varis (2011) characterize a superdiverse society as a "combination of micro-hegemonised niches . . . as discursive orientations towards a set of features" (3). Thus, migrant identities denote a unique combination of features that represent the self-understanding of individuals from different perspectives, including both the inherited features over which they have no control, such as their nationality, ethnicity, and gender, and the acquired assets which they achieved and have some control over, such as their level of education, occupation, and social relationships. In this way, superdiversity emphasizes that the traditional categories used to represent migrants' identities based on their inherited aspects no longer adequately capture who they are in light of the complexity and individualization that have become common sense (Wessendorf and Phillimore 2019).

A sense of belonging is a crucial element of an individual's comprehensive awareness of the social status ascribed to them both themselves and others. For migrants, establishing a sense of belonging entails the intricate process of reformulating the concepts of "us" and "them," which involves individual, relational, and socio-structural dimensions, as well as spatial and temporal circumstances that collectively contribute to their positionality in society (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Blommaert and Varis 2011; Bauman 2013). Once individuals have established a certain sense of belonging, this in turn shapes their understanding of their identity. The key

point here is that when migrants' identity and sense of belonging align with their aspirations to be valued members of society, their life satisfaction increases, as does their social integration (Amit and Bar-Lev 2015; Wessendorf and Phillimore 2019).

2. A Paradigm Shift in Social Integration: From Assimilation to Superdiversity

A growing body of literature has devoted considerable attention to migrants' sense of belonging and identity formation in destination societies. As the functional dimension has traditionally been the primary indicator of migrants' social integration, individual-centered aspects have received less attention, including migrants' feelings of being at home, their sense of belonging, and their overall satisfaction with their environment (Korac 2003; Cheung and Phillimore 2017). This raises questions about the feasibility of implementing policy interventions at the individual level despite their potential to promote integration at the societal level. Scholars have increasingly emphasized the need for policymakers to reassess migrants' belonging in contemporary society, especially in light of the growing complexity and diversity of migration types and migrants' social backgrounds (Eriksen 2015; Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018). Given the diverse and individualized nature of today's migrants, who often embody different identities within the same groups or categories, providing a one-size-fits-all approach to improving social integration is no longer feasible. In this context, the sense of belonging serves as a critical indicator to assess individuals' socioemotional integration and overall quality of life in the destination society (Fernando and Patriotta 2020; Vertovec 2023).

In examining the early phase of contemporary migration after World War II, scholars have focused primarily on Park's (1928) concept of acculturation, with particular emphasis on the assimilation phase. Park's perspective has played a fundamental role in shaping the core principles of social integration and is still prevalent in various migration systems in the migration-oriented society (Meissner 2018b; P. Scholten 2020). The assimilationist viewpoint emphasizes the minimization of the "markers" that could distinguish migrants from the "mainstream others" (see Gordon 1964; Alba and Nee 1997, for further details on assimilation theory). From a more radical perspective, such as right-wing nationalism, migrants who failed to integrate were construed as refusing to assimilate and fell into isolation or segregation within the destination society (Wodak, Khosravinik, and Mral 2013).

Such a viewpoint stands in stark contrast to the modern emphasis on diversity, which highlights the importance of valuing diverse cultural backgrounds (Crul 2016). Numerous dissenting

voices have emerged, some of which partially agree with this notion while criticizing assimilation theory's emphasis on classifying individuals into stratified categories of "mainstream" and "alien" (Treitler 2015; P. Scholten 2020). It has also been found that migrants do not necessarily replace their original identities with newly developed ones and a consequent sense of belonging as assimilation theory depicts; instead, they expand upon their layers of identity according to the specific group of people with whom they interact at any given time and in different spatial contexts (Sheringham 2010; Tamaki 2011; Meissner 2018b).

As the value of diversity has gained increasing recognition, alternative concepts have emerged to supplant assimilation as the guiding framework for social integration policies, including multiculturalism, transnationalism, and, most recently, superdiversity. While these concepts have also been subject to considerable criticism for a variety of reasons (see Waldinger 2015; FitzGerald 2022 for detailed critiques on the social integration taxonomy), this evolution demonstrates scholars' ongoing efforts to establish a shared understanding of social integration that accommodates the complexities of contemporary migration (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010; Wessendorf and Phillimore 2019).

Superdiversity contends that migrants' identity and sense of belonging are individually contextualized phenomena and places significant emphasis on migrants' agency in the process of social integration, rather than relying solely on functional indicators that represent integration at the demographic level. There is considerable evidence to suggest that individuals who form stronger attachments to the host society and feel more respected by others in that society tend to feel more positively about their sociopolitical inclusion (Aranda and Vaquera 2011; Geldof 2016; Bilodeau et al. 2020).

While migrants' identity and sense of belonging naturally concern their internal conditions, influenced by personal experiences and their own capabilities, they are also impacted by external conditions affecting their everyday lives, such as society's degree of inclusiveness and social integration with migrants (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018). As a result, scholars urge awareness of superdiversity to policymakers, such that urban governance undergoes a holistic reconfiguration based on migrant participation to reach their own aspirations (Phillimore, Sigona, and Tonkiss 2020; Breugel and Scholten 2020). With this literature in view, this dissertation aims to exemplify how digitalization has yet to render necessary public services accessible to migrants with various backgrounds and thus far has reached only those migration-related domains that directly concern the nation-states'

perspectives.

According to De Haas (2021), migrants with the capabilities to migrate on the basis of their expertise and socioeconomic and educational assets tend to be more willing to integrate as equally respected members of society within their socioeconomic groups. In this context, this group of migrants acutely assesses the various external conditions affecting their inclusivity and accessibility. For this reason, some studies indicate that highly skilled migrants may experience greater dissatisfaction and demotivation regarding social integration due to their heightened feelings of relative deprivation and a sense of un-belonging through various experiences with people, communities, and institutional systems within the destination society (Verkuyten 2016; Steinmann 2019). This dissertation focuses on highly skilled/educated voluntary migrants as the primary study population, given their acute awareness of identity and sense of belonging within the destination society, individually contextualized based on their capability and aspirations (Blommaert and Varis 2011; Crul 2016; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2016).

3. Digital Space as a Coevolving Platform with and for Contemporary Migrants

Digital technology has dramatically transformed our social life, constantly evolving in form alongside the changing landscape of society (Fuchs 2007a). Not only has digital technology enabled people to access a wider scope of information and opportunities and to build their social networks across borders, ultimately contributing to a greater motivation to migrate and socially integrate (Nedelcu 2012; Dekker and Engbersen 2014), but digital social platforms are also constantly evolving to accommodate those in need of such space for their social activities. These observations align with Bijker's early sociological study of technology, which explores how technology and social groups interact and coevolve with each other (1997). He points out that technology, as a social artefact, is assigned meaning by social groups addressing different problems that arise while using it, while these social groups are also themselves shaped by the configuration of technology.

Human connectivity in the digital age has experienced significant changes, especially when the whole world underwent a fully digitalized social life during the COVID-19 pandemic (H. Turner and Gulerce 2021). Since then especially, the shape of the community characterized by the proliferation of "weak ties" (Granovetter 1983) and "networked individualism" (Wellman 2001) has become common. Weak ties are distinguished by the fluid, instantaneous, and temporal nature of networking driven by personal interests, in contrast with the strong ties of

the conventional type of social networking, which are more static, long term, and tightly bound based on relational subjects to each other (Granovetter 1983; Ryan 2011). Likewise, "network individualism" (Wellman 2001; Castells 2011) describes how the primary unit of community has shifted from the group to the individual, reflecting the current features of social networking on digital platforms. While this transformation affects all members of society, these individually contextualized weak ties are particularly relevant for migrants and migrant communities. More precisely, migrants are the leading agents shaping and promulgating such characteristics of online social networking, intensively weaving their own new networks (however "weak" or temporal they may be) transnationally within the first years of settling in the destination society (Ryan 2011; Lim, Bork-Hüffer, and Yeoh 2016; McAuliffe 2021).

In the 2000s, earlier types of digital social platforms, such as membership-exclusive websites, were rather accommodating of a more classical networking model: these were group-based, closed, and often gathered around inherent categories including age, country of origin, and ethnicity. While later social platforms have also steadily evolved to foster smaller group-based communities as well, the latest type of platform rather encourages individuals to actively weave and create their own networks. Such evolution makes it especially interesting to observe migrants' evolving identity and belonging throughout different times and spaces on digital social platforms. Given that the former types of platforms do not disappear but still exist alongside the latter ones (although they are not the majority anymore), digital space provides migrants with a wider selection of various types of communities, allowing them to choose where they feel they belong and can express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas.

Accordingly, among the various aspects of the transformative power of digital technology, this dissertation focuses on its coevolving nature with social groups. Namely, it explores digital technology that engages in a reciprocal relationship with migrants at different societal levels: a. at the individual level, digital space as a conduit where contemporary migrant individuals can find information or people or a place where they can speak for themselves, b. at the relational level, digital social platforms which interact and coevolve with migrant communities therein, and c. at the institutional level, digitalization as a means for providing an inclusive and accommodating social infrastructure affecting migrants' sense of belonging and quality of life (Fuchs 2007b).

III. Analytical Framework

This section introduces this paper's analytical framework, beginning with the rationale behind the design of comparative and/or case-based studies. Subsequently, concise overviews of the methods employed in the four studies—namely, in-depth interviews, qualitative text analysis comprising content analysis and thematic analysis, and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)—are presented. The explanations articulate why each method is deemed appropriate for addressing the corresponding sub-questions.

1. Why Case-Based Studies and Why Compare?

The research methodology in this dissertation employs a case-based qualitative approach aimed at deeply exploring migrants' voices to highlight their unique circumstances while delineating implications for the destination society. Each study's cases served as the cornerstone of shaping the analytical framework, providing the necessary context to address the research questions. Case-based studies empower researchers to conduct intensive investigations into specific units and to offer rich insights into distinct contexts while providing findings applicable to a broader category of similar units (Gerring 2004). While the term "unit" may encompass various meanings and scales, the dissertation focuses on individuals and small groups as the units of analysis. It aims not only to present thick descriptions based on the specificity of the cases but also to identify causal relationships between different conditions influencing the phenomena under study (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994; George and Bennett 2005).

In this dissertation, the social context brought to the cases is superdiversity and the digital age. These contexts serve as the background against which to study social inferences, providing meanings for migrants' sense of belonging and social integration. Specific sociopolitical issues catalyzing certain migrant groups' intriguing actions were selected to investigate. In this way, case-based studies are able not only to uncover novel aspects of social outcomes but also to facilitate a detailed understanding of migrant groups through qualitative investigation (Coleman 1994; Berg-Schlosser and De Meur 2009).

Another crucial aspect of the research design lies in the adoption of a comparative approach. This approach enhances the potency of case studies by uncovering patterns, contrasts, and connections between different groups and thus providing nuanced insights (Ragin 2013). Comparative case studies, widely employed in empirical research in the political sciences,

prove particularly beneficial when the research aims to unravel complex social phenomena spanning various subdisciplines of social sciences (Berg-Schlosser and De Meur 2009). Indeed, combining a comparative research design with case-based studies underpins the analytical framework of this dissertation. The research question addresses various societal scales encompassing individual, relational, and institutional levels while adopting an interdisciplinary approach that integrates perspectives from political science, sociology, and social psychology.

Accordingly, the dissertation adopted a wide range of qualitative methods, from in-depth interviews for Study 1, qualitative text analysis for Studys 2 and 3, to QCA for Study 4. Additionally, each study underwent a two-step analysis tailored to its specific requirements, maximizing the depth of interpretation. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the initially processed qualitative data from Studies 2 and 3, while QCA was conducted on the interview data for Study 4 to provide the configurational outcomes.

2. Methods

Study 1 employed in-depth interviews which illuminated the highly individualized and interpretive nature of Korean migrants' personal experiences and perspectives during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In-depth interviews are particularly helpful to deepen and sharpen understanding of the complexities of conflicts, as they allow the researcher to fully grasp the context of the inferences (Boyce and Neale 2006; Brounéus 2011). While the traditional type of in-depth interviewing (mostly led by ethnographers) tends to be unstructured with a focus on very few interviewees (Legard, Keegan, and Ward 2003), the broader types of in-depth interviewing rather adopt a semi-structured design with a relatively higher number of participants. In this way, the researcher may guide the interviews to the intended topic while allowing flexibility to explore emergent topics based on the research questions. This approach also allows leeway to conduct the deductive coding of the interview data under clear guidelines with higher reliability (Boyce and Neale 2006; Campbell et al. 2013). Accordingly, this research employed semi-structured in-depth interviews with seventeen participants. The interviews are transcribed and coded through thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998; Swain 2018) with both inductive and deductive coding schemes.

SQ2 and SQ3 sought to explore the interplay of group identity dynamics across three distinct online social networks. Both Studies 2 and 3 utilized qualitative text analysis, specializing in coding and interpreting group narratives. Among numerous types of qualitative text analysis,

content analysis (Schreier 2012) and thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998) were opted for as a two-step analytical approach for the primary data in two studies. Content analysis offered an advantage in cleaning data to present overarching associations among data through inductive and descriptive coding. Thematic analysis, on the other hand, deepened the understanding of data patterns by abstracting the descriptive codes into interpretive codes based on the themes of each study (Schreier 2012; Boyatzis 1998). In Study 2, the analysis presented the nuanced evolution of debates between two conflicting parties within the same online community throughout five phases of the social movement they initiated. In Study 3, the two-step analysis resulted in three thematic categories, facilitating the comparison of online social networks in three cases and revealing reciprocal relationships between migrants' identity manifestations and the types of online social networks they used.

Lastly, Study 4 employed QCA, facilitating qualitative data comparisons to provide systematic and configurational evidence at the institutional level. QCA, a set theory-based method, combines the advantages of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Rihoux and Ragin 2009; Ragin 2021) and enables the identification of conjunctions of conditions within complex social systems. This method is particularly suited for investigating various conditions influencing complex social phenomena, such as that described by SQ4 (Gerrits and Pagliarin 2021). Given the research aims to explore how migrant individuals shape their sense of belonging under different public service delivery conditions within the destination society, the study utilized twenty semi-structured interviews to produce the original data for QCA analysis. Notably, the QCA design for Study 4 adapted fuzzy-set QCA analysis to accommodate the dynamic range of participants' experiences, enriching the QCA formula with deeper insights from the data (Jopke and Gerrits 2019; Pappas and Woodside 2021).

3. Study Populations

The primary population studied in the dissertation are Koreans living in Germany, as they constitute a sample of highly skilled[3] and/or highly educated migrants from non-EU countries who had voluntarily migrated to Europe, primarily Germany. South Koreans in Germany are the largest Korean immigrant group in Europe and the third largest East Asian migrant

[3] The definition of highly skilled migrants is adopted from European Union Law (2009), which states "… third-country nationals… acquire required adequate and specific competence, as proven by higher educational qualifications, and/or extensive (vocational) experience."

population in Germany after those from China and Vietnam, and comprise approximately 47 thousand people, including 25 thousand temporal residents with professions and international students (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Korea 2019). Given the political and economic status and international relations between Germany and South Korea, Koreans' migration to Germany today is broadly considered "lifestyle migration" (Benson and O'Reilly 2009), sought by those searching for self-realization, a higher quality of life, and freedom from prior constraints in the original places (610).

Highly skilled lifestyle migrants tend to possess a heightened awareness of their own identity and sense of belonging in the destination society compared to other groups, given that their initiative to migrate was based on their self-identity and how their societies support their self-realization (O'Reilly and Benson 2016; Verkuyten 2016). However, such recognition often coincides with higher levels of dissatisfaction with the destination society, resulting in feelings of deprivation, exclusion, or being undervalued relative to individuals in the same socioeconomic groups (Verkuyten 2016; Steinmann 2019). Considering these, this dissertation found Koreans and other selected populations suitable for the focus of this research and for exploring meaningful social inferences through their narratives concerning both others' and their own understanding of belonging and social integration.

The dissertation commenced with Studies 2 and 3, in which the impact of online social campaigns led by Koreans in Germany on the relevant online social groups was analyzed. While Study 2 focuses on the internal group identity conflicts within Korean migrant groups in Germany, the data for Study 3 included the broader population, such as the postings written by other East Asians and other nationals on these networks which clearly manifested their personal relations and feelings about the event. Later, Study 1 was developed to scrutinize the deeper mechanism underlying the formation of the sense of belonging for these groups of people, and its relationship with their coping strategies upon encountering incongruent categorizations; this endeavor resulted in interviews of Koreans in Germany. Study 4 expands its focus to highly skilled individuals with various national backgrounds, acknowledging that the conditions of digital public services within the destination society similarly impact them regardless of their countries of origin.

As a result, each article focuses on different subgroups within the study population. As outlined in Table 1, the analytical focus is progressively broadened: Studies 1 and 2 examine Koreans in Germany as a single nation group in the same country; Study 3 includes direct and indirect

East Asian migrants in Germany (including Koreans); and Study 4 encompasses highly skilled migrants from seventeen different countries residing in three cities in the Netherlands and Germany. Table 1 provides the overview of the research design for the four articles and how they are related to each other.

Table 2. Methods for Each Study

	Study 1	**Study 2**	**Study 3**	**Study 4**
Study Population	Koreans living in Germany	Koreans in online communities for Korean migrants in Germany	Members of three online social networks centering on East Asians living in Germany	Highly skilled migrants in Germany and the Netherlands
Methods	In-depth interviews	Qualitative Text Analysis	Qualitative Text Analysis	Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)

IV. Findings and Implications

1. Findings from each article

Studies 1, 2–3, and 4 were analyzed to determine the complex dynamics of migrants' sense of belonging at the individual, relational, and societal levels, respectively. Given that the relational level significantly influences the dynamics of a sense of belonging, Studies 2 and 3 delved into different dimensions of this level, highlighting its important role in the fluctuations of migrants' identity and sense of belonging. The following summarizes findings from each article to address their corresponding sub-questions.

SQ1. How does migrants' sense of belonging affect their identity contestation when encountering incongruent categorizations?

Study 1 focuses on the individual experiences of Korean migrants, revealing how they engaged in identity contestation and cultivated distinct self-identifications according to their sense of belonging within their immediate social groups. The findings highlight how migrants' varying degrees of belonging affect their coping strategies with incongruent categorizations. Those who had already established a robust sense of belonging, rooted in social groups centered around their acquired assets, use their sense of belonging as socioemotional resilience against challenging events targeting their inherited attributes. Conversely, those with a weak or absent sense of belonging because of their previous experiences with incongruent categorizations based on their inherited attributes, experience greater frustrations that reinforce their sense of isolation when facing the same challenges. This dynamic was exemplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which anti-Asian sentiments towards those with East Asian heritage were prevalent in the destination society. While highlighting the significance of a sense of belonging, this research also emphasizes how persistent incongruent categorizations can eventually impede migrants' sense of belonging in any form and ultimately dampen their willingness to integrate within the destination society in the long term.

SQ2. How do migrants from the same country identify the collective "us" and distant "them"?

The findings of Study 2 unveil the dynamic evolution of group identity within the same national migrant group and how the group members conflict with each other in defining who are the collective "us" and distant "them." Aligned with numerous existing studies on inter- and intra-

group conflicts within the same ethnic migrant groups, the article delineates various factors influencing the members' divergent identities, including the shifting norms of migrants' transnationalism in the destination society over different time periods. The article underscores how a migrant group with a shared national background has grappled with varying interpretations of group identity, ultimately leading to fragmentation and division within that group. The results illustrate the divergence due to the differentiated definitions of "us" and "them" within conflicting factions in online communities composed of Koreans in Germany. While the historical and sociocultural background that migrants bring from their original country still affects their identity formation, it was evident that the more recent and younger Korean migrants tended to prioritize their transnational identity to define who is "us" in Germany, compared to those older and/or having resided in Germany for a longer time, who exhibited dualized nationalism towards both Korea and Germany.

SQ3. How do migrants' identities and online social platforms affect each other?

Study 3 examines how different technological forms of online social networks facilitate migrants' expression of diverse transnational identities based on specific contexts. This study builds on one of the key findings from Study 2 concerning migrants' complex transnational identities, which tend to be selectively chosen to cultivate a sense of belonging. This finding underlines the vital role of digital technology in enabling migrants to simultaneously maintain their multidimensional identities, depending on individuals' unique contexts. Of particular relevance is the evidence supporting the theory that technology and people are constantly influencing each other, fostering a reciprocal relationship that evolves, allowing each actor to better accommodate the other. In this process, online social networks offer a plethora of choices, empowering migrants to join or create their own communities that align with their aspirations.

SQ4. How do the digitalization of public services and migrants' sense of belonging affect each other?

Study 4 marks a significant departure from the individual and relational levels, as it shifts the focus to the institutional level. While Study 3 points to digitalization as a mediator through which individuals can expand their social networks, Study 4 considers digitalization as a means of enhancing migrants' sense of belonging by narrowing the gap between migrants and others in terms of accessibility to essential public services. The article underscores the importance of viewing the digitalization of public service delivery as a means not only to improve the

convenience and efficiency of government operations but also to cultivate inclusive environments that enable migrants to secure their desired quality of life. The migrants' interpretations of the digitalization of public service delivery were indicative of their attitudes towards their destination societies, particularly in terms of whether they are recognized and welcomed as valued members. This finding echoes the emphasis on holistic approaches to configuring social policies when considering the diversity of migration populations (Breugel and Scholten 2020), as well as the importance of enhancing the accessibility for migrants who need emergent support to enjoy public services in different areas beyond acquiring legal rights, including healthcare, educational system, employment, and various family benefits.

2. Overall Implications

Synthesizing the findings from the four articles, this dissertation answers the central research question as follows: In today's super-diversified migration landscape, migrants shape their unique identity and sense of belonging based on individualized attributes and backgrounds rather than conventional categories such as ethnicity or country of origin. This self-defining process continuously occurs while they interact with various sociopolitical conditions existing at individual, relational, and societal levels within the destination society. Especially digital technology plays a significant role in this process, serving as a conduit for effective communication, a facilitator for accessing commodities, and a coevolving social platform where migrants actively create their own networks and interact with diverse groups of people. Based on this foundation, three principal avenues of research were developed: understanding contemporary migrant identity and sense of belonging in a super-diversified society, exploring the features of highly skilled migrants in establishing their sense of belonging, and examining the role of digital technology in shaping migrant identity and sense of belonging. The following provides the detailed implications of these three aspects and how they fundamentally address the central research question.

Migrants' Identity and Sense of Belonging in a Super-Diversified Society

Migrant identities and sense of belonging are multifaceted and fluid, shaped by interactions at individual, relational, and societal levels within the destination society.

At the individual level, migrants encounter diverse individuals in daily settings such as streets, workplaces, and public places. These interactions offer insights into how others perceive them, and how they respond to these perceptions. In this identity contestation process, this

dissertation highlighted the significance of their sense of belonging to their surrounding social groups, especially in the superdiversity context: Given the diverse and individually contextualized backgrounds of migration, which cannot be captured by traditional categories, migrants' sense of belonging can be firmly established when based on their acquired assets rather than inherited attributes. A sound and robust sense of belonging, founded on migrants' acquired assets, enables migrants to resiliently cope with incongruent categorizations imposed by others. Conversely, when their sense of belonging is still founded on the conventional categories such as race, nationality, religion, or ethnicity, migrants tend to establish a very weak and minimal sense of belonging to the destination society, often resulting in social isolation and frustration.

The relational level constitutes the foundation of migrants' sense of belonging. It is by joining or creating different social groups, including family, friends, colleagues, and any temporary communities formed around common interests, that migrants form their sense of belonging. Within these groups, migrants actively assess the degree of their membership – whether they are embraced as part of the collective "we" or viewed as a distant "they." In the superdiversity setting, migrants are offered a wide selection of social groups to choose from to weave their own social networks. Migrants grouped by traditional categories such as country of origin or ethnicity may encounter discrepant group identities, often resulting in internal group conflicts and identity contestations. Conversely, when migrants feel that they belong and are respected by others within their social groups based on the acquired asset-based categories for which they wish to be appreciated by the destination societies, they find themselves integrated within the destination society as part of the "us" members. Moreover, such a robust sense of belonging based on their acquired assets becomes the source of their socioemotional resilience against discriminatory practices in their daily lives, often resulting in positive reactions towards individual identity contestations.

At the societal level, migrants establish their sense of belonging through interactions with public systems. They assess the accessibility, transparency, and equitable provision of necessary public services given by the nation-states. They compare their experiences with those of other members of society, which leads them to feel either respected or deprived by the destination society. While their self-identification can be influenced by their internal conditions such as their beliefs, experiences, and aspirations, their sense of belonging is more directly related to the external conditions given by the destination society, as it is the result of the

negotiation between migrants' own and others' understanding of their belonging within the destination society. Given that migrants consider the accessibility of public services to reflect societal attitudes towards them, the measure of how accommodating the institutional environment is within the destination society influences migrants' sense of belonging, which precedes social integration. Therefore, the dissertation emphasizes the need for improving the holistic structure of public services based on the concept of superdiversity, especially in those nation-states striving to attract more highly skilled migrants to their countries.

Highly Skilled Migrants' Establishment of a Sense of Belonging

Highly skilled migrants, equipped with the capability of making voluntary migration decisions and holding their desired socioeconomic status in the destination society, are often recognized and accepted in the destination countries for their acquired identities. These identities are composed mostly of the individuals' accomplishments such as their profession, socioeconomic status, or educational achievements. They are distinguished from inherited identities, determined by country of origin, ethnicity, gender, or race, based on which destination societies traditionally categorize migrants.

Highly skilled migrants actively seek to connect with social groups associated with their acquired identities to establish a sense of belonging to the community they aspire to be part of. Among the multifaceted identities these migrants possess, they selectively express desired identities based on situational contexts, aiming to align themselves with their desired social groups.

Societal attitudes and perspectives that are congruent with these migrants' desired identity and belonging foster a strong sense of belonging in them. Once migrants gain a robust sense of belonging based on their acquired identities, they become resilient upon encountering incongruent or stereotypical categories imposed by society, which are often based on inherited attributes. However, repetitive identity contestations posed by incongruent categorizations eventually hinder the migrants' ability to establish or sustain their sense of belonging, leaving them frustrated and isolated.

The Role of Digital Space in Shaping Migrant Identity and Sense of Belonging

The dissertation illuminates the role and value of digital technology in establishing contemporary migrants' identity and sense of belonging in the destination society. It reveals the coevolving mechanism guiding the relationship between migrants and digital technology

at different societal levels, eventually affecting migrants' social integration in the broader sense.

At the individual level, digital platforms offer migrants the freedom to discover and connect with like-minded individuals across borders. Because individuals are active participants and creators of social networks on digital platforms, they choose certain digital spaces based on their interests and purposes. While interacting with other members within those selected spaces, migrants learn new information and opportunities that often contribute to their initiative to learn different ways of life, including how to settle in the new society. Through this process, migrants cultivate and maintain, or change, their new identity and sense of belonging within the destination society, aligning it with their aspirations more effectively than in offline settings.

At the relational level, migrants utilize digital technology to find, create, and join diverse social communities based on their interests, without being constrained by physical locations or societal categorizations imposed by the destination society. Digital technology allows migrants to increase their social capital, enabling them to improve their livelihoods, mobilize resources, and protect themselves against social discrimination. Within the digital space, migrants weave multiple social networks and selectively manifest their identities based on the situational context. Given the various types of online social platforms, migrants choose specific platforms to engage with their preferred audiences in terms of time, place, people, and purpose (Wellman 2001; Castells 2011; Dolata 2013). In turn, digital platforms evolve based on the configuration of their users, in order to attract and accommodate certain types of people to a greater degree.

At the institutional level, the dissertation reveals that migrants prioritize digital space for accessing essential information and public services, as they mitigate barriers of unfamiliarity in the destination society, such as language differences, bureaucratic hurdles, and documentation requirements. Migrants consider digital accessibility to public services as indicative of societal attitudes towards them, namely whether the destination society endeavors to provide equal social rights. Digitalization has been initially considered a necessary means for nation-states to manage large waves of migration, which has led to a focus on the formal aspects of migration, including obtaining visas, entering at the border, registering with local authorities, and securing legal documents such as residence permits (Nedelcu 2012; McAuliffe 2021). However, the efforts of nation-states to digitize the subsequent stage considered the real starting point of social integration, have not yet reached the same level of development (Brom

and Besters 2010; Safarov 2021). Therefore, digitalizing a wide range of domains beyond the migration sector should be prioritized. This calls for a holistic restructuring of digitalization planning through the lens of superdiversity-centered migrants' perspectives.

V. Conclusion

In summary, this cumulative dissertation offered a comprehensive exploration of social integration issues from the perspective of migrants in the digital age, with a central focus on their identity and sense of belonging. Through a multifaceted approach, the series delved into the intricacies of migrants' experiences in a superdiverse society, examining the impact of sociopolitical constraints on their identity and belonging, as well as the significance of their self-identity and sense of belonging in achieving social integration, particularly in this digital age. Across the four articles, the series emphasizes a unique narrative of the migrant experience by employing a range of qualitative methods within the realm of case-based and comparative approaches. I believe this series of articles makes a substantial contribution to the ongoing discourse on migration, encompassing an interdisciplinary framework across political science and sociology. It is of immense significance for understanding both migrants and destination societies and how they constantly interact and reciprocally coevolve with each other. I firmly believe that such an endeavor is key to moving towards a more inclusive and cohesive society where all members, including migrants, feel a shared sense of belonging and ultimately contribute to becoming "us." Finally, I conclude this framework paper by outlining its detailed contributions in theoretical, empirical, and normative dimensions, as well as its inherent limitations and promising avenues for future research.

1. Contributions

First, the theoretical contribution of this dissertation pertains to migration studies and sociological technology studies, focusing specifically on contemporary migrants in a superdiverse society. By inhabiting migrants' perspectives on the internal and external challenges in forming their identity and a sense of belonging, which are considered the core elements of social integration today, the dissertation offers fresh insights into the ongoing sociopolitical issues within destination societies and contributes to a micro-level understanding of these. Furthermore, the dissertation reviews the reciprocal relationship between digital technology and migrants. By highlighting the significant role of digital technology in forming migrants' identity and sense of belonging, the dissertation demonstrates the co-evolving mechanism underlying digital spaces and migrants as active users at different societal scales. This dissertation adopts a comprehensive approach, aiming to examine the multifaceted influences on migrants' sense of belonging across different societal scales. It delves into how

individual, relational, and societal levels interact with this fundamental aspect of social integration in the digital age. Through the examination of various conditions fostering or hampering migrants' sense of belonging in the four articles, the dissertation sheds light on the intricate dynamics at play within migration-oriented societies.

Secondly, the dissertation presents empirical contributions by focusing on highly skilled migrants. This group is often understudied in the realm of migrants' social integration due to the broad understanding of them as a separate privileged group from other migrants as if they do not experience the identity and belonging struggles within the destination society that other migrants undergo (Weinar and Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020; van Riemsdijk and Basford 2022). The importance of studying this population extends beyond achieving a balanced representation of various migrant groups. While recognizing the urgent need to represent various migrant populations, especially those in vulnerable sociopolitical circumstances, this dissertation extends the scope of migration studies by examining social awareness and policy interventions from a multidimensional perspective, highlighting the agency and aspirations of migrants who seek to move beyond the labels of marginalized minority groups. Building on preceding studies on the integration paradox and alienating policies (Verkuyten 2016; Steinmann 2019; P. Scholten 2020), this dissertation argues that highly skilled migrants, with their deep awareness of social rights and keen sensitivity to belonging, offer acute assessments of their individual, relational, and institutional spheres. Studying this group provides valuable insights into their experiences in destination societies, particularly in assessing the direction being taken towards better social integration in today's society. Studies also amply illustrate that digital platforms can reflect people's social behavior. It highlights the role of digitalization in bridging the gap between migrants and native citizens, suggesting that there is potential for a collaborative transformation of the public policy environment through digital platforms. Furthermore, this dissertation holds a distinctive position by exclusively featuring qualitative case-based empirical studies. While acknowledging the significance of quantitative research with its emphasis on numerical data and larger sample sizes, this dissertation seeks to address the need for niche evidence within a spectrum of qualitative studies. Specifically, it endeavors to offer not only rich descriptive accounts of qualitative contexts but also configurational evidence through the utilization of qualitative data in computational logical processes. By applying various qualitative methodologies to the data from small-scale migrant groups, this dissertation aims to deepen understanding of the nuanced experiences and perspectives of migrant individuals, thus enriching the existing superdiversity context in migration studies.

Last but not least, the dissertation advocates normative contributions in two aspects. In the realm of public discourse, this study added empirical evidence of ongoing debates relating to right-wing populist nationalism and incongruent categorizations based on societal stereotypes toward migrants. As diversity is often associated with uncertainty and social challenges, this dissertation acknowledges the populist narratives that demonize migrants as threatening minorities. It recognizes that these narratives can further fuel negative attitudes, particularly among socioeconomically marginalized populations including migrants, significantly hindering their quality of life (Mepschen 2017; Mamonova and Franquesa 2020; Vertovec 2023). The dissertation vividly illustrates how various societal stereotypes reinforce the discriminatory practices that migrants encounter in their daily lives and how exactly these challenges impede migrants' social integration by degrading their identity and senses of belonging within the destination society. In terms of public policy, this dissertation highlights the need for more inclusive and participatory digitalization in public services. While validating the impact of digitalizing public services on migrants' sense of belonging and their overall satisfaction with migration, the dissertation emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to digitalization that ensures migrants' diversity and values are carefully considered.

To be sure, the dissertation cannot suggest a panacea for solving fundamental social inequalities among migrants and people with diverse backgrounds. By presenting a more nuanced view of the migrant experience, however, the dissertation underscores the importance of fostering a deeper understanding of the contemporary landscape of migration and migrants' unique perspectives for a better diagnosis of migrant-related social issues.

2. Limitations and Future Research Avenues

This dissertation strives to elucidate multidimensional features of migrants' identity and sense of belonging today at different societal levels, though it has several inherent limitations in its structure. The first limitation lies in the fact that the majority of the sampling is based on a migrant group with the same national background residing in a specific country – that is, Koreans in Germany. While the dissertation aimed to demonstrate that individuals' distinct ideas, feelings, and actions cannot be captured by conventional categories, including nationality, studying a specific migrant group multiple times should not overlook certain sociocultural contexts given by the national background. Due to some critical restrictions, including the COVID-19 pandemic which occurred during the research period, it was challenging to extend the research to the broader and diverse study population. Instead of

prolonging the research period, the dissertation rather decided to concentrate on how superdiversity resonates with a specific group of people from various angles, in order to present a comprehensive view of how the people in a migrant group with a shared national background in the digital age exhibit diverse interactions, conflicts, and coping strategies when encountering the individual, relational, and institutional challenges within the destination society. In this context, further studies on other migrant groups with different sociocultural backgrounds would bolster the broader implications of migrant identity and sense of belonging in the superdiversity context.

Secondly, the research question necessarily juxtaposes several disciplines, including the sociopolitical and psychological facets of migration studies and the sociological facet of technology studies, resulting in the limited theoretical depth of its findings. Although I believe the research questions were properly addressed by the analytical frameworks of each article, the data could have been studied further to gain deeper theoretical implications by focusing on a single discipline. Thus, it would be fruitful to apply the conceptual frameworks used in this dissertation to investigate more specific discipline-oriented questions and arrive at stronger theoretical contributions. For example, questions focusing exclusively on the interdependence between digital technology and migrants would provide a deeper understanding of the sociological function of technology, or more detailed questions on the formation process of individuals' sense of belonging would have teased out further implications regarding the psychological aspect of migrant sense of belonging.

Nonetheless, I suggest various promising areas for future research, all aimed at addressing conflict and developing the true meaning of social integration in a superdiverse society. At the institutional level, there is a need for further research into local migration policies in different cities, especially those representing different socioeconomic contexts within the same country. Such research can offer valuable insights into how varying degrees of socioeconomic development and diversity across different regions influence the inclusiveness of migration policies. By examining these regional variations, a deeper understanding of the impact of policy decisions on antagonistic attitudes towards migrants can be gained, ultimately informing more effective and tailored policy interventions.

At the relational level, the experiences of individuals who hold anti-migrant sentiments and the way in which public discourses affect their political attitudes towards other groups, including other migrant groups and native populations, is a rich avenue for future research. This could

include examining different generations within the same migrant group or comparing various migrant groups based on their economic or educational backgrounds. By exploring the motivations and attitudes of individuals with anti-migrant sentiments, a more nuanced understanding of the factors that shape these perspectives can be gained, and strategies for promoting more inclusive and harmonious social interactions can be developed.

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Study 1: Exploring the Role of Sense of Belonging on Response to Ethnic Stereotypes: A Case of Koreans in Germany during the COVID-19 Pandemic[4]

Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic era witnessed a surge in anti-Asian hate and ethnic discrimination against East Asian descendants, including Koreans, across migration-oriented societies. This paper explores how the various degrees of belonging among Korean migrants in Germany influenced their responses to these heightened ethnic stereotypes in 2020. Through thematic analysis on the in-depth interview data, the study reveals the significant role of participants' current sense of belonging as a foundation for their socioemotional resilience, in shaping three divergent ways of responses on the ethnic-stereotyped discriminatory events. Conversely, those repetitive challenges posed by incongruent categorizations based on participants' inherited aspects – such as ethnicity, nationality, or race – consistently overshadow their acquired assets and eventually impede them to develop sound sense of belonging. Based on these findings, this paper exhibits the patterns of lifestyle migrants' individualized coping strategies when encountering ethnic stereotypes, based on their three different shapes and degrees of belonging. In so doing, this paper advocates for an acute awareness of ethnic-stereotyped categorizations prevalent underneath society, which may hamper migrants' quality of life and social integration in the destination society.

Keywords: *Migrants' Sense of Belonging, Ethnic Stereotypes, Identity Contestation, Incongruent Categorization, Anti-Asian Hate, COVID-19 Pandemic*

[4] This is the manuscript version of single-authored article submitted to *Ethnicities*, under review at the time of this submission

I. Sense of Belonging, Empowering Migrants to Confront Discrimination?

The extended duration of the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted scholars to pay keen attention to pressing social disparities, particularly those affecting minority groups within society. One of the elevated issues was the surge in hate crimes and ethnic discrimination targeting East Asians. Throughout this period, the stereotypes and ethnic biases against individuals of East Asian migrants, often inaccurately grouped under the umbrella term 'Chinese', including Koreans, have become strongly pronounced. These biases have exacerbated the misperception that they were somehow responsible for the pandemic's challenges. Relevant studies predominantly highlight how this anti-Asian hate has negatively affected East Asian migrants' daily lives and left them to struggle with prejudice and discrimination. Scholars particularly concerned with this phenomenon in societies based on abundant diversity and migration, as it reveals the underlying stereotypes towards East Asians, prevalent yet often undermined (Elias et al., 2021; Gover et al., 2020; Tessler et al., 2020).

While acknowledging the negative impact of such antagonism on targeted migrants' daily lives, this article seeks to examine the nuanced experiences of these migrants, especially concerning the super-diversified nature of contemporary society where migrants' identities and senses of belonging are multifaceted (Vertovec, 2023). This article questions whether all targeted migrants would experience the same degree of negative impacts from ethnic-biased stereotypes, assuming that migrants within a single national category may not navigate these incidents in a uniform way. Amidst various individual contexts, this article takes migrants' sense of belonging as a core factor to contribute to migrants' dynamic responses to discrimination. A sense of belonging encompasses an individual's comprehensive awareness of the social status ascribed to them, both by themselves and by others. For migrants, it entails the particularly nuanced endeavor of reshaping concepts of 'us' and 'them' within a new societal setting. Scholars assert that migrants who cultivate strong attachments and a sense of belonging at the individual and relational levels, while feeling respected by others within their social groups, are more likely to experience sociopolitical inclusion and social integration (Amit and Bar-Lev, 2015; Bilodeau et al., 2020). Besides, numerous studies are highlighting the importance of migrants' sense of belonging in super-diversified society as an indicator to assess their social integration within the destination society. In this context, the study aims to address the question of whether different degrees of migrants' sense of belonging affect their responses to ethnic stereotypes within the destination society.

Migrants often experience identity contestation through interactions with various people and spatial and temporal circumstances that collectively contribute to migrants' perception of their social positions within the destination society (Blommaert and Varis, 2011; Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Caldas-Coulthard and Iedema, 2008). Of various interactions, this paper focuses on ethnic stereotypes imposed by destination society as part of incongruent categorization, one of the crucial elements provoking identity contestation for migrants. Incongruent categorization refers to the discrepancies between migrants' self-perception of their social positions and the categories imposed upon them by destination societies (Abdelal et al., 2006). Most incongruent categorizations are typically originated from traditional categorizations of migrants, based upon predefined socioeconomic and cultural frames such as race, ethnicity, country of origin, gender, or any related categories intersecting these domains. When migrants encounter stereotypes, particularly those related to preconceived notions about their ethnic or cultural background, this discrepancy becomes especially pronounced, leading migrants to undergo identity contestation to reconcile with these imposed categories (Caldas-Coulthard and Iedema, 2008).

Recent instances of anti-Asian hate crimes during the COVID-19 period reflect a rise in ethnic-based discrimination in migration-oriented societies, including Germany. Regarding this issue, numerous studies have highlighted the troubling trend of right-wing-centered antagonism in these societies, asserting how incongruent categories have fueled this trend, perpetuating biased perceptions and leading to discriminatory practices (van Heerden et al. 2014; Vertovec 2023; Wodak, Khosravinik, and Mral 2013; Elias et al. 2021). However, only a few studies have delved into how migrants themselves navigate these challenges in dynamic ways, considering their varying degrees of belonging within the destination society. Accordingly, this article considers the surge in anti-Asian hate discrimination during the COVID-19 as a lens through which to answer the following central research question: how do migrants' different degrees of belonging influence their coping strategies when encountering ethnic-stereotypes, the occasions they feel as incongruent categorization? This study addresses three key aspects: First, it investigates participants' current sense of belonging, categorizing them into three groups based on how the participants define themselves. Second, it explores how the participants have coped with the ethnic stereotypes encountering in their daily lives, particularly concerning how they constitute incongruent categorization triggering identity contestation for them. Finally, it analyses their responses to the occasions posed by incongruent categorizations, highlighting how their reactions reflect the role of their varying degrees of

sense of belonging.

Given the substantial impact of different migration types on migrants' sense of belonging, this study acknowledges the unique context of Korean migrants in Germany today. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea (2019), the majority of Korean migrants fall within the age group between the 20s to 40s (except those who migrated as children following their parents) and have voluntarily migrated to Germany for lifestyle reasons (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). These individuals possess high levels of education and expertise or have migrated to Germany to pursue higher education and professional careers. Recent studies on such migrants indicate that they possess a keen awareness of their desired social position and belonging within the destination society, actively seeking to align themselves with others in similar socioeconomic groups (De Haas, 2021). Consequently, these migrants may experience heightened disappointment and frustration when encountering incongruent categorizations, which imply otherness or exclusion within their social groups (Steinmann, 2019; Verkuyten, 2016). These attributes were prevalent among Korean migrants in Germany, including the participants in this study, and were meticulously considered throughout the analysis.

The next section presents the theoretical framework to explain today's migrant sense of belonging, with a particular focus on how it features in the increasingly diversified migration and migration-oriented society. Building upon this context, it contextualizes ethnic stereotypes as part of incongruent categorizations of the destination society towards migrants. In doing so, it details how migrants experience identity contestation against these categorizations imposed by others in the destination society. Following this section, the paper describes how the research is designed, conducted, and analyzed. Next, it presents the comprehensive findings derived from the qualitative thematic analysis. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the implications, offering insights into a deeper understanding of migrants' sense of belonging and their daily struggles encountering societal categorizations, which are often incongruent and stereotypical.

II. Theoretical Framework

Given that the study of belonging, identity contestation, and incongruent categorization spans various theories across a wide array of social sciences, this study adopts necessary theories from different disciplines within the field of migration studies. First, it delves into migrants' sense of belonging in today's diverse society by drawing studies on superdiversity and its implications for societal categorization. This includes exploring what makes certain categorizations of migrants incongruent and how they relate to discriminatory practices. Next, it draws upon the literature on social identity theory to understand the detailed mechanism through which migrants engage in identity contestation in response to incongruent categorizations. To this end, it provides evidence on why this study considers a sense of belonging plays a vital role in migrants' coping strategies with incongruent categorizations in their daily settings, which significantly influence their overall life satisfaction and social integration.

1. Migrant Sense of Belonging in Super-diverse Society

The concept of belonging has long been studied in social science, but its significance for migrants today is shaped by the increasing diversification of society, especially in terms of migration and migrants (Vertovec, 2007). Blommaert and Varis (2011:3) define identity in today's 'super-diverse' society as a 'combination of micro-hegemonized niches […] as discursive orientations towards a set of features'. In this evolving landscape, migrants' sense of belonging refers to a sense of membership to the unique combination of features that represents their self-understanding across various categories. These categories include inherited attributes over which individuals have no control (such as nationality, ethnicity, and gender) and acquired assets that individuals attain and can control to some extent (such as education, occupation, and social relationships). Such societal change affects the domains of migrants' sense of belonging from traditional functional indicators that represent demographic or societal-level integration to the migrant agency at the individual level within the context of social integration. In other words, migrants' sense of belonging is not confined to predetermined categories imposed by the destination society but is instead established upon their unique experiences, relationships, capabilities, and agency (De Haas, 2021).

As complexity and individualization have become common sense in migration-based society, scholars emphasize the importance of recognizing migrants' acquired assets, while concerning

the deeply rooted traditional categories in society, which heavily rely on migrants' inherited attributes that no longer sufficiently encompass migrant identity and sense of belonging (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019). In this context, traditional categories are often incongruent with migrants' aspirations for belonging. Incongruent categorizations based on inherited aspects become the basis of othering and alienation in destination societies which often stretch to the discriminatory practices towards migrants based on race, ethnicity, gender, or the intersections among any of these aspects (McDowell, 2008; Meissner, 2018). Within these categories, migrants are often seen as big chunks, rather than considered as distinctive individuals. In this study's case, the incongruent categorizations targeted East Asian migrants including Koreans, were rooted in the category of '(East) Asian' ethnicity that conflates any East Asian nationals as Chinese as a whole. Such ethnic conflation has been a controversial issue in the North American context (see for example: Azhar et al. 2021; Sarangi 1996; Uchida 1998, among others). What this study inquires about here is whether the migrants from a single country, who are targeted by discrimination due to their country of origin, would feel such incongruent categorizations in the same way. If the individual-oriented superdiversity context reflects the diverse shapes of migrants' sense of belonging and their unique circumstances, their coping strategies to the incident may vary as well (Abdelal et al., 2006; Azhar et al., 2021; Kim and Chung, 2005; Lew, 2020).

2. Identity Contestation

Looking deeper down to the mechanism of developing a sense of belonging, Turner(1982) and later he and his colleagues (1987) detailed how individuals engage in identity contestation to form a sense of belonging, negotiating between others' perspectives and self-understanding. They present how the repetitive identity contestation resonates with individuals' social positions and ultimately leads them to develop a sense of belonging in society. Building on this foundation, Abrams and his colleagues (1990) laid further evidence of how persistent and intense identity contestation due to the discrepancies between others' and self-categorization can weaken an individual's group identity and polarize group belongingness, leading to divisions between different social groups.

Likewise, scholars in migration studies emphasize that social integration can be interfered with when the social categories given by society do not match migrants' diverse assets (Amit and Bar-Lev, 2015; Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019). Numerous studies provide evidence of the effects of migrants' identity contestation on incongruent categorizations based on race, country

of origin, and religion, resulting in their isolation and marginalization within both intra- and inter-group contexts (Kibria, 2008; Liu, 2015; Werbner, 2004). Although such incongruent categorization can affect anyone, migrants experience it more deliberately as they are the new members of the society who intensively establish their sense of belonging through repetitive identity contestation while learning others' perspectives on them (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Meissner, 2018). Building on the implications of these studies, it becomes evident that incongruent categorizations negatively impact migrants' sense of belonging and their social integration. Yet, there is still limited evidence on 'how' such incongruence impacts various migrants based on their individualized contexts. The concept of superdiversity suggests that migrants today more actively shape their identity and belonging based on their aspirations and capabilities, rather than passively accepting being labeled as others by incongruent categorizations (De Haas, 2021; Vertovec, 2023). This underscores the importance of a sound sense of belonging, which resonates with migrants' social inclusion and life satisfaction, serving as an indicator of their social integration (Amit and Bar-Lev, 2015; Bilodeau et al., 2020). If a sense of belonging is indeed one of the most crucial conditions determining migrants' social integration, it would also play a key role in understanding migrants' attitudes and reactions to incongruent categorizations – deeply rooted otherness and alienation (Fernando and Patriotta, 2020). In this context, this paper aims to fill this research gap by focusing on migrants' current sense of belonging as a core factor in understanding their dynamic responses to incongruent categorizations. Through this exploration, it will more evidently demonstrate what a sense of belonging truly means for migrants in today's complex society, and why establishing a sound sense of belonging is essential for migrants' social integration.

III. Research Design

1. Interviews

This study conducted in-depth interviews with 17 South Korean migrants residing in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic between October and December 2020. These interviews helped explore the participants' lived experiences, perspectives, and negotiation strategies in response to the challenges they faced during this specific time. Although the range of interview questions was clearly defined, the study employed semi-structured interviews, allowing the interviewees some extent of liberty to share their personal experiences within broad guidelines. This flexibility was adopted to ensure that the depth of responses was not hindered while assuring the scope was focused on the research question (Boyatzis 1998; Schmidt 2004). Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted through the online meeting platform, Zoom.

Given the current nature of Korean emigration to Germany, most participants voluntarily chose to move to Germany and pursue their own goals (with two exceptions: individuals who had moved to Germany during childhood with their parents or simply followed their family members' decisions). The selection criteria for the participants were that they had been living in Germany for more than a year and had or used to have Korean heritage. After recruiting 12 interviewees via public announcements on online social networks comprising Koreans in Germany, five additional interviewees were added via snowballing, resulting in seventeen interviews conducted between October and December 2020, until the data reached a sufficient amount for the qualitative text analysis on the next step (see Table 1)[5].

[5] There was no ethical committee in an author's institution at the time the interviews were conducted. Instead, the interview design followed the Statement of Ethnical Practice by the British Sociological Association, and all interviewees provided verbal consent for the interviews and using them for publications, which were video-recorded, on awareness of the purpose of this research, its anonymity, how the data were being analyzed, and their right to confidentiality.

Table 1. List of Interviewees

No.	Age	Gender	Residence	Duration of stay in Germany (At the time of the interview)
1	34	F	Berlin	2 years
2	36	M	Berlin	2 years
3	38	M	Berlin	1.5 years
4	36	F	Berlin	1.5 years
5	32	F	Leipzig	3.5 years
6	30	F	Erlangen	4 years
7	34	M	Stuttgart	3 years
8	28	M	Düsseldorf	17 years
9	28	F	Heidelberg	11 years
10	45	F	Berlin	16 years
11	29	F	Köln	3.5 years
12	35	M	Düsseldorf	13 years
13	29	F	Darmstadt	1 year
14	28	F	Frankfurt	4 years
15	30	M	Düsseldorf	2 years
16	24	Not identified	Berlin	1.5 years
17	27	F	Berlin	4.5 years

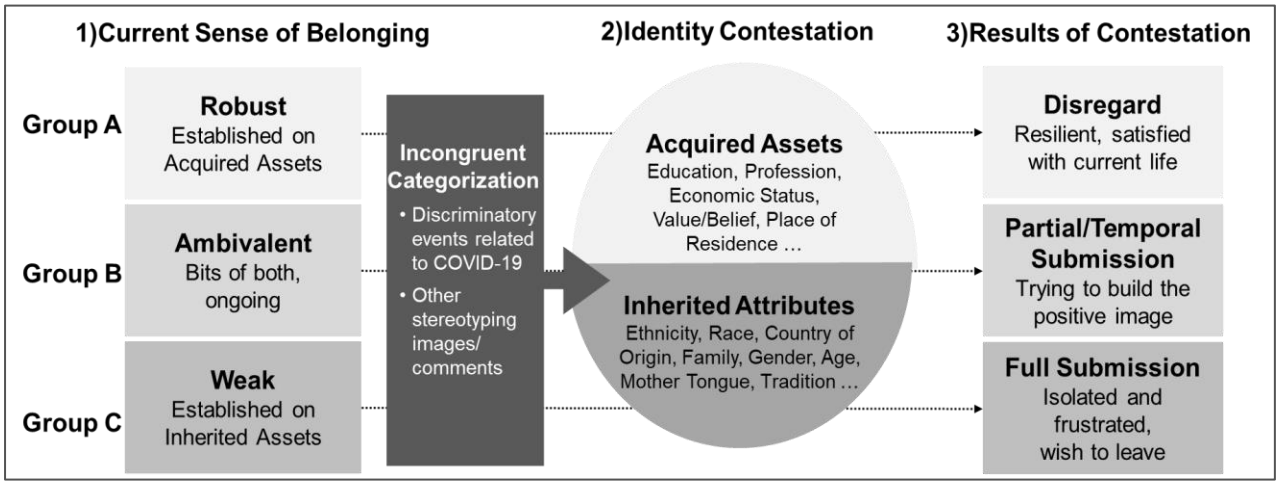
During these interviews, discussions naturally gravitated towards migrant-related social issues, eventually encouraging the interviewees to share their personal experiences regarding stereotypes. These discussions encompassed both direct and indirect discrimination against Asian migrants experienced in their daily life in Germany, regarding and regardless of pandemic restrictions. These narratives vividly portrayed the evolving dynamics of the participants' identity contestation, incorporating their senses of belonging vis-à-vis personal aspirations and others' perspectives. The focus of the interviews lies in participants' own interpretations of the entire process: how they understood their own current sense of belonging, incongruent categorizations in the destination society – predominantly ethnic stereotyping actions in the context of COVID-19, and their subsequent reactions to coping with these experiences.

The author's position as a Korean national living in Germany likely had a particular influence on interviewees, who might have felt a natural kinship, adopting the mindset of 'we are Koreans in Germany'. This observation is partly based on the decision of all interviewees to speak Korean, even if it was not their first language, and even if they could also speak English. This might have allowed them to talk more openly about their thoughts and feelings. Accordingly, the author acknowledges that the data might reflect the interviewer's position to some extent and that some data might reflect the lived experiences of the interviewees in a less-than-simple-and-transparent fashion (Smith and Osborn, 2007).

2. Thematic Analysis

The interview data underwent thematic analysis via software MAXQDA(VERBI Software, 2021) , blending deductive techniques to address the research question while remaining open to inductive coding for unexpected insights (Boyatzis, 1998; Schmidt, 2004). The predefined top-level categories encompass 1) Current Sense of Belonging, 2) Identity Contestation, and 3) Results of Contestation, which collectively address the process of migrants' identity contestation provoked by certain interactions with others. Additionally, the category of Incongruent Categorization is set to clarify the type of occasions, including but not limited to COVID-19 related ethnic stereotypes. Within these top categories, sub-categories are derived from inductive insights based on interview data. Subcategories comprise Robust, Ambivalent, and Weak for Category 1), Acquired Assets and Inherited Attributes for Category 2), Disregard, Partial/Temporal Submission, and Full Submission for Category 3). Incongruent Categorization includes Discriminatory Events Related to COVID-19 and Other Stereotyping Images/Comments. Figure 1 illustrates how each top-level category is further branched into specific subcategories and affect each other in the process of identity contestation.

Figure 1. Process of Identity Contestation in Three Groups



The participants were coded into three subcategories of Current Sense of Belonging and classified as Group A, Group B, and Group C, representing Robust, Ambivalent, and Weak sense of belonging, respectively. The analysis tracked each group's varying results in each subcategory. Interviews often involved participants describing the types of social groups to which they believed to belong. Their narratives indicated combinations of various categories rooted in these social groups which eventually signified how firmly their current sense of belonging is established. The circle in 2) Identity Contestation lists the subcategories that participants described as representing their identities, and they were classified as acquired assets and inherited attributes to distinguish which domain is predominantly targeted by incongruent categorizations. This approach not only assured that participants viewed ethnic stereotypes as part of incongruent categorization but also clarified which subcategories within Identity Contestation show a more or less resilience to incongruent categorizations. Finally, these variations in Category 1) and 2) led to three distinct outcomes in 3) Results of Contestations: Disregard for Group A, Temporal/Partial Submission for Group B, and Full Submission for Group C in response to incongruent categorization.

IV. Findings

This section presents findings from the thematic analysis, beginning with common findings across all stages and subgroups. It then provides further details from the three subgroups accompanied by relevant quotes, vividly illustrating how the participants in each group navigated different pathways of identity contestation facing incongruent categorization.

First and foremost, it was evident that participants universally perceived certain societal categorizations as 'incongruent' when based on their inherited assets including ethnicity and nationality, as illustrated in Figure 1. All participants displayed a heightened awareness of East Asian stereotypes surrounding them in the context of COVID-19, although they emphasized that such experiences were not entirely new to them. All of them already had encountered similar instances of incongruent categorizations in various situations. Stereotypical images or comments rooted in categories such as ethnicity, race, nationality, gender, mother tongue language, or the intersection of two or more of these elements were deeply disturbing to participants, leading them to feel discriminated against, and homogenized.

Another common finding was that all participants aspired (or had previously aspired) to establish a sense of belonging through their acquired assets, regardless of their current sense of belonging. These assets, representing their social capabilities (De Haas, 2021), held greater values and shared greater commonalities with others in their social groups. This observation reflects the specificity of lifestyle migrants with high level education and expertise, as they were initially accepted by the destination country based on their acquired assets, which also contributed to their legal and economic status for their residences. Accordingly, participants were able to develop a firm and robust sense of belonging, when their social positions were primarily shaped and recognized based on their acquired assets.

1. Group A: Robust Sense of Belonging

Notably, Group A clearly showed a robust sense of belonging within their social groups, primarily built upon their acquired assets, as described by Interview 2:

> *Well, I don't like to define my identity by my nationality or ethnicity, and I find people in Berlin tend to do so […] Especially because my company is very global—only 20% of the employees are Germans—we view each other pretty much in the same way—like we are just colleagues with different backgrounds, and*

that's it […] Obviously, we are not Germans, but does it matter for who you are here? (Interviewee 2)

Interviewee 2, holding a leadership position in a renowned global company in Berlin, aptly exemplified this perspective, highlighting how he was perceived through the lens of his acquired assets while downplaying the role of inherited assets. Another noteworthy point from Interviewee 2 was the contrasting sense of belonging compared to Interviewee 1 – a spouse who migrated to Germany together. Interviewee 1 rather expressed feelings of perpetual isolation, longing to return to her hometown someday in the near future. The narratives of this couple vividly illustrate the disparate senses of belonging, despite sharing the same ethnicity, country of origin and residing in the same location. This observation reaffirms that migrants within the same functional categories do not necessarily share the same extent of sense of belonging. Instead, it underscores the intricacies of how individual's acquired assets are perceived within their social groups, shaping their sense of belonging in unique and individualized ways.

Although all participants were under the same period of pervasive anti-Asian hate that catalyzed Identity Contestation, the pathways of contestation were markedly individualized and divergent. Participants in Group A predominantly opted to not pay significant attention to relevant events unless directly experiencing them, leading this group to reach the result of Disregard. Interviewee 2, for instance, did not voluntarily bring up any relevant ongoing issues related to COVID-19 until specifically asked by the interviewer regarding incongruent categorization. He emphasized that such discrimination could not be accepted within his groups and communities and believed that it harmed neither his reputation nor his social bonds with colleagues and friends. Similar to Interviewee 2, others in this group largely had supportive group members surrounding them and did not necessarily feel their sense of belonging threatened by the targeting of their inherited assets.

For instance, Interviewee 6 believed she had established herself in a good profession and expressed a strong sense of belonging within her work community. Even when faced with a discriminatory event during this period, she rather found her belonging reassured when her colleagues sympathized with the unfair categorizations she encountered:

While most of my colleagues told me that I was simply unlucky, so forget about it (discriminatory event), it was a very moving moment when one colleague got so

upset about the verbal attack that I faced and tried to sympathize with me as much as she could […] (Interviewee 6)

Including Interviewee 6, those in Group A expressed a high level of satisfaction with their lives after migrating. They were able to overlook external incongruent categorizations during COVID-19 because they had good companions who respected their acquired assets and sympathized with the unfairness of existing incongruent categorizations in their society.

2. Group B: Ambivalent Sense of Belonging

The majority of participants posited in Group B an ambivalent Sense of Belonging, still developing it within the social groups they aspired to be a part of. Participants in this group took both inherited and acquired assets when describing their senses of belonging, sometimes contradicting their reactions. They diversify their strategies to establish more positive images among their social groups to survive and thrive as accepted members of society. During these times, participants in Group B expressed strong frustration and disappointment with society as they witnessed a dramatic shift in their social positions. Interviewee 17 described the following:

How can I remain true to myself in this environment? I'm becoming increasingly frustrated with the thoughtless questions and comments I encounter these days. People constantly inquire about my home country, whether I'm of Chinese descent, mixed race, or a second-generation German, otherwise how my German can be so perfect without any accents, and so on. Honestly, I sometimes wish I could fit into their categories, as it would make it easier for them to accept me for who I am, just as they expect. (Interviewee 17)

Interviewee 17, who initially came to Germany for university studies and later decided to settle permanently, expressed a deep attachment to Berlin. However, she shared frustrating experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. In these encounters, her achievements and reputation were swiftly overshadowed by the global event, leaving her feeling reduced by being solely categorized as 'Chinese' because of her appearance. Interviewee 17 pointed out that although racial discrimination was not a new experience in Germany, it was rare, and most people around her agreed that it was unethical. However, during the pandemic, verbal attacks or discriminatory actions against her and other Asian migrants by random strangers became bolder and more frequent, which made her feel unsafe when walking alone. Others in this group who had not directly experienced COVID-19-related discrimination expressed equally

disturbing feelings about their current circumstances. They linked these incidents to previous experiences of discrimination or their knowledge of existing ethnic stereotypes. This highlighted the fact that temporal inference may reinforce the relevant stereotypes and, hamper migrants' quality of life, regardless of whether discrimination directly affected them.

One profound observation was the participants in Group B expressed a surge of pride for the first time in their country of origin during the pandemic. This pride stems from positive media coverage, drawing attention to the Korean government's management and control of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Kang et al. 2020; Park, Park, and Chong 2020). Subsequently, these participants used this wave of positivity to shield themselves from ethnic discrimination and attempted to enhance their image. Although they did not want to be seen through the category of 'Asian migrants' by others, some actively sought to distinguish themselves as 'Koreans', emphasizing their national identity as distinct from being 'Chinese'. While rejecting xenophobic biases against Chinese individuals during the pandemic, they still underscored their different nationalities and unique characteristics to set themselves apart from the primary targets of discrimination. Notably, the participants' temporal strategies to utilize their nationality is to build a better image of themselves, while acknowledging it as an inherited asset that they did not fundamentally aspire to be seen by others. For example, Interviewee 9, who worked as a teacher for refugee and single-parent children, shared the following personal experience:

> *When I work, I receive respect from colleagues and that makes me feel like a part of this group. But still, it is hard to become the same as other teachers, especially when some students resorted to racist name-calling, [such] as 'Ching-Chong' or 'Virus' publicly […] But these days, for the first time, people ask about my home country with genuine respect and curiosity. These days, instead of scolding them, when random people say 'Ni-Hao' or 'Corona,' I just assert that I am Korean. But isn't it funny? I have been all the same, but they suddenly treat me differently once I say I am Korean. (Interviewee 9)*

It became evident that those who found life in Germany satisfying and were still in the process of establishing a firm sense of belonging via their desired shapes of identity tended to resist the categories imposed by discriminatory events. As part of the reaction, they employed temporary strategies to distinguish their nationality and project a more positive image. Interviewee 15 described these as 'survival strategies':

> *…I think every migrant has [their] own survival strategy, and mine is to diversify my social communities and selectively engage with the different groups in various situations […] In communities comprising non-Koreans, I started sharing information about what Koreans specifically do during the pandemic, in which people seemed quite interested. […] The first time I faced discrimination, I reacted more aggressively and emotionally, but these days, I've more-or-less given up on changing their views but finding my way to build a better image. I mean, it is not my problem but their prejudice, and I do not want to spend any pennies to educate them. But when micro-aggressions happen systematically in your career, only because they think I am Asian, that is the hardest thing to bear. (Interviewee 15)*

The narrative of Interviewee 15 represents the pursuit of a way to reconcile with the incongruent categories Korean migrants encounter in the social groups they aspired to belong, resulting in Temporal/Partial Submission. Such contradicting strategy – do not wish to be seen by the country of origin but proudly manifest it when receiving positive attention – echoes with another essential observation: their desire to belong based on acquired assets does not imply erasing or denying their connections to inherited assets. What they truly fear about the perceptions based on inherited assets is the strong tendency for stereotypes to overshadow all other aspects and stand out as a single label to represent who they are. It was noticeable that the majority of this group expressed their acute awareness of ethnic stereotypes directed towards Asians (particularly Asian women), predominantly developed in Western societal contexts before they migrated to Germany (see Uchida 1998; Azhar et al. 2021, concerning Orientalism and Asian stereotypes in Western society). Interviewee 15 later admitted that facing incongruent categorizations by the communities where he tried to belong was harder to bear than the random discrimination by strangers. This observation provides a key to understanding of the final Group C, who chose Full Submission of the incongruent categorisations.

3. Group C: Weak Sense of Belonging

Participants in Group C expressed that they had previously attempted to build a sense of belonging but found it challenging to find groups of people accepting them as part of 'us ' based on their aspired assets. Perpetual and recurrent confrontations with incongruent categorizations in their social surroundings, particularly within close groups, eventually led them to surrender as marked as 'Full Submission' in this study. What distinguishes this group

from others is their perception of the wave of discrimination towards East Asians was not too exacerbated but rather has always been beneath society, only now brought to light by this event. For instance, interview 10, who has been married to a German and raising a child in Germany for over a decade, described how she introduces herself in her social circles:

> *In the parents' group of my daughter's class, I now introduce myself as an 'Asian labor migrant'. It's much simpler than trying to place myself in a unique category that other parents may not fully understand. I just attribute any discomforting situations to the fact that I am an Asian labor migrant [...] My daughter looks more like her father (German) than me, and I'm grateful for that because not only is she not a target of the current wave of anti-Asian racism, but she is also more readily accepted by others than I am. (Interviewee 10)*

Despite having resided in Germany for an extended period and possessing a master's degree and expertise in her field, Interviewee 10 felt frustrated with how she was treated by others, attributing it solely to her Asian appearance. While finding solace in her daughter resembling her German father, she also felt isolated even within her own family due to this aspect. Similarly, most participants in Group C emphasized that they had endured years of repetitive categorization based on their inherited assets – primarily their ethnicity – and could not establish a sense of belonging based on their acquired assets as they had initially hoped. Consequently, they adopted demotivated attitudes toward the desire to become part of the broader 'us'. They no longer resisted these incongruent categories imposed on them based on their ethnicity, race, nationality, or gender; instead, they chose to accept them as ingrained social positions. For this reason, many had exclusively built social networks with other Koreans or Asians who shared similar sentiments in Germany, leading to significantly limited integration in the destination society.

Although only a few participants expressed significant deprivation or unfair treatment because of their inherited attributes, it was equally observed that they have resided in Germany for more than a decade and equally emphasized their feeling of exhaustion towards denying deeply ingrained categories in German society and continuing to challenge them.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

Migrants shape their sense of belonging via complex and dynamic processes that interact with their desired social positions and various categorizations imposed by others in the destination society. The COVID-19-related anti-Asian hate discriminations provide an example of incongruent categorizations based on ethnicity for Koreans which homogenizes prejudicial images that degrade their acquired assets.

While acknowledging the importance of mitigating these issues, this study investigates how migrants themselves cope with such challenging circumstances. Presenting the diverse voices of Korean migrants in Germany, this paper asserts that a well-grounded sense of belonging within migrants' social groups established upon their acquired assets fosters self-resilience encountering identity contestation, which empowers migrants to deny incongruent categories imposed by the destination society. In contrast, a weak sense of belonging based on migrants' inherited attributes reinforces their social isolation, hampering their willingness to cope with incongruent categories and rather surrender.

When confronted with incongruent categorizations in daily life, the study participants exhibited diverse attitudes in processing identity contestation. Their varied results – ranging from disregard to partial or temporal submission and eventually full submission to the incongruent categorizations– reflect the different impacts of the migrants' various degrees of the current sense of belonging within surrounding social groups and local communities: whether it is well-established through their acquired assets, still in the process around their communities, or weak due to the recurrent incongruent categorizations. These findings echo De Haas's discussion on migrants' capability and aspirations, inspired by Sen's Capability Approach (Sen 1993; cited in De Haas 2021). He argued that promoting a sense of belonging at the relational level based on migrants' aspirations fundamentally improves their socioemotional resilience and life satisfaction. This study also proved that migrants gain a sound sense of belonging to overcome the obstacles posed by incongruent categorizations when they are respected for their acquired assets among their social groups.

However, this study also observed instances in which migrants who had lived in Germany for longer gradually lost their motivation for integration after facing repeated frustration owing to incongruent categorizations. Participants, reflecting on their experiences before and after the pandemic, highlighted the shifting perspectives of others towards them during this unique

societal period, which contributed to the reinforcement of incongruent categorizations.

Particularly, participants in Group B vividly portray the daily struggles of those in the intermittent stage of establishing a sense of belonging. They demonstrated a deliberate selection of manifesting their national identity, interpreted as part of their endeavors to construct a more positive image among their social groups. This highlights another intriguing aspect regarding migrants' high reliance on others' perceptions of them in their destination society as some literature suggested. Migrants tend to be more sensitive to others' judgments compared to other groups, given their often precarious and downgraded socioeconomic status compared to their home countries. Consequently, they are much more dependent on normative values to establish their identity and belonging to society (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Fernando & Patriotta, 2020). In this context, this article does not argue that migrants with a sound and strong sense of belonging are not affected by incongruent categorizations at all. It rather reaffirms other scholars' concerns that incongruent categorizations that the destination society inscribes to migrants based on their inherited attributes negatively influence migrants in any socioeconomic circumstances, ultimately undermining cohesive social integration (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; Vertovec, 2023).

This study acknowledges its limitations, primarily due to the small number of participants from a specific group of highly skilled voluntary migrants within the same national background. Although the insights derived from this analysis may offer valuable perspectives on the experiences of other highly skilled migrants facing incongruent categorizations, future studies may broaden their scope to encompass a more diverse range of migrants in different geographical contexts. This expansion would allow for a comparison of how migration type, destination society attitudes, and sociocultural categorizations between the home and destination countries influence migrants' identity contestation and result in various senses of belonging.

In addition, the implications of this study may transcend the ongoing issues on the politicization of migrants in the social integration discourse: the demonizing rhetoric of migrants along with the rise of populist right-wing politics (Wodak, Khosravinik, and Mral 2013; van Heerden et al. 2014). Future research may delve into the sources of such incongruent categories, examining how they reinforce and intensify social division, and explore a sense of belonging in shaping and contributing to the ongoing discussions on social integration.

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Appendix: Interview Guidelines

- Interview Theme: Understanding the identity and sense of belonging
- Date: 09.2020 ~ 11.2020
- Time: TBD
- Place: Online Zoom conversation
- Interviewer: Sonya Sunyoung Park
- Interviewee: TBD
- Language: Korean or English

1. INTERVIEW PROCESS

Introduce the aim of the study

This study aims to understand migrants' identity and sense of belonging. This study is a part of the interviewer's Doctoral project, followed by the first research on migrants' manifestation of their identity in online social network via contents analysis of the migrants' postings. To bridge the previous study with this interview, we will try not only to compare the interviewee' own definition of identity with the previous findings but also to examine whether there are any relations of such identity manifested, in between online and offline society. The research expects to contribute this study to the enhancement of social awareness of Korean migrants in Germany, given that it is a minority of ethnicity amongst other major migrant groups in Germany.

Introduce yourself

I have been working on my PhD project at BAGSS in Germany since October 2018. Given that I have lived in different countries in the past, I naturally got interested in migrants' identity for my study. Thanks to my background, I could sympathize with such complex feeling of being migrants more than others, particularly those from South Korea living in Europe.

Inform interviewee of confidentiality

This interview, by all means, keeps confidential and never to transmit other than the purpose of this research, unless there are consents from the interviewees for the specific uses. The interviewer only has access to the original transcript of interview and the recorded file.

Inform interviewee/respondent of anonymity

The name of interviewees going to be anonymized unless the interviewees' consent to allow

the usage of their family name in the article.

Inform interviewee of the right not to answer a question if they do not wish to

Inform interviewee of right to stop the interview at any time without jeopardy

Get consent (verbal or written) to participate

Get consent for audio recording

2. INTERVIEWEES

Interviewees are recruited via open call for the interviews from two online social communities with Korean migrants living in Germany, which are the sample groups of the researcher's previous research. The conditions given for the interviewees are: those of the members who have lived in Germany more than a year, who are often visiting different types of OSNs and communicate with the members therein, who are willing to consent for using the interview contents for the research.

3. QUESTIONS with examples

Q1. A brief understanding of interviewee's background of migration:

- How long have you lived in Germany?
- How long will you stay more?
- What brought you here?
- What do you do?
- Do you work here?
- What is your profession?

Q2. Self-definition on the own identity and sense of belonging:

- Tell me about your overall impression of living in Germany, especially when you think about the differences from that of in South Korea.
- How do you think who you are in Germany?
- How do others think who you are in Germany?

Q3. Offline social community

- How do you usually spend your free time? With whom?
- Which social/working communities do you feel belonged these days?
- When do you specifically feel belonging to the communities?

Q4. Online social community

- How do you think about the role of different online social media in your social settlement in Germany?
- Do you think it affects your identity and belonging here?
- Do you differentiate the purpose of socialization in online society from that of your offline society?

Q5. Choice of the community, in light of own definition of audience

- Do you choose a specific community to interact about a certain topic? Why?
- Can you give me an example of your recent interactions in that community?
- How do you differentiate the topic among different communities?

Study 2: "Who Are *Us* and *Them* Today?" Dynamics of Korean Migrants' Identity in Their Online Social Movement in Germany[1]

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 group identity, nationalism, transnationalism, ethnic stereotype, online social movement*

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I. 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.[2]

In addition, traditional Korean identity has highlighted its exclusiveness and single-ethnicity-

[2] 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).

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 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.

II. 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 migrants in Europe think about themselves.[3]

[3] 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 497,000 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).

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.

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).

III. Analysis and Central Findings

1. 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.[4] 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.

[4] 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 (Feb.~Jun. 2020)	Critical Points		Identity Contestation Process (Abdelal et al. 2006)
	Exclusive membership website	Facebook Closed Group	
Stage 1) Issue Emerged (Late Feb.)	- The sociocultural context of Germany in 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 Mar.)	- Heated debates about who we are in Germany and why this matters/or does not matter	- Provoking solidarity - Planning the ongoing actions	Contestation intensified
Stage 3) Decision-making (Mar.-Apr.)	- How Korean nationalism constitutes who we are	- Embracing the identity as Asians	Resistance or reconciliation
Stage 4) Movement Outcome (Mid-Apr.)	- The little reaction came out from the maintained identity as an exclusive Korean	- Collective identity firmly manifested	Identity maintained or changed
Stage 5) Aftermath (Late Apr. ~Jun.)	- The politicization of the organizers as "Far Left"	- Keep protecting Asian rights in Germany/Europe	Reassurance of collective identity

1) Issue emerged: Driver of contestation

The following post led to a conversation with over 50 replies, where members shared their experiences as East Asian or East Asian women living in Germany:[5]

"*Is it only me who feels offended by this?*" (March 26, 2020, a posting in the Facebook closed group).

Although an online petition, which had around 42,000 supporters in March, triggered the social movement and gained attention from the media in Germany and South Korea, dialogues questioning the advertisement's intention had already started in the Facebook group shortly after the ad was published. Early posts aimed to inform community members about the ad and

[5] The data collected for this study are all written in Korean and analyzed accordingly. The quotes introduced here were translated in English by the author.

asked whether they found the message "Smell of Spring" and the image of an East Asian woman offensive. Some members found the ad relatable and supported the idea that it triggered unpleasant memories. Although there were some disagreeing voices about whether the ad intentionally discriminated against East Asian women, the mainstream idea was set as a "micro-aggression" that gained support for official action.

The following post 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?" (March 26, 2020, a posting in the closed Facebook group).[6] 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,

[6] 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.

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.

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.[7] 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

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

See, for instance, the official letter sent by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Germany (in Korean): https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/de-ko/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=.

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. As a result, the fervent atmosphere gradually subsided; the case appeared to have been resolved positively.

5) Aftermath: Reassurance 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 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.

IV. 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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Study 3: How Migrants Manifest Their Transnational Identity Through Online Social Networks: Comparative Findings from a Case of Koreans in Germany[1]

Sunyoung Park and Lasse Gerrits

Abstract:

Although migration has long been an imperative topic in social sciences, there are still needs of study on migrants' unique and dynamic transnational identity, which heavily influences the social integration in the host society. In Online Social Network (OSN), where the contemporary migrants actively communicate and share their stories the most, different challenges against migrants' belonging and identity and how they cope or reconcile may evidently exist. This paper aims to scrutinise how migrants are manifesting their belonging and identity via different technological types of online social networks, to understand the relations between online social networks and migrants' multi-faceted transnational identity. The research introduces a comparative case study on an online social movement led by Koreans in Germany via their online communities, triggered by a German TV advertisement considered as stereotyping East Asians given by white supremacy's point of view. Starting with virtual ethnography on three OSNs representing each of internet generations (Web 1.0 ~ Web 3.0), two-step Qualitative Data Analysis is carried out to examine how Korean migrants manifest their belonging and identity via their views on "who we are" and "who are others". The analysis reveals how Korean migrants' transnational identities differ by their expectation on the audience and the members in each online social network, which indicates that the distinctive features of the online platform may encourage or discourage them in shaping transnational identity as a group identity. The paper concludes with the two main emphases: first, current OSNs comprising different generational technologies play a significant role in understanding the migrants' dynamic social values, and particularly, transnational identities. Second, the dynamics of migrants' transnational identity engages diverse social and situational contexts.

keywords: *Transnational identity, migrants' online social networks, stereotyping migrants, technological evolution of online social network*

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I. Introduction

1. Problem statements

In migration studies, “transnationalism” has long been a widely used concept to explain the globalised social phenomenon taking place beyond the nation-state border (Vertovec 2007, 2009; Blommaert 2013). Given the contemporary migration has become more complex and multidirectional, migrants’ transnational identity tends to be much more dynamic and individually contextualised. The recent term ‘superdiversity’ describes very well such contemporary migrants as “… multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade” (Vertovec 2007). However, in the real-life of migrants, their identity still tends to be seen through the classical border-based frames given by the country of origin, host country, or quite often, by ethnicity. Taking a closer look into the everyday lives of immigrants in destination society, migrants face numerous challenges extended by those existing frames and strive to settle and shape their own identity in the way they can cope with the society where they (hope to) belong (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2016). In this process, migrants not only reflect their desires but also agree with the given views from the people in destination society (Blommaert and Varis 2011). The migrants who just landed in the new world often face the challenges against their identity for the first time in such a process, realising the gap between their own definition of ‘who I am’ and the ‘others’ judgement of ‘who you are’. The fundamental reasons of such conflicts are mainly from the narrow and conflated understanding of migrants’ background through the typical images formed by ‘others’, who are the majority groups of the host society (Sarangi 1996, p. 7; Vieten 2014). A diverse and unique shape of identity places in the core of many relevant social issues in any society where migrant communities exist. Most of the migrants’ communities nowadays emerge on Online Social Network [OSN] s, where like-minded people can easily gather and share their values, thoughts and feelings without limitation of the physical space (Castells 2004; Wellman 2005; Scheepers et al. 2014). Therefore, OSN, as a core mean of communication amongst migrants, may reflect the up-to-date dynamics of migrants’ identity the most. This paper investigates how a migrant group can manifest their transnational identity in diverse ways by looking at a recent social issue alleged by a group of South Koreans in Germany via an online petition, which catalysed them to express their feelings of belonging, especially concerning the stereotyped image of East Asian migrants in

Germany[2].

2. A controversial advertisement

In late February 2019, a German retail chain Hornbach released its commercial on television and online media in German-speaking countries to promote its Do-It Yourself shops. The commercial quickly became viral but not for the advertisement itself. Instead, its main message led a South Korean doctoral student in Germany to start an international petition[3] that gained much attention in a short period. The petition claimed that the advertisement was discriminatory in the way it pitched white men versus a woman of East Asian descent[4]. The advertisement's message was ambiguous, and the petition starter expressed dismay with the implied stereotypes of East Asian women for the company's primary target group of white men engaging in DIY activities. The petition fired up the East Asian migrants in Germany to organise a social movement via different OSN channels, following the manner of the contemporary hybrid movement such as #metoo campaign[5] (Caren et al. 2020). Given the #metoo was to accuse the different degrees of sexism that women have had to bear in their lives, this movement – with own hashtag #ich_ wurde_geHornbacht (meaning, "I was (offended) by Hornbach" in German) – has centred on the subtle racism against East Asian people in Europe. People have actively shared their experiences with the stereotyped and conflated prejudice of Germans (mostly indicating white men) to East Asian women, which implies the sexual objectification of any women who have young East Asian appearances. This brings again how the misjudgment of 'others' in host society may affect the immigrants feeling

[2] South Koreans in Germany are the largest Korean immigrant group in Europe and third largest East Asian migrants in Germany next to those from China and Vietnam, comprising approximately 45 thousands of people (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea 2019). Over 77% of them are highly educated, including digital literacy, which allows them to actively utilise OSNs in their everyday social lives more than the other groups (Bertelsmann 2018).

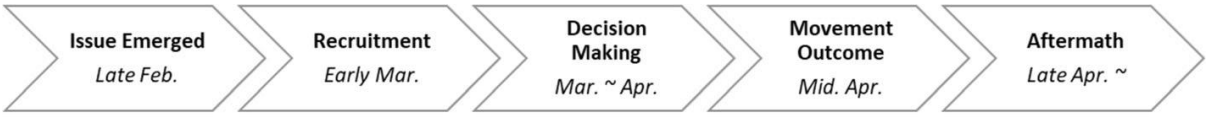
[3] On the online petition website "change.org": https://www.change.org/p/wolfgang-rupf-wir-stehen-gegen-dasrassistische-und-frauenverachtende-unternehmen-hornbach

[4] The sequence of scenes first showed a couple of bulky men in a pastoral scenery doing manual labour, and their sweaty cloths are collected and packed by two scientists - whose appearances seem like a white man and an Asian man. In the next scene, an East Asian-looking woman buys one such package from an automatic vending machine and proceeds to smell its contents, with a close-up of her face showing her being extremely aroused. A text superimposed on the image of the woman reads "the smell of spring".

[5] The "Me Too" campaign created one exemplary way of the participatory online social movement, proving that a specific social issue going viral in online may exert significant influence on the individuals' online behaviour to share their relevant experiences and thoughts in their online social networks (Juris et al. 2012; Margetts et al. 2015; Roth-cohen et al. 2019).

of belonging. Koreans in Germany, who already have negative personal experiences due to the unified prejudice against 'East Asian', would feel offended as the woman in the scene may address anyone with the similitude of her ethnic appearance. The movement quickly gained much traction in the German, Korean and other international press, as well as South Korean migrant communities in many European countries including Germany. The issue provoked the migrants to share their thoughts and experiences in their OSNs, related to the advertisement but also more broadly about the experience and the stereotypes one encounters when establishing a living as an (East) Asian migrant in Germany. On top of that, some of the community members started channelling the online dynamics into online and offline social movements, including street demonstrations in Berlin and Seoul, an online counter-campaign with videos and posters, and releasing a public statement sent to the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Germany and relevant German government officials. Consequently, the German Communication and Media Committee (Werberat) decided to ban the commercial, giving the following reasons for the ban: "degrading and discriminating against a certain group of people". These stipulate that people in commercial advertising should not discriminate against "on the basis of their gender, their origin, their race, their language (...)". The advert's withdrawal was the demanded outcome, but the level of activities in various OSNs remained high even after the ban. Indeed, such favourable outcome catalysed the participants to talk more about their daily experiences until around the end of May 2019, when the momentum gradually lowered. The participants became less emotional than before but more determined, mainly sharing messages about how they have been protecting their rights as migrants in Germany and combating the discrimination they encounter. Over 3 months, the social event went through five different phases, four of which similar to the ones identified by Polletta and James (2001), and an additional fifth phase defined as the aftermath by authors (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Timeline of the incident and the forming of the social movement



Five(5) Phases of the social event (by author 2019, sourced from Polleta & Jasper 2001)

Given the issue cuts to the heart of the discrimination of a certain migrant group's identity, it is vital to scrutinise the narratives shared amongst the party concerned to understand "behind the scene", rather than only looking at the movement itself. The ethnographic approach allows the researchers to gain deeper insights into how people interpret and act on the situation they

face (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Hammersley 2015). Thus, we have deployed virtual ethnography (Hine 2008; Boellstorff et al. 2012), focusing on the narratives in different OSNs, the most popularly used by Korean migrants in Germany. We have observed how the migrants share their ideas and feelings with other members and how they constitute their own way of belonging in the host society (see also Schrooten 2012). The debates particularly played out over different types of OSNs. On the one hand, a Facebook group featured an extended discussion about the feeling of being offended by the depiction of East Asians in the commercial and an urgent need to speak up to enhance the social awareness in Germany. On the other hand, one of the largest membership-only web communities questioned the necessity of the movement and featured discussions as to whether the reaction from Korean migrants was overly sensitive in the face of a German culture those Koreans may have misunderstood. It became more evident that members in the various OSNs would describe themselves in different ways – ranging as "traditional Korean", "Korean-German", "Asian", and "minority in the migrant society in Germany". Such descriptions appear to inform the posters' views on the contested commercial and to drive the narratives among the members in each OSN. Those different types of OSN respectively represent different stages in the development of the internet, broadly classified as Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 (O'Reilly 2007; Vickery and Wunsch-Vincent 2007). It seems that the types of OSN coincide with different expressions of the transnational identity of Koreans in Germany, which may imply a relationship between the type of technology and platform and the ways transnational identity is formed. However, the relationship between (manifestations of) transnational identity and technology has not received much scholarly attention. Using the case as *pars pro toto*, we continuously investigate the narratives in three OSNs of which respectively represent each of different internet generations, with a focus on the following research question:

"How do Korean migrants differentiate the manifestation of their transnational identity by type of OSNs, and what factors explain these differences?"

The focus lies on a) what kind of identities are manifested in each OSN, b) what are the different features among the OSNs and c) how do these features influence the expression of certain types of identity. We analysed the data with two-step Qualitative Data Analysis, which juxtapose the results with the characteristics of different generations of OSNs (Flick 2014). The first step was Qualitative Content Analysis, inductively coded the texts from the postings to examine the associations between different OSNs and the postings manifesting the members'

thoughts and feelings on the event (Elo & Kyngäs 2008; Schreier 2012). The second step with Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis 1998) was carried out with a hybrid approach between inductive and deductive coding. Based on the descriptive codes from the first step, we developed interpretive codes to embrace the profound understanding of the posters' intentions that eventually steer to the relationship between transnational identity manifested and different types of OSNs. In the following sections, we firstly discuss those different generations of OSN and relate them how migrants' transnational identities may emerge from such networks. Next, we discuss the research method deployed in the empirical part and report the findings. The final part of the article discusses the implications of the findings vis-à-vis existing literature.

II. Online social network and migrants' transnational identity

1. Nature and evolution of migrants' online social network

To begin with, we distinguish the difference between the definition of network and community in the article. Network refers to the web of individual relationships and connections comprising of nodes and links amongst members, and that networks may construct communities with the people having a shared identity or interest around the topic that represents the collective intention (Sonn and Fisher 1996). In the early stage of migration process, migrants tend to develop dense networks to acquire relevant information and familiarise themselves in the host society. Yet, those networks tend to be temporal as constantly reshaped and modified in the latter stages (Boyd 1989, as cited in Ryan 2011). Researchers who observe the dynamics of migrants' networking and joining/creating the communities convince that the migrant, who have accessibility to the OSNs, tend to engage in the community concerning of own interests, not a shared ethnicity or country of origin like a past (Gill and Bialski 2011; Vieten 2014). This temporality is associated with the Granovetter's notion of "weak ties", which highlights the dynamics of alienations to shared information for an individual's desire to integrate into the society (Granovetter 1983). Prior researches distinguish a difference in the strength of the migrants' social ties between online and offline networks (Cornelius et al. 2009; Komito & Bates 2011; Boyd and Ellison 2007; Postill 2008). While offline relationships are characterised as strong ties, the relationships situated online are constituted as weak ties. Accordingly, online social networks should be understood as being composed of more instantaneous, light and diverse relationships, in line with the proliferation of 'network individualism' (Wellman 2001; Castells 2011). Network individualism signifies the shift of unit of community from 'group' to 'individual', which coincides with the transformation of OSNs. Unlike the classical model of community as group-based, tightly knit, and emphasising the group identity as a whole, the community on network individualism focuses on the connected individuals, sharing and accepting more diverse identities. Accordingly, the community on network individualism is more fragmented and often reshaping their network schemes with other individuals on different occasions (Feenberg and Bakardjieva 2016; Postill 2008). The current research is important for the interaction between the technology and its users in expressing their transnational identities. We differentiate between two mechanisms: (1) manifestation of transnational identity as the result of matching expectations with the characteristics of the three generations of OSNs; (2)

mediation as the process of negotiating a transnational identity according to prevailing social norms on each generation of OSN. If OSN fosters online ties, it also concerns the shaping and persistence of social networks of migrants in host countries (Nedelcu 2012; Oiarzabal 2013; Dekker & Engbersen 2014). OSN enables migrants to develop their social capital, namely by improving their livelihoods, mobilising assets, and defending themselves against social discrimination. At the individual level, the exchange of information and the formation of relationships of trust are the building blocks of migration networks (Castells 2011; Chen and Choi 2011; Castles and Miller 2009; Lingel et al. 2014). An important aspect is that the social network can be created and recreated regardless of physical locations and borders. In transcending the connection with migrants' offline networks, the online platform allows migrants to create more dynamic social networks according to their choice of time, space, people, and purpose (Wellman 2001; Castells 2011; Dolata 2013). In this context, online space can play a role as a buffer zone for isolation and/or integration in the destination society (Lim et al. 2016). There has been accumulating evidence that the change of community space is linked to the emergence of OSN, given a reciprocal relationship between the structure of the OSN and that of community (Scheepers et al. 2014). OSN often highlights the core characteristics of an online community, including its identity, in the sense that the communication among the members is based on texts and pictures which leave explicit evidence to assure the identity (cf. Komito & Bates 2011). While there is no doubt that technology has transformative power (Dolata 2013; Yearley 2014), this capacity is not inherent to the artefact but rests on society's interaction with it (Bijker 1997; 2010). This perspective frames technology as a configuration of material artefacts and social practices. It implies that different social groups will read technology and interact with it in different ways, culminating in different practices (Pinch & Bijker 1984; Sismondo 2004). It goes for technology at large, and online, digital technologies in particular (Fuchs 2008). The structure and dynamics of social networks that play out in digital space need to be understood as an enactment of that configuration. As the internet has evolved in general, so have the OSN that have emerged online communities out of like-minded individuals meeting online. Early types are characterised by closed memberships of the community that allowed members to build a guarded sphere that offered the opportunity of establishing persistent and private relationships between members. In such type of environment, namely Web 1.0, the online communities are severed so that it is hard for the people outside of the community to find and join. Came the 2000s; a change emerged with a more open and interactive form of OSN since then termed Web 2.0 to

differentiate it from the closed nature of the original OSN. People build more flexible and diverse networks on global social platforms such as Facebook, which still give the room to develop the private community but with greater openness to the people outside than before. More recently, the openness and participatory nature of OSN has extended considerably to provide users with a customised, semantic web. The relationship becomes more instant and temporal, and people tend to link themselves with the others on the same interest of the moment, rather than sticking in the fixed community for a long time. It has then become more widely known as Web 3.0 (Blank and Reisdorf 2012; Aghaei 2012). Although all OSN run on the same digital infrastructure, there are distinct differences between the various generations, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Different generations of Online Social Networks and their main characteristics

	Web 1.0	**Web 2.0**	**Web 3.0**
Platform Type	Membership-based websites & blogs	Group communities among the members of widespread global portals and social media	Global social media
Message Style	Long, descriptive, written style of language	Mid-to Long, relatively concise, mixed style of written/spoken language	Short, abstracted, usually spoken/informal style of language
Audience	Focused members in the closed group	Members and some related users	Open to public
Accessibility	Restricted	Somewhat restricted	Unrestricted

The differences matter because they may coincide with different types of migrants, the different ways in which they express themselves, and how they would prefer to relate to others in their networks and communities. The most significant differences between OSNs include the audience (accessibility of the messages), how easy it is to find and join the community from the outside, and the cohesion of the community, i.e., how tightly bound the members are. The latter is the proverbial 'glue' that holds the community together.

2. Migrants' transnational identity

In this section, we shed light on the transnational identity per se and relate the stereotyping issue in the host society. Echoing Vertovec's "Superdiversity" as a concept of contemporary migrants' identity, this paper uses the term 'transnational' to capture migrants' unique sense of belonging that can be individually contextualised and diversified beyond the nation-state

borders (Vertovec 2007; Blommaert and Varis 2011). There is confrontation between the norms and values that shape the identity in the home society and those prevalent in the host society, which nudges migrants to be constantly aware of who they are and how they (re) present themselves in various situations. They will also become more acutely aware of how others (mainly in the destination society) perceive them and which societal position they are believed to belong (Waldinger 2015). Such pressures drive the generation of transnational identities in various ways, including as assimilating, isolating, integrating, or binary being in (or beyond) home and destination society (Glick-Schiller 2003; Castles and Miller 2009; Vertovec 2015; Waldinger 2015). The newly formed identity is not necessarily a trade-off with the original identity. A migrant may simultaneously experience a strong sense of belonging to the home society, a sense of assimilation in the host society, and the transnationalism 'across the borders' (Sheringham 2010; Tamaki 2011). Stereotyping minor ethnicities in the host society is not a new issue in migration studies. Till the early 2000s, it has been mainly discussed in the Northern American contexts where the migrants' endemic identity has been confronted by white supremacy throughout their modern migration history. Sarangi observes how the conflation of the cultural stereotyping of Asian migrants in the United States affects those Asians' sense of belonging (Sarangi 1996). Such a social norm can also create internal gaps of the belonging between early generations and later generations in the same migrant group. Pyke and Dang's case study gives an example of how the migrants who just landed in the host society – so-called 'Fresh-Of-the-Boat' – are likely to have conflicts with the earlier generation of migrants who already have formed own way of assimilated identity, so-called 'whitewashed', much reflecting the images given by "others" (Pyke & Dang 2003). While those 'Fresh-Of-the-Boats' are engaging with people from a similar background (country, religion, profession, among others) to learn the social norms and behaviours, they also realise how such stereotyped prejudice may affect their positions in the host society. They find the like-minded people who may feel the same agony, share every day's thoughts and feelings, and re-establish their own social ties. In this way, migrants may speak up for empowering themselves against certain discriminatory events that counteract their desires of belonging, by developing new communities that centre on shared identities. Naturally, online communities are constantly active. A particular incident, such as the one triggered by the ad mentioned earlier, elicits migrants' positions, stances, ties, emotions and feelings about being an alien in the host society. Consequently, such an incident provides the researcher with a *casus pars pro toto* through which migrants' various dynamics of transnational identity can be mapped and analysed.

III. Qualitative data analysis

As discussed earlier, this research's virtual ethnography focuses on the narrative development of Koreans in Germany as taking place in three types of OSNs across the five phases of the event, as shown in the introduction to this paper (see Fig. 1). The three OSNs included as the cases are: a website A representing Web 1.0, a Facebook group B representing Web 2.0, and Twitter representing Web 3.0.[6], particularly with the messages written by the users giving the clues of their geographical heritage as Koreans. With Twitter being almost entirely open to the entire public (except for direct messages), there were no specific steps required to collect data. For A and B, we asked the administrator for anonymised use of their data. Data was collected from postings and subsequent discussion threads (replies), and tweets (in the case of Twitter) about the topic. The data sources are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Data sources and main features of the discussions on each generation of Online Social Network

	Web 1.0 (Website A)	Web 2.0 (B Facebook group)	Web 3.0 (Postings in Twitter)
Group size	21,200 ~ 21,300 members	Approx. 41,220 members	Uncountable
Number of postings analysed	24	30	29
Language of postings	Korean	Mostly Korean, some English or German (approx. 10%)	Korean (approx. 60%), English (30%), German (10%)

The relevant postings from each OSN were imported to NVivo 12 for the two-step qualitative data analysis[7]: the first step taken is inductively developing the codes for each case according to Qualitative Content Analysis, aiming to identify the overarching associations among data (Schreier 2012). The second step was interpreting the descriptive codes from the first step to code the patterns[8], which can succinctly interpret the aspects of the findings, following

[6] The exact names of the sample groups A and B can be easily tracked by searching certain keywords on the internet, therefore they are anonymised here. This was also pre-requisite for getting permission to use their data for this research.

[7] By virtue of understanding Korean, English and German, it was possible to read and code most of the texts collected.

[8] In Boyatzis's Thematic Analysis (1998), said that at the minimum describes and organizes the repeated

Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis 1998). From here, the researchers actively used memos to summarise the coding units from the existing codes to build the code hierarchy which at the end, clustered into three themes as highest parent codes called “Tones of voice”, “Expected Audience” and “Group Identity manifested” (see Table 3).

Qualitative content analysis

As mentioned above, the unit of analysis encompassed all messages containing meaningful information and pointers regarding the properties of the online communities in general and the expression of identities in particular. In the first step, each unit of analysis was taken as a coding unit to develop five descriptive categories as (a) Sentiments, b) Us vs Them, and finally, c) Key Messages. In the case of some, the units contained multiple coding units (which often occurs in the Web 1.0 OSN with its lengthy and explanatory style of writing), and all of them remained in the dataset as individual coding units.

Thematic analysis

The Qualitative Content Analysis results showed the associations among the descriptive codes, and we continued with the Thematic Analysis by abstracting the descriptive codes into the interpretive codes to seek more concrete patterns underneath. The final interpretive codes constitute the following three categories - d) Tones of Voice, e) Expected Audience, and f) Identity Manifested. In this stage, we segmented the unit of analysis into coding units because a unit sometimes contains multiple ideas for different categories. For example, a unit from group B was categorised as “East Asian Women in Germany” under b) Us vs Them category. Still, the context of a unit implies multiple meanings that contribute to the mutual interpretive codes on Thematic Analysis – such as “Stereotyped ethnicity” and “Minority amongst other migrant groups in Germany” under the category f) Identity Manifested (see Table 3).

observations at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon.

Table 3 Comparative Analysis on Three Online Social Networks

		Web 1.0	Web 2.0	Web 3.0
Descriptive Codes	**a) Sentiments**	'puzzled', 'confused', 'sceptic'	'disgusted', 'frustrated', 'determined'	'outrageous', 'weird', 'perplexed', 'angry'
	b) Us vs Them	Korean-German Migrants vs Koreans /Japanese	East Asian (Women) in Germany (or in Europe) vs Germans in Germany	Ethnic/gender minorities in foreign countries vs Racism/Sexism
	c) Key messages	- Counter argument against negative responses to the ad - Nothing (little) is wrong with the ad	- Empowerment of Asian Migrants in Europe - Accusation of the message of the ad as stereotyping Asians	- Condemnation of Racism/Sexism in Germany (Europe) - Empowerment of (East) Asians (women)
Interpretive Codes	**d) Tones of voice**	Mostly calm, barely using the emotional words or exclamation mark	Emotional words are often used, much more in the 1, 2 phases, relatively less in the 4,5 phases	Highly Emotional, often with aggressive expressions and/or extreme generalisations
	e) Expected Audience	- Koreans living in Germany, who may understand both Korean and German cultural contexts	People concerning the issues from Korean-German relations	People concerning the discrimination issues from all kinds of subjects in the world
	f) Identity Manifested	- Traditional Korean - Antagonism based on the historical relation with Japan - Naturalised Korean-Germans, having a different identity from Koreans in Korea	- Stereotyped East Asians - Gender minority - Minority amongst other migrant groups in Germany	- (East) Asian - Gender Minority - Ethnic Minority - Humans

IV. Findings

To begin with the overarching comparative perspective, the analysis shows that each platform has numerous distinctive characteristics. First, different audiences of each platform indicate various aspects of implications. Migrants' selection of a platform to manifest specific identity varies, according to the audience given as South Koreans in Germany in the Web 1.0 community (private/ closed), Koreans in Germany and other closely involved people in the Web 2.0 community (semi-private/semi-closed), and finally, worldwide social media users with various nationalities in that of Web 3.0 (public/opened). Second, the defining "who we are" and "others" are tightly associated with the group identity. Throughout three OSNs, a number of definitions on b) Us vs Them are already the emblem of their identity: for instance, 'Korean in Germany' in the Web 1.0, and 'East Asian' in the Web 2.0 for 'who we are', and 'Japanese' in the Web 1.0, and 'White men' in the Web 3.0 for 'who others are'. Third, the analysis of sentiments reveals the different bonds of the relationship among the community members, especially in consideration of the degree of emotions expressed in each OSN. On the one hand, the posters in the Web 1.0 seemed to feel the tighter ties with the expected audiences so that the postings keep their tones of voice polite and calm. Unlike some previous positive topics that the members used to share their emotions freely, they tended to talk about such a controversial and disturbing issue more carefully and rationally concerning others' different feelings. It may convince the East Asian culture that people tend to care and concern their friends' feelings while expressing their emotions but not to the case with strangers (Ma-Kellams and Blascovich 2012). On the contrary, the postings in Web 3.0 contained the most intense emotional tones of voices because the audience seems not their 'friends' but instant 'partnership' whom the posters could relatively easily attack and end the relationship once the common interest disappears. The members in the Web 3.0 who voluntarily gathered with the same hashtags were not likely to force their identities to others but valued diverse opinions. The most distinguishing dynamic on the sentiment is in the Web 2.0, as its tones of voice have changed throughout those five-time phases (see Fig. 1). The initial postings expressed doubted and uncertain attitudes toward the advertisement, asking other members if their disturbed feelings would be personally oriented. After most of the posters agreed on the interpretation that the advertisement contains ethnic and gender discrimination, the number of postings exploded, and the tone changed to a more explicit emotional expression. When the movement reached the peak phase to initiate the social movement, the postings became much more

rational, trying to recruit the people and announcing the progress of their group actions. The postings were changed to a calmer tone of voice in the last phase, but their collective identity became clear and determined - as East Asians in Germany. As such, the sentiments also involve in the distinctive degrees of developing collective identity in each OSN, indicating how community and networks reside differently. The people in the Web 1.0 often indicate their collective identity that the members are valuing the community therein as an actual relationship beyond the screen. However, the Web 1.0 has the members relatively tightly knitted and only affiliating themselves with the limited people in the specific circumstance - identifying their community's identity as a Korean heritage but currently belonged to Germany. Therefore, people in Web 1.0 do not consider the issue as closely related to them. The Web 2.0 created the most firmed solidarity against the discrimination, based on the understanding of transnational identity as East Asians in Germany (Europe). Drawing the more flexible boundaries to include the people from other similar ethnic and geographical backgrounds, the members in the Web 2.0 consider 'us' as the broader term that encompasses anyone sharing the same identity. Therefore, the issue was taken more seriously and personally than those in other OSNs. While the movement is moving forward by those organisers in the Web 2.0, the members have consolidated the group identity and still uses the space to share the relevant stories and experiences. In contrast, social networking takes place more instantly and temporally on Web 3.0. It provides stronger anonymity and big-data customisation for the members to link those in the same interest easily and filter out those not interested at the same time. This system provides the members great liberty to express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts, but limitations to constitute the proper community due to its basis of a weak tie and temporal interest. Besides, numerous postings in Web 3.0 criticise the advert while highlighting the human rights and justice for the minority people in society overall, but seldom trying to influence or push their opinions to the other people. It indicates that the majority in Web 3.0 is in a position taking the universal level of identity as 'human', which, in the end, did not motivate the people to weave strong collective identity with the people who are targeted by the incident, and therefore, harder to form solidarity for the active movements as what Web 2.0 community does.

Another interesting feature in the analysis is that ethnic discrimination is much more highlighted than other underlying issues in the incident such as sexism. There are many postings in Web 3.0 from different geographical backgrounds that pointed out the gender issue in the commercial. However, most of the postings written by Koreans (or at least written in the

language of Korean) on any platforms put their emphasis on the humiliating message of the East Asian cultural heritage, often bringing the clues from the posters' personal experiences that the 'Europeans' are not able to distinguish Chinese, Japanese and Korean people. It sheds lights on how migrants in Germany may concern the perspective of the other people in the destination society, when they shape own new identity. Finally, the analysis elicits that the identities manifested in each platform differ to each other, in light of transnationalism (see Fig. 2). Identities are labelled considering geographical, cultural, and gender points of view. The group identities examined are as follows with some quotes from each OSN to introduce some examples (translated).

– Web 1.0:

- Traditional Korean, who should be distinguished from Japanese because of the hostile historical relation with it*: "Why are we Koreans bothered, when the target is obviously a Japanese girl?"*
- Korean migrants fully integrated in Germany so that different from Koreans in South Korea: "You are still further behind to be integrated, if you don't understand this German joke."

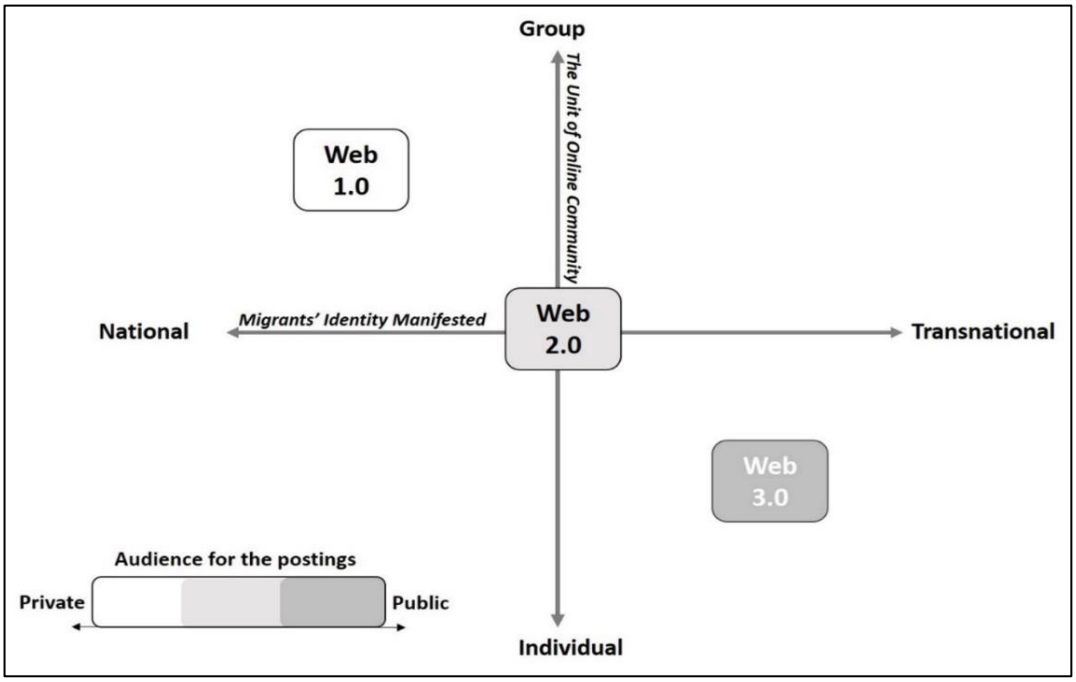
– Web 2.0:

- East Asian in Germany: "We should speak up to defend East Asians' right in Europe."
- Ethnic and gender minority in Europe: "I am experiencing similar threats and mockeries in my daily life, only because I am (East) Asian woman."

– Web 3.0

- Ethnic and Gender Minority: "The ad makes Asian women's everyday life in Germany even harsher."
- Women in the white-male-superior society: "This (ad) reflects white Germans' racial morality about (East) Asian women."

Figure 2. Relation among transnational identity, the unit of community, and type of audience



Developed by authors, sources from the result of own analysis

All things taken together, this case study proves that the more advanced type of OSN is used, the more transnational migrants' identity is manifested, associated with the degree of public openness of audiences in each platform. As seen in Fig. 2, migrants are expecting more public audiences in the latter type of OSN than others, considering the definitions of "Us" and "Them" in each community. It can be understood that the more recent type of OSN paves the way for embracing the audience from diverse backgrounds who may have and understand the more transnational identity. Besides, it is evident that the more individual and diversity-valued OSN embraces the more flexible and broader concept of transnational identity. It is vital to bear in mind that the result does not mean the group identity represents an individual's identity exclusively in a specific OSN. When we look at the Web 2.0 community, the solidarity and the movement had gradually bolstered, and later, there were only remained fewer voices against the leading ideas. Since the third phase started, only the members echoing the developed group identity and participating in the online movement remained and have kept creating relevant postings and replies in the community. It assures again that the people's choice is the result of the negotiation among the type of identity, type of expected audience, and finally, the type of OSN. The research shows that the OSNs in Web 2.0 and 3.0 show the broader scope of transnational identity, while those in Web 1.0 shows the narrower identity viz. national identity (see also Fig. 2). While transnationalism has flourished in the last decades along with

international migration (Portes 2003; Glick-Schiller 2003; Levitt & Schiller 2004; Castles and Miller 2009; Vertovec 2015; Waldinger 2013; Waldinger 2015, among others), so have the members of migrants' online communities that expended its arena from Web 1.0 to Web 3.0. That means, migrants who wish to share their national identity may feel familiar with the earlier type of online platform, where the migrants' communities form the closed social groups based on the same destination countries. Such a conventional and heritage-oriented identity in the Web 1.0 community may be more common when the Web1.0 platform was emerged and most widely used amongst migrants in the past. Likewise, transnationalism, the more recently disseminated type of identity, is more strongly anchoring in the later types of platforms where the applied technology embraces the worldwide social network. While different generational technologies are co-existing as options for the people to communicate, people tend to choose a technology that may provide a more favourable environment to reflect a specific type of transnational identity. Notably, it is people who continuously keep creating new technology for the better application of the current shape of society, but then, it is technology that enables people to utilise it in a way the technology provides. We reflect these findings vis-à-vis the theories on the relationship between technological evolution and society, and echo the idea that technology and people are affecting each other, keep creating the reciprocal relationship. Especially when it comes to the relation between OSNs and migrants' transnational identity, our research shows that the influence does not exist in a single direction, but rather it is the reciprocal relationship. Given that OSN platforms are existing simultaneously, the technology reflects the period when it was created as a primary mean of social networking. Likewise, our research proves that technology itself does not determine how migrants develop their identity. The research answers back to the existing argument that the online ties hinder migrants from adapting to the new circumstances due to the tighter bond to the society of origin (Komito 2011; Suh and Hsieh 2018, among others).

V. Conclusion

Migrants' transnational identity can be diversified by social positioning within and across home and destination society. This paper highlights migrants' dynamic formation of transnational identity and its interaction with OSNs in contemporary society. The comparative case study on three OSNs of Koreans in Germany examines how migrants' transnational identities may differ by their expectations on the audience of each online social network, concerning the technological types of online platform that may encourage or discourage in manifesting own transnational identity, and eventually shaping it as a group identity. The findings also imply the reciprocating relationship between online social networks and the migrants' transnational identity: a certain type of online social network drags a certain type of audience and encourage them to organise such type of community. Likewise, the technological evolution on the online social platform also has been affected by the changing desires of the users, namely migrants in this research, as the more transnational identity migrants wish to share with others, the more audiences who echo such identity are gathered in the more open and transnational type of online platform. From the methodological aspect, the research provides a good example of using qualitative data analysis on the narratives in online social networks as a conduit to understanding the dynamics of international migrants' up-to-date identity and belongings. All in all, this paper concludes with three core suggestions. First, current online social networks comprising different generational technologies play a significant role in developing migrants' dynamic social values and transnational identities swaying between home and destination society. We should take into account more carefully that a migrant may have different layers of identity that would be selectively manifested in the wide range of online agoras, where expected, a certain audience exists. This means that an individual who has multiple access to various online social networks would choose one of them to share one identity on a specific occasion. Perhaps, choose another network for sharing another identity that could situationally vary from the previous one. Second, the causation between technology and migrants' transnational identities should not be dichotomised as one shapes another. Instead, we suggest that they reciprocally influence and affect each other. People keep creating new technology for the better application of the current shape of society, and that technology enables people to utilise it in a way the technology provides. Finally, migrants' transnational identity, multi-layered and complex, should not be defined by the fixed frames such as conventional nation-state or ethnicity concepts but should be contextualised with different social dimensions that

may affect the individual's choice of belonging to the host society. Nota bene, this study only provides the evidence sourced from particular circumstances in the realm of migration society, which leaves generous room for further potential studies. The limitation also lies in observations in the anonymised narratives in the virtual world without knowing those posting writers' personal context. For example, an individual may have a gap between offline and online behaviours regarding the same issue. Or there might be unrevealed reasons for participating/organising such movement other than identity issues. If we could study their deeper reasons of diversifying own identity, it would nurture the vigorous understanding of the relationship between online social networks and the formation of migrants' transnational identity. Accordingly, two tracks of further studies would be suggested, considering the breadth of the study and that of the depth. Widening the breadth of the study is the replicating applications of the two-step Qualitative Data Analysis on the other similar cases with different migrant groups to test whether those cases would be coherent with existing findings. To cope with the depth of this study, the more direct and intimate ways of interaction with corresponding migrants - such as in-depth interview or focus group - would be much helpful to see the core mechanism of the current findings, especially when it comes to the relationship between migrants' choice of social communication with others and shaping own unique transnational identity.

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Appendix I. Definitions on each coding unit in two-step Qualitative Data Analysis

1. The First Step - Content Analysis:

a) **Sentiments**

Sentiments are the key to understanding the context of different aspects of postings. On the one hand, some words indicating emotions provide the evidence how the posters are feeling over the subject, such as 'frustrated', 'embarrassed', or 'puzzled', 'confused' that support the self-definition of themselves and why they upset about the commercial. On the other hand, the sentiments reflected in each posting shed light on the legitimacy of their behaviours and their insecure positions in the situation. In some cases, those strong emotional expressions trigger some inner controversies between the members, reproaching the opposite side, mostly with extreme messages and often showing intense emotions. Such conflicts are part of the process filtering out the excessive voices which expedite building the community's solidarity. Here also includes the degree of emotions expressed in the posting. The indicator is set as to how strong the postings are demonstrating the author's feeling, by using certain emotional proofs, including exclamation marks, question marks, emojis, emotion words, attacking/insulting words, slangs, swear words, among others.

b) **Us vs Them**

Under the topic discussed, most of the units contained the expression of author's identities – such as "I, as a Korean living in Germany more than 20 years(from OSN A)", for instance. All of the codes created from a) and b) also indicated to embody the different types of identity. The identity codes are labelled following the quantitative majority rule since the minor voices were steadily diminished as time goes by. Evidently, the more the case moved on to the later phase, the stronger and the more predominant the group identity in each OSN has appeared, particularly in Web 2.0 OSN.

c) **Key messages - the core sources to understand the posters' identity**

While developing the nodes of key messages, the focus lies in the symbolic terms expressing "who I am", "who we are" and "who the others are". By nature of the incident, most units already contained the specific description that can be directly the labels of the codes. The key messages are often the signifiers to understand the

posters' self-definition of their own identities. In fewer instances, there are also some units which do not contain the explicit term but indirectly describe who they are, implying a certain identity manifested in the other neighbouring postings. In such cases, the unit is classified in the same category with those most highly relevant units, labelled with the word/description, most often used in the OSNs.

2. The Second Step - Thematic Analysis:

d) **Tones of voice**

Tones of voice were entitled by considering both contexts and emotions. It gives the key to understand 'whom they think they are', but also how much the posters value the relationship with 'the expected audience'. The highlight exists in case B, which shows dynamics based on its five phases.

e) **Expected Audience**

The codes under this category are mostly sourced from "Us vs them" codes in the first step. It was interesting to see that the posting authors were often drawing the clear line between them and us, but at the same time, trying to persuade the readers - including us, them, and others - why the poster is concerning this issue and therefore, the whole expected audience should listen to their stories. In the end, those codes show the strong relationship with the different types of OSNs, as the openness of the OSN platform constitutes the scale of audiences who may access and read the narratives in the platform.

f) **Group Identity**

We eventually drew out the results as three different group identities manifested in each OSN. In group A, the types of identity pose very nationalistic, either traditional Korean or fully assimilated German citizen or both. Overall, people rather worry about being "over-sensitive" as they cannot relate themselves to the issue. In case of group B, they tried to speak up as "a minority group" from different contexts, yet signifying certain geographical identity such "East Asian", which in fact, reflects the perspectives from "us" and "them". Last but not least, the identity was more liberalised from the conventional borders in group C, highlighting the fact that here, in a part of the world, we are having the discriminating issue which should be addressed in light of migrants' human rights, and gender and racial equality.

Appendix II. Descriptions on Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and Web 3.0

Web 1.0 comprises the membership-only space with specific conditions such as language, religion and nationality so that most migrants from the same geographical background are able to join and communicate, while others will find it much harder to participate. Migrants participating in Web 1.0 OSNs usually conceive who their potential audience is since they have relatively stronger ties among the members than is the case in the latter types of OSNs.

Web 2.0 communities revolve around semi-closed group often created on (worldwide) popular social platforms. It still allows migrants to keep their private and closed networks with the people based in the home country but leaves some room for the other migrant groups from the host country to find them and join communities. The community members typically have weaker ties than those of Web 1.0, although their relationship may become tighter and cohesive under the specific conditions.

Web 3.0 communities are based on individuals rather than networks, examples of which include Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. It enables each migrant to weave person-based networks based on their own choices. In this type of platform, people can easily connect, disconnect, and reconnect with various people throughout the world, which may make its arena much more transnational than other earlier type of OSNs. In turn, it has much weaker social ties. On top of that, migrants using the Web 3.0 OSNs understand that their communication is not limited to a specific audience but publicly opened to a largely anonymous audience.

Study 4: The Impact of Digitalising Public Services on Migrants' Sense of Belonging – A fsQCA Analysis of Highly Skilled Migrants in Germany and the Netherlands[9]

Abstract:

This paper examines the impact of digitalising public services on highly skilled migrants' sense of belonging. Employing a small-N fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) on in-depth interviews with twenty highly skilled migrants in Germany and the Netherlands, the study explores how these migrants interpret the meaning of digitalised essential public services for their quality of life, a feeling of welcome, and eventually their sense of belonging within the destination society. Particularly, qualitative contexts gained from interviews provide abundant interpretation for the QCA formulae. The findings reveal diverse evaluations of digital public services and their impact on participants' daily lives based on their previous experiences. It highlights the importance of comprehensive approaches to improve the digital inclusion of public services from migrants' perspectives to promote a greater sense of belonging. In a broader sense, it underscores the significance of re-considering the concept of social integration that should go beyond solely migrant-related domains when designing policies as a whole. The study also acknowledges its limitations, such as the specific context of the participating migrants, highly skilled with an acute awareness of social rights. Future research could explore different migrant groups in various social settings, including refugees, irregular migrants, and low-cost labour migrants.

Keywords: digitalising public service, migrants' sense of belonging, highly skilled migrants, inclusive public service, fsQCA

List of abbreviations

- QCA: Qualitative Comparative Analysis
- fsQCA: fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis
- SoB: Sense of Belonging
- SDPSx: satisfaction with digitalised public service in the past residence
- SDPS: satisfaction with digitalised public service in the current residence
- SPSx: satisfaction with public service in the past residence
- SPS: satisfaction with public service in the current residence

[9] This is the single-authored manuscript version of the study submitted to *Comparative Migration Studies*, under review at the time of this submission.

I. Introduction

In recent years, the migration landscape has experienced significant development, with migrants harnessing online resources to actively engage in and shape their migration journeys. This paradigm shift highlights the transformative impact of digitalisation on the entire concept of migration, including the institutional system that migrants encounter throughout their migration journey (Castells, 2004; McAuliffe, 2021; Scheepers et al., 2014; Wellman, 2001). When digitalisation occurs throughout the institutional system, its ramifications extend to migrant individuals, particularly affecting various socioemotional aspects of their lives (Bijker, 1997). This paper delves into the impact of digitalisation on the individual-oriented dimensions, particularly linked to migrants' sense of belonging (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008).

Here, a 'sense of belonging' refers to an individual's self-conception of their sense of being part of the 'we' in certain groups of people, organisations, or societies. What makes it particularly significant for migrants is their sense of belonging is built upon newly gained experiences in the destination society during the initial years of settlement. Hence, migrants' sense of belonging is heavily influenced by the attitudes of the destination societies towards them, for example, whether the social system, groups, and individuals welcome, included, or respect migrants as valuable members of society (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008; Ryan, 2018a). Through repeated exposure to social cues, migrants ascertain whether the destination society regards them as part of the collective 'us' or as distant 'them', which becomes a cornerstone of their sense of belonging (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015; Blommaert & Varis, 2011; Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018).

To better understand the impact of digitalising public services on migrants' sense of belonging, it is essential to consider the broader implications of public service delivery first. Previous studies have highlighted how the institutional environment may affect migrants' sense of belonging within the destination society (Aranda & Vaquera, 2011; Belabas & Gerrits, 2017). For migrants unfamiliar with the institutional system, additional support may be imperative to ensure minimal accessibility. The digital environment becomes a fundamental means of providing this support that may positively improve their sense of belonging. Evidence sheds light on this idea that migrants describe feeling 'unwelcomed' or 'alienated' when they encounter limited digitalised migration infrastructure in their destination society, leading to a

sense of exclusion rather than support (Georgiou, 2019; Udwan et al., 2020). The relevant studies indicate that such institutional challenges may not only impact the factual indications of integration of migrants, such as employment and citizenship (Georgiou, 2019) but also may influence more fundamental elements of their social integration, including their sense of belonging (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008; Ryan, 2018a).

These challenges can affect all migrants, irrespective of their socio-economic and educational backgrounds. However, they may have a more pronounced impact on highly educated or skilled migrants who hold greater expectations for the digitalised institutional process within the society they are moving into. Recent studies suggest that highly skilled migrants tend to perceive limitations in accessing public services more substantially than other migrants, arguing that they anticipate being treated as equally valued members of society, especially within their socio-economic groups. Consequently, the lack of access to public services may foster a stronger sense of deprivation, particularly among those not fluent in the native languages yet (Steinmann, 2019; Verkuyten, 2016). With this context in mind, this study centres on highly skilled migrants[10] with proficient digital capabilities.

Indeed, it has been crucial for those nation-states consistently receiving large numbers of migrants to digitalise the policy and administration directly related to the migration process—from acquiring a visa, entering the border and registering in the local municipality to obtaining the legal entities to have a home, such as a residence permit. Subsequently, many academic studies have concentrated on how such digital transformation has diminished the complication of the bureaucratic migration process in the destination society (Betz et al., 2016; McAuliffe, 2021). On the other hand, some scholars, examining another dimension, assert that digitalising public services not only enables the nation-states to effectively govern migration population but does migrants to easily access and enjoy their social rights—and is, thus, constituting a vital element for their quality of life (Brom & Besters, 2010; Buoncompagni, 2021; Georgiou, 2019; Portes et al., 2009). In this context, digitalisation that matters for migrants should embrace both the institutional contacts directly related to the migration process and broader engagements with essential public services for maintaining a sound quality of life, such as navigating the educational system, accessing healthcare, and applying for social benefits

[10] This paper adapts the definition of highly skilled migrants from the European Commission: '… third-country nationals… acquire required adequate and specific competence, as proven by higher educational qualifications, and/or extensive (vocational) experience' (European Union Law, 2009).

including family subsidies, among others.

Another point to consider is when public services do not provide a sufficient digital environment for migrants, they instead contact their online social networks to figure out how to access these services, thereby increasing their dependence on online communities (Castles et al., 2005; Chen & Choi, 2011; Lingel et al., 2014; Ryan, 2018b). Unfortunately, the credibility of information shared within online communities cannot be guaranteed, and reliance on them can lead to misunderstandings or misperceptions about the new society they have become part of (Borkert et al., 2018; Turner & Gulerce, 2021).

Overall, the study examines how highly skilled migrants assess their own degree of accessibility to digital public services and its relation to their sense of belonging within their destination society. To find the robust answer, this study aimed to apply the novel method having the strength of both systemic analysis and the depth of contexts that individuals may provide via in-depth interviews. Amidst various research methods, this study applies fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), which provides a fair comparison to set the conditions while ensuring the thick interpretations behind the logical outputs (Pappas & Woodside, 2021).

II. Theoretical Background

In this section, the impact of digitalising public services on migrants' sense of belonging will be scrutinised along with an introduction to the relevant literature. The discussion begins by addressing the broader scholarly perspective that connects the digitalisation of policy and administration with the dramatic increase in the migration population. This perspective emphasises that digitalisation fosters greater connectivity and accessibility, particularly for migrants who experience difficulties in appreciating public services through conventional government systems.

Another attention will be given to migrants' sense of belonging in line with accessibility to public services. While contextualising digitalisation as a vital tool, further discussion compares how digitalising public services may differently affect migrants compared to offline settings. Lastly, literature on highly skilled migrants' sense of belonging will be distinguished to explain why this study considers this group suitable for the research topic.

1. Digitalising public services: why do we need it, and what should it encompass?

The form of digitalisation, as Gil-Garcia and Garcia (2019:92) defined it, entails 'organisational, institutional and contextual aspects that affect the characteristics and potential results from the use of information technologies in government settings'. It pertains to various aspects of migrants' daily lives in their destination country. Georgiou's (2019:602) concept of 'digital infrastructure' further emphasises this, as it refers to not only the functional dimensions of technology access, connectivity, and use but also the performative function of utilising technology for self-representation and digital citizenship enactment.

However, digitalising such necessary public services beyond the domain of migration – which this paper argues substantially concerns migrants' social integration in the long term– has been often neglected, unlike those directly related to the migration process. One aspect of criticism in this context revolves around online processes predominantly designed by nation-states seeking advantages in surveillance and control (Brom & Besters, 2010; Van Dijck, 2013). Once the legal migration process is accomplished, migrants are left to navigate the complexities of public service environments on their own. To bridge this gap, migrants have turned to alternative digital means, primarily social media and online communities, to access the information they need (Alam & Imran, 2015; Buoncompagni, 2021; Dekker & Engbersen,

2014; Gill & Bialski, 2011). While digital media and communities play a crucial role in providing essential information for migrants' daily lives, there is a significant risk of encountering misinformation or even threats related to smuggling, which can lead to misconceptions about the destination society and potentially disrupt social integration (Borkert et al., 2018; Turner & Gulerce, 2021).

Another aspect of criticism pertains to whether governments are developing adaptive systems that account for the diverse situations of migrants. The rigid categorisation of migrants, which is prevalent in offline settings, may also dominate the design of digital public service delivery. Sourbati and Loos (2019:5), for instance, have highlighted how the 'minimization of complexity' in experiences of place, community and technology fails to recognise the influence of changing structural circumstances, identity, class, ethnicity and gender throughout individuals' life courses. Therefore, governments need to understand the diversity of their users to be inclusive of the needs of migrant communities. In the case of migration and integration trajectories, the characteristics, skills and behaviours of migrants in a broad sense need to be considered. Too little research concentrates on these conditions, especially in a digital context (Safarov, 2021). Nevertheless, this study predicts that the extent to which digitalised public services account for the diversity within migrant groups impacts their sense of belonging.

Diversity in public services challenges conventional bureaucratic systems, as categorisation and simplification are inherent to many government structures. In the context of migration and integration policies, Belabas and Gerrits (2017) demonstrated how the successful integration of migrants relies not solely on the willingness of the migrant to integrate at a given moment but also on the patterns of interaction between migrants and bureaucracy. The categorisation tendencies of bureaucrats have significant implications in offline contexts, leading to a chain of reactions that affect future bureaucratic interactions and how migrants integrate into society (Belabas & Gerrits, 2017).

In the recent work of McMullin (2021) on the communication of third-sector public services to migrant populations during COVID-19, the author described further developments in online service delivery from issues such as reliable and consistent access to technology and the discomfort of accessing online services to decreased trust and communication for certain migrant groups (McMullin 2021). However, studies that discuss migration communities are too focused on the digital capability divide of migrants and not on how the government system takes into account the diversity of current migration communities, that is, how it neglects the

broader potential user group and its implications for the diverse groups within the category of 'migrant'. Here, the paper argues that inclusive public service delivery should extend beyond the focus of having the relevant skills to use digital technologies. Barth and Veit (2011), for example, showed how German residents with a migration background are not confident that they have the necessary skills for using German public e-services, even though they use the Internet regularly. Hence, the relationship and interaction patterns between digital public service and migrants need closer attention for the field to grasp the fuller picture.

Given that the right to acquire public services concerns one's civil rights, the difficulties of finding the right information on the type of public services available, their specific locations, and how to access them would give migrants frustration and feelings of insecurity. Notwithstanding the argument that the complexity of most administrative processes in Europe is no exception for any citizen, the awareness of such complexity and how to find the corresponding sources to address such a bureaucratic system remains an obstacle to the newcomers in their settlement process (Concilio et al., 2022). Some recent studies proved that the digital divide is not necessarily aligned with the socio-political status of migrants, providing evidence with Syrian refugees who hold sufficient capability to utilise and evaluate the digital tools necessary to access public services in the destination society (Borkert et al. 2018). This signifies that socio-political status does not necessarily juxtapose the level of digital capability to access the digital sphere, and migrants may merely wish to digitally access necessary public services to integrate into the destination society, regardless of their various backgrounds.

2. Migrants' sense of belonging and digitalization in the destination society

A sense of belonging is the common understanding of an individual's membership in a certain social group (Blommaert & Varis, 2011; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). It is established through the intricate process of formulating the individual's position agreed upon by society, other members, and oneself. Migrants undergo intensive challenges to build a new sense of belonging within the destination society (Abdelal et al., 2006). This process reflects not only the individual and relational interactions but also societal and institutional circumstances that collectively build the consensus of their positionality in society (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018). It is relatively recent that migrants' sense of belonging is highlighted and construed as a crucial element in social integration, especially with regard to the multifaceted characteristics of contemporary migrants in complex social contexts, often termed super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007; Wessendorf & Phillimore, 2019). The digital sphere

has emerged as a primary platform where migrants potentially forge social connections with like-minded people, eventually nurturing their sense of belonging and providing meaning (Gill & Bialski, 2011; Vieten, 2013). They also anticipate acquiring vital information tailored to their specific needs via online platforms, recognising it as the most familiar and accessible means for adapting to their new way of life in the destination society. In this regard, digitalising public services signifies the destination society's effort to enhance inclusivity and accessibility for migrants.

A study on practices of social exclusion and discrimination in public services echoes this idea that the inclusiveness of public service delivery does impact migrants' judgement of public institutions as a whole, 'resulting in a constellation of high expectations and limited opportunities in conjunction with feeling less valued and accepted by mainstream society' (Röder and Mühlau 2011:553). Another study has confirmed that negative experiences with migrant officials in the United States, both incidents as consistent patterns of behaviour, lead migrants to feel less attached as these officials are seen as representing the destination country and setting the tone for how they will be treated in their daily lives (Aranda & Vaquera, 2011). This effect is in line with more classical theories, such as that presented by Lawler (1992; cited from Aranda and Vaquera 2011:302), who argued that public institutions that are helping migrants 'will strengthen affective attachments to the ethnic community in which they are'. The underlying idea is that when the state or broader society imposes bureaucratic or political constraints, this will affect the sense of belonging of migrants in the larger society or nation. Similar to public services in an offline setting, the digital services governments provide also may impact migrants' sense of belonging. The study, therefore, postulates that disappointing experiences or structural constraints with the digitalisation of public service will weaken the affective attachment of migrants to the destination country and society at large.

This idea provides insight into the source of the frustration experienced by highly skilled migrants: their expectation of being appreciated as equal members of the destination society remains unmet. Verkuyten (2016) described it as an 'integration paradox', wherein highly skilled and educated migrants are less likely to be successfully integrated into the destination society due to their stronger feelings of relative deprivation compared to other migrant groups. While different dimensions of expectation occur, one critical aspect for this group is that they cannot enjoy public services to the same extent as other members of their communities (ibid.). It is important to note that this does not imply such digital constraints disproportionately affect

highly skilled migrants compared to others. Although digital capabilities are becoming less relevant to the sociopolitical status of migrants these days (Borkert et al., 2018), different migrant groups may have distinct aspirations regarding the digitalisation of public services based on their expectations towards the social system of the destination society (Steinmann, 2019; Verkuyten, 2016). Within this framework, this study specifically targets highly skilled migrants, holding higher expectations for their destination society to accommodate social rights and public services in a manner afforded to other members of their socioeconomic group. It aims to thoroughly investigate critical perspectives on the digitalisation of public services within their context and to comprehend the implications for their sense of belonging.

III. Research Design: Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis

For this study, fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) was conducted to analyse qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews with twenty migrants, comprising ten residents from Bamberg (Germany), eight from Rotterdam (the Netherlands) and two from Leiden (the Netherlands)[11]. QCA is rooted in a set theory that combines the strengths of qualitative research, which focuses on a case-oriented approach and quantitative research, which employs configurational thinking (Berg-Schlosser et al., 2023; Ragin, 2021). When researchers produce their own data set with sufficient background knowledge of cases, QCA offers significant advantages by allowing researchers to delve deeply into the context and understand the underlying causal mechanisms behind the data (Ragin, 2021).

While QCA may be applied to various studies with a range of small to large sample sizes, this study opts for a small-N approach to emphasise a thorough analysis. In other words, small-N QCA allows for the functionality of fair sorting and comparison of data while highlighting the thick and nuanced interpretation of the formulae (Geertz, 2008; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). Given that the study aims to investigate individuals' various experiences with digital public services and their influence on the sense of being welcomed and belonging within the destination society, using fsQCA with interview data aligns well with the study's objectives[12].

However, small-N fsQCA may run the risk of inheriting limitations from both quantitative and qualitative research if not accompanied by a thorough research design and theoretical underpinnings. It may face challenges regarding both the breadth of generalisability and the depth of analysis at the same time. To minimise such risks, this study implemented several measures: a) setting very conservative thresholds for logical minimisation, b) calibrating the data with different scales to assess robustness, and c) conducting a thorough qualitative analysis of interview transcripts to validate the configurational formulae against the findings from the

11 The interview design followed the Statement of Ethnical Practice by British Sociological Association. All interviewees were informed of the contents and details of this study and provided oral consent for using the interview data for publications before their interviews began (video recorded).

12 Unlike Crispy-set QCA (csQCA) which simplifies data calibration to binary outcomes (0 or 1), Fuzzy-set QCA (fsQCA) allows outcomes to reflect nuanced differences among responses by calibrating them across a wider range of scales. For instance, it can categorise responses as strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, or strongly agree with four-scale calibration (0, .33,.67,1) as this study adopted (see Pappas & Woodside, 2021, for more details)

analysis. The following subsections outline the design process of fsQCA for this investigation.

1. Case selection and interviews

QCA begins with careful case selection, considering each case's suitability for calibration and configuration in later stages. In this study, each interviewee is considered a separate case, precluding comparative analysis at the country or city level. Instead, the focus is on understanding participants' perceptions of the digital public service conditions and how they impact on their sense of belonging within a specific context. For instance, the three cities where participants reside are considered mid-sized Western European cities with constantly growing migrant populations, but specific features of each city – such as the level of digitalisation, and populational proportion of migrants –did not make significant differences in participants' assessments of digital public service accessibility.

The interviews were twenty in total, designed as semi-structured and conducted via one-to-one meetings while video recorded. Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling initiated through the researcher's social circles. These cases share similarities in terms of individual capabilities that influence the evaluation of digital public services and their sense of belonging. These shared characteristics include digital capabilities, type of migration, duration of stay, occupational stability and education level (see Table 1)[13]. The criteria for selecting interviewees consisted of (a) those who migrated fewer than five years ago, ensuring they are still in the integration process or at least have vivid memories of the process; (b) those with proficient digital skills actively used in their daily lives (e.g. regular internet and social media usage via computer and smartphones); and (c) those whose migration was not due to their being critically endangered and/or politically forced, which may have significantly affected their access to public services in general. The interviews were transcribed and subjected to qualitative interview analysis (Legard et al., 2003; Schmidt, 2004) before progressing to the subsequent stages.

13 Refer to Appendix B, for further details of interview process.

Table 1. List of Interviewees

	Age	Place of Origin	Current residence	Duration of Stay	Gender	Occupation	Education
1	26	Tunisia	Bamberg, Germany	1.5 years	Male	Nurse	College degree
2	24	China	Rotterdam, the Netherlands	5 Years	Female	Doctoral Student	Masters' degree
3	40	Italy	Rotterdam, the Netherlands	2 years	Female	Postdoc researcher	Doctoral degree
4	32	Brazil	Leiden, the Netherlands	2 years	Female	Housewife	Masters' degree
5	25	China	Rotterdam, the Netherlands	4 Years	Female	Doctoral Student	Masters' degree
6	35	USA	Leiden, the Netherlands	2.5 years	Female	Nurse	College degree
7	26	Tunisia	Bamberg, Germany	1.5 years	Female	Nurse	College degree
8	42	Spain/Australia	Rotterdam, the Netherlands	1 year	Female	Assistant Professor	Doctoral degree
9	25	Vietnam	Rotterdam, the Netherlands	2 years	Female	Intern	Bachelor's degree
10	40	Turkey	Rotterdam, the Netherlands	4.5 years	Male	Businessman	Masters' degree
11	28	Egypt	Rotterdam, the Netherlands	3 years	Female	Housewife	Bachelor's degree
12	35	Italy	Rotterdam, the Netherlands	5 years	Male	Assistant Professor	Masters' degree
13	45	Spain	Bamberg, Germany	1.5 years	Male	Postdoc researcher	Doctoral degree
14	41	Macedonia	Hanover, Germany	2.5 years	Male	Engineer	Bachelor's degree
15	29	Poland	Bamberg, Germany	2.5 years	Female	Research Assistant	Masters' degree
16	32	Rwanda	Bamberg, Germany	3 years	Male	Lecturer	Masters' degree
17	32	Israel	Bamberg, Germany	2.3 years	Male	PhD student	Masters' degree
18	28	Albania	Bamberg, Germany	3 years	Female	Archaeologist	Masters' degree
19	32	South Africa	Bamberg, Germany	2.5 years	Female	Digital Forensic analyst	Bachelor's degree
20	33	China	Bamberg, Germany	2.5 years	Female	Artist/Language teacher	Masters' degree

2. Condition selection and calibration

QCA provides flexibility in approaching the research question inductively and deductively. While a number of core assumptions built up the conceptual framework of this study

deductively, condition selection and calibration followed the inductive approach (Jopke & Gerrits, 2019). The study assumes that digitalising public services significantly impacts the sense of belonging among migrants. The sense of belonging can encompass a wide spectrum of societal scales, from individual relations to the feeling of membership given by the local populations or nation-states. While it is a complex outcome of combinations with different relationships at individual, relational and societal levels, this study zooms in on the feelings given by society that sometimes are not coherent with those given by their personal relationships.

As the first condition, the satisfied experience of public service (SPS) within the destination society was selected resonating with the results of the interview analysis. To test the impact of digitalisation, it is important to distinguish the digital public service and public service in general separately. The definition of SPS encompasses not only the initial process of acquiring membership rights to stay but also the essential services for daily life, such as healthcare, taxation, childcare, public subsidies, education and local/community events. During the interviews, the participants were provided with this definition and given examples, though the range of services was not strictly limited as it varies depending on individual cases.

Given the specific focus on the role of digitalisation in SPS, the second condition selected was satisfied experiences in digital public service (SDPS). This separation of conditions allows for examining the interplay between SPS and SDPS. It seeks to determine whether the digitalisation of SDPS, in combination with other conditions, promotes or hampers the sense of belonging among migrants.

One crucial point that emerged during the interview analysis was the influence of interviewees' previous experiences with digitalised public service in their previous place of residence. While it is important not to overestimate the impact of these previous experiences in shaping the baseline assessment of the current digital public service delivery, it is evident that these experiences serve as references that influence their expectations and satisfaction with the destination country. They bring their knowledge, comparisons and preconceived notions to the evaluation of the services they encounter in the new context. This is another reason that research is not seeking the changes in their satisfaction between the past and present, but the different sets of experiences making certain combinations affecting the outcome – the sense of belonging (SoB).

While considering other possible conditions based on the existing theory – such as local language proficiency and previous migration experiences – the QCA gave the result that those conditions do not produce consistent outcomes when combining SPS and SDPS. It was also witnessed via interview analysis that such conditions, mostly concerning the migrants' capability to bring over to the destination society, were often unnecessary to promote or hamper their feeling of being welcomed or belonging to the society.

Overall, four conditions are finally set up to test their effect on SoB via the four-point scales (threshold = .5), defined as follows:

- SDPSx: satisfaction with digitalised public service in the past residence
- SDPS: satisfaction with digitalised public service in the current residence
- SPSx: satisfaction with public service in the past residence
- SPS: satisfaction with public service in the current residence

Again, calibration focuses on the societal level of SoB, not the level of personal relationships, unless the interviewees provide a coherent answer without distinguishing different levels. For example, if an interviewee answers that he or she feels a sense of belonging to, or is welcomed by the family/friend group in the same society but not by the social system/city/nation-state, the outcome considers the case to be the absence of SoB.

As a fuzzy set calibration, the four-point scale (0, 0.33, 0.67, 1) is assigned to score the membership of each case. While there were clear questions directly indicating each condition, the outcome ensured to be coherent with the results of the interview analysis. More specifically, the assessment carefully considered participants' own and others' understanding of their social position, how they have felt welcomed/unwelcomed by the destination society, and if they have experienced any deprived/frustrated/respected feelings concerning others in dealing with digital/non-digital public service delivery in the destination society.

3. The logical minimisation

Once all cases are calibrated via the four-point scale, logical minimisation is the final necessary step to reach the final solutions, which eventually involves computational calculation. The logical minimisation was conducted via truth table analysis, which selects the causal conditions to be included in the analysis and converts the fuzzy-set calibrations into dichotomised sets

(1,0)[14]. The logical minimisation was applied by using R (Duşa, 2019; Oana et al., 2021). The goal was to identify the simplest possible solutions that explain the association between specific conditions and outcomes. In this study, the same combinations of the above four conditions were applied to both set (SoB = f(SDPSx, SDPS, SPSx, SPS, meaning how four conditions are formulated for the existence of a sense of belonging) and set negated (~SoB = f(SDPSx, SDPS, SPSx, SPS, meaning how four conditions are formulated for the absence of a sense of belonging)[15].

4. Solutions

QCA logical minimisation yields three solutions for each model: complex, parsimonious, and intermediate. The complex solution disregards any logical remainders identified from the truth table analysis, while the parsimonious solution includes all logical remainders. Conversely, the intermediate solution involves manually selecting certain remainders based on researchers' substantive knowledge of the conditions under study.

In this study, the intermediate solution is employed with the assumption that SDPS and SPS are fundamental contributors to the existence of SoB. However, the contribution of SDPSx and SPSx were set as they may or may not be present, based on participants' past experiences with public services, which were identified via interview analysis.

Instead of discussing each of these three solutions individually, the following section focuses on the most representative solution for each model, deemed most insightful and illuminating while briefly touching on other solutions to highlight the significance: the complex solution for Model 1 and the intermediate solution for Model 2.

[14] Here, the causal conditions mean the independent variables and the outcomes mean the dependent variable in statistics language.

[15] See Appendix A for further details of the truth table analysis.

IV. Results and Discussion

1. Model 1: SoB = f(SPSx, SDPSx, SPS, SDPS)

In Model 1, the complex solution offers valuable insights into the intricate nature of the relationship, while the parsimonious and intermediate solutions reaffirm the importance of SDPS and SPS (see Table 2).

Table 2. Complex Solution for Model 1 (Consistency = 0.804)

No.	Formula[16]	Raw Consistency	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	PRI[17]	Cases
1)	~SDPSx* ~SPSx* SDPS	0.956	0.708	0.099	0.899	1,4,5,7,15,16,18
2)	~SDPSx*~SPSx*SPS	0.949	0.61	0	0.856	4,7,16,18
3)	SDPSx*SDPS*~SPS	0.894	0.545	0.13	0.668	10,11
4)	SDPSx*SPS*~SDPS	0.881	0.48	0.066	0.601	14,19
5)	~SDPSx*~SDPS*SPSx*~SPS	0.831	0.319	0	0	

Notably, formulae 1) and 2) demonstrate a strong level of consistency and PRI. These findings suggest that individuals who experienced dissatisfaction with public service and its digitalisation in their previous society find a sense of welcome and belonging in the destination society when they encounter satisfactory levels of digital or general public service delivery. During interviews, participants frequently emphasised these aspects as key factors that influenced their decision to migrate, and they expressed high levels of satisfaction with their current lives, which have met their expectations. It also echoes the results that those people who found SDPS well-organised think that the nature of the society they belong to is already well-prepared to welcome migrants. They do not have to feel like outliers but rather as one of its members.

Nevertheless, it is also true that the participants with the membership of ~SDPSx*~SPSx are

[16] Following example shows how to read the formulae:1) ~SDPSx* ~SPSx* SDPS = Not satisfied with digital public services in the past society, and not satisfied with public services in the past society, and satisfied with digital public services in the current society

[17] Proportional Reduction in Inconsistency

mostly from socio-politically restricted societies where they found those particular aspects critically hampering the quality of life. This is also why experiences in the past may influence the satisfaction of SDPS and SPS, though not everyone with ~SDPSx*~SPSx is necessarily satisfied with SDPS or SPS. It would rather imply that some migrants who had negative experiences with public service delivery in their past society would have lower expectations than those with positive experiences, which may produce a stronger impact on their SoB when they find such conditions satisfying. This tendency is more dramatic when the interviewees are referring to their past experiences in the previously migrated country. Those who have already migrated before provided direct and detailed comparisons between the public service delivery conditions in current and previous migrated societies, often emphasising how important it is for the migrants with their lived experiences.

Another meaningful point that the complex solution reflects is that the digitalisation of public services is considered an attitude of society towards migrants rather than just a technological advance. While it is naturally understood that those with satisfaction with SDPSx having SDPS felt an SoB even with the absence of SPS, those with SDPSx and having SPS also felt an SoB in the absence of SDPS. This echoes the findings from the interviews that the attitudes of bureaucrats being friendly and accommodating gave a strongly positive impression of the migrants feeling welcomed (Belabas & Gerrits, 2017). Likewise, when migrants find well-digitalised information and processes for the necessary public services, they feel that society makes an effort to include the newcomers as an important part of their membership. In either case, when migrants found a part of public service delivery, being inclusive would positively affect their SoB, although another part – either digitalised or traditional service – would not be satisfactory.

2. Model 2: ~SoB = f(SPSx, SDPSx, SPS, SDPS)

Table 3. Intermediate Solution for Model 2 (Exp. - ~SDPS, ~SPS, consistency = 0.856)

No.	Formula	Raw Consistency	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	PRI	Cases
1)	~SPS*~SDPS	1	0.805	0.077	1	3,6,8
2)	SPSx*SDPSx*~SPS	0.934	0.538	0.039	0.836	6,8,17
3)	~SPSx*~SDPS	0.904	0.727	0.039	0.667	12,13
4)	SDPSx*~SDPS	0.855	0.69	0	0.625	6,8,12

In Model 2, the most striking implication lies in the importance of SDPS (see Table 3). Each formula has above-threshold consistency and a high PRI score18. Based on the interviewees' attitudes and their evaluation of relevant experiences hindering their SoB, it is natural to see such a strong consistency in formula 1). In the parsimonious context, there is a coherent highlight of the role of SDPS. It is sensible to concentrate more on the intermediate solution than others, underscoring how the absence of SPS and SDPS results in the absence of SoB in each formula. It became evident that the public service system and its digitalisation have a stronger impact when their absence negatively affects SoB than when their existence positively affects it. This result reassures the importance of digitalisation and its inclusive and accommodating practices in public services to prevent the integration paradox (Verkuyten, 2016).

3. Further findings from the interview analysis

Looking at the interview analysis, the interviewees provided more detailed and focused stories about their feelings of disappointment, deprivation, or frustration when they found SDPS and SPS to be not inclusive or accommodating. They also established a clear connection between the feeling of dissatisfaction and the absence of SoB, emphasising that the lack of transparency, language inclusion and clear guidelines negatively affected their SoB. Digitalising public services enable better communication and engagement between migrants and public authorities. The empirical evidence highlights that digitalising public services should not apply to the specific domains deemed to be needed for migrants. Although the participants share the similarity in their socio-economic status, the main reason for divided evaluations among the participants from the same society stems from their individual contexts: they prioritise different services based on their daily needs. For instance, a male migrant in his 20s who rarely requires medical attention showed a different level of satisfaction with the healthcare system compared to a female migrant with two young children in the same city in Germany. Likewise, the consideration of diversity should extend beyond sectors directly associated with migration and encompass any essential sectors that are crucial for various members of society. By recognising and addressing the diverse needs of all individuals within society, policymakers can create more inclusive and effective policies. A number of interviewers are willing to provide ideas to

[18] The exception is the formula in the last row in the complex solution, which remained limited to interpretation (see Appendix A).

improve accessibility to the necessary information on the Internet – which signifies that digital platforms enable migrants to actively participate in shaping policies that affect them directly via feedback, suggestions and collaboration. This inclusivity and transparency in the public policy system can create a sense of empowerment and belonging among migrants. In light of these considerations, it becomes evident that inclusive and transparent digitalisation efforts in public services can contribute to a more comprehensive integration of migrants (Concilio et al., 2022).

V. Conclusion

A sense of belonging is a complex outcome influenced by various conditions at personal, relational and institutional levels within society (Ryan 2018). This study zoomed in on its interplay with the institutional level, considering the social system not as a static infrastructure but as an interactive platform that shapes individuals' feelings, social positions, and eventually, their quality of life. In this vein, digitalising public services serves as an effective tool to mitigate the marginalisation of migrants in terms of social rights and benefits that conventional social system inherently has.

The study reveals that migrants, particularly those highly skilled individuals who acutely acknowledge their social positions, perceive digitalising public services as an effort to provide them equal opportunities, and therefore, affecting their sense of belonging. This paper systematically examines this phenomenon by providing formulae configured from fsQCA and verified through qualitative interview analysis. The significance of this approach lies in the assessment given by migrants, which calls for the responsibility of the destination nation-states for the social integration as a whole.

Furthermore, the outcome of this study underscores the importance of inclusive and transparent public policy systems for migrants, not only in terms of the membership acquisition process but also in relation to various social policies that enhance the overall quality of life for citizens (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015). While highly skilled migrants may believe that they are accepted as useful and valuable members of the destination society, the rest of the settling process after acquiring legal membership mostly falls upon the migrants themselves, with nation-states being less inclined to assume such responsibilities (Aranda & Vaquera, 2011; Röder & Mühlau, 2011).

However, it is important to note that the findings are limited in providing sufficient conditions contributing to the individual's overall sense of belonging. It would be contradictory to its concept and definition and social integration that this paper is pursuing if the study were to suggest that the social structure and system alone can fully shape an individual's true sense of belonging (Wessendorf & Phillimore, 2019). The study rather reassures that migrants' sense of belonging cannot be solely attributed to the social structure and system. Yet, when it comes to how society should accommodate and strive to make a more inclusive public service system, the research provides valuable insight.

Again, as mentioned before, this study only covers a small number of highly skilled migrants in a few European societies, sharing similarities in terms of fostering migration and social integration in the institutional circumstances of recent times. Therefore, further studies examining different migrant groups with their unique contexts, ranging from refugee groups to low-income labour migrants in other societies, would provide valuable insights into how digitalisation may play different roles in forming their sense of belonging.

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Appendix A. QCA Models

This section explains further details of QCA formula, particularly focusing on the results of logical minimisation and three different solutions for both set and set negated Models.

Abbreviation:

- SDPSx: Satisfaction with digital public service in the previous residential society
- SDPS: Satisfaction with digital public service in the current residential society
- SPSx: Satisfaction with public service in general in the previous residential society
- SPS: Satisfaction with public service in general in the current residential society
- SOB: Sense of belonging to the society

1. Truth table Analysis

In this study, the truth table outcomes are set in a conservative manner to minimise the shortcomings of small N (frequency = 1, consistency = .8)

Table 1. f(SDPSx*SDPS*SPSx*SPS) = SOB

SDPSx	SDPS	SPSx	SPS	Number of Cases	SOB	Raw consistency	PRI[19] consistency
0	1	0	1	4	1	1	1
1	1	0	0	3	1	0.94	0.80
0	1	0	0	4	1	0.94	0.80
0	0	0	1	1	1	0.93	0.49
1	0	1	1	1	1	0.91	0.67
1	0	0	1	2	1	0.87	0.50
0	0	1	0	1	1	0.83	0
1	1	1	0	1	1	0.83	0.33
1	0	1	0	2	0	0.69	0

[19] Proportional Reduction in Inconsistency

Table 2. f(SDPSx*SDPS*SPSx*SPS) =~ SOB

SDPSx	SPSx	SDPS	SPS	Number of Cases	~SOB	Raw consistency	PRI consistency
1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1
0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
0	0	0	1	1	1	0.93	0.51
1	1	1	0	1	1	0.92	0.67
1	0	0	1	2	1	0.87	0.50
1	1	0	1	1	1	0.82	0.33
0	0	1	0	4	0	0.77	0.20
1	0	1	0	3	0	0.77	0.20
0	0	1	1	4	0	0.68	0

2. QCA Solutions

1.1.Model 1: SOB = f(SPSx, SDPSx, SPS, SDPS)

Table 3. Complex Solution for Model 1 (Consistency = 0.804)

	Raw Consistency	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	PRI	Cases
~SDPSx* ~SPSx* SDPS	0.956	0.708	0.099	0.899	1,4,5,7,15, 16,18
~SDPSx*~SPSx*SPS	0.949	0.61	0	0.856	4,7,16,18
SDPSx*SDPS*~SPS	0.894	0.545	0.13	0.668	10,11
SDPSx*SPS*~SDPS	0.881	0.48	0.066	0.601	14,19
~SDPSx*~SDPS*SPSx*~SPS	0.831	0.319	0	0	

The complex solution in Table 1 shows slightly above the consistency threshold (= 8), though each possible solution has strong row consistency. Except for the last row, which is empirically limited to provide the interpretation and has 0 Unique Coverage in our cases, each solution consists of SDPS or SPS. The interesting point in the third and fourth solutions is the absence of one and the existence of another with SDPSx results in the same outcome. The last solution, with its 0 for Unique Coverage and PRI, does not sufficiently explain the outcome.

Table 4. Parsimonious Solution for Model 1 (consistency= 0.774)

	Raw Consistency	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	PRI	Cases
SDPS	0.902	0.902	0.162	0.902	1,2,4,5,7,10,11, 15,16,18
SPS	0.883	0.739	0.098	0.739	4,14,7,16,18,19
~SDPSx	0.785	0.708	0	0.708	1,4,5,7

In Table 2, the parsimonious solution does not fulfil the consistency threshold. Yet, it still seems to show meaningful aspects that the existence of SPS and SDPS both have strong row consistency, resulting in the existence of SOB.

Table 5. Intermediate Solution for Model 1(Exp.= SDPS, SPS, consistency= 0.814)

	Raw Consistency	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	PRI	Cases
SDPS	0.902	0.902	0.261	0.902	1,2,4,5,7,10
SPS	0.883	0.739	0.097	0.75	4,7,13,14,16,18, 19
~SDPSx*SPSx	0.855	0.383	0	0.496	

The intermediate solution in Table 3 also shows that the existence of either SPS or SDPS leads to a sense of belonging. However, the final row is empirically limited to interpretation because it is outside the scope of this research, as the combination of the conditions only comprises past experiences.

1.2.Model 2: ~SOB = f(SPSx, SDPSx, SPS, SDPS)

Table 6. Complex Solution for Model 2(consistency = 0.851)

	Raw Consistency	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	PRI	Cases
SPSx*~SPS*~SDPS	1	0.614	0.039	1	3,6,8
SPSx*SDPSx*~SPS	0.934	0.538	0.039	0.836	6,8,17
~SPSx*SPS*~SDPS	0.894	0.651	0.039	0.601	12
SPSx*SDPSx*~SDPS	0.865	0.498	0	0.667	6,8
SDPSx*SPS*~SDPS	0.821	0.535	0	0.399	12

The set negated model shows stronger consistency in general, and the complex and intermediate solutions have the highest score among all solutions in the two models. It is striking that the first solution shows the consistency of 1, which indicates that the combination of unsatisfied SPS and SDPS with satisfied SPSx experience results in the absence of SOB. While the third solution shows that the existence of SPSx and SDPSx with the absence of SPS has the strongest consistency in resulting in the absence of SOB, the rest of the four solutions highlight how the absence of SDPS in combination with different conditions may result in the absence of SOB. The last scenario, which contradicts one of the complex solution formulas of Model 1, shows zero (0) Unique Coverage and a very low PRI score that limits the interpretation within the cases but suggests further consideration of additional conditions.

Table 7. Parsimonious Solution for Model 2 (consistency = 0.816)

	Raw Consistency	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	PRI	Cases
~SDPS	0.88	0.883	0.269	0.727	3,6,8,12,13,
SPSx	0.85	0.653	0.039	0.669	3,6,8,17

While the parsimonious solution shows relatively lower than other solutions, it reconfirms that the absence of SDPS may result in the absence of SOB. However, the existence of SPSx solely cannot provide logical implications with the current data.

Table 8. Intermediate Solution for Model 2 (Exp. - ~SDPS, ~SPS, consistency = 0.856)

	Raw Consistency	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	PRI	Cases
~SPS*~SDPS	1	0.805	0.077	1	3,6,8
SPSx*SDPSx*~SPS	0.934	0.538	0.039	0.836	6,8,17
~SPSx*~SDPS	0.904	0.727	0.039	0.667	12,13
SDPSx*~SDPS	0.855	0.69	0	0.625	6,8,12

The most noteworthy point of the intermediate solution, which has the same highest consistency as the complex solution, is that the result of the first solution is the same as that of the complex one: the absence of SPS and SDPS results in the absence of SOB with the consistency of 1. While the second and the third solutions also prove the absence of SDPS in

combination with the absence of SPSx and the existence of SDPSx, respectively, the third solution cannot be empirically proven from the current study. The last solution – that the existence of both SPSx and SDPSx in combination with the absence of SPS results in the absence of SOB – is also consistent with the third solution from the complex solution.

Appendix B. Interview Guidelines

1. General Information

- Theme: How does the digitalising public services affect migrants' sense of belonging?
- Duration of Interview: Oct. 2022 ~ Jan. 2023
- Interviewer: Sunyoung Park(sunyoung.park@uni-bamberg.de)
- Interview venue: offline places mutually agreed upon or via online Zoom meeting
- Interview structure: semi-structured, allowing descriptive answers from the interviewees

2. Recruitment Process

The snowball sampling method was used to recruit interviewees for this study, starting with acquaintances around the researcher. A total of twenty-two interviewees were recruited in Germany and the Netherlands. However, two of them were later excluded from the study because their migration status differed from the desired criteria. These two individuals had voluntarily migrated but were in refugee status, which did not align with the study's focus.

The desired conditions for the interviewees included having good knowledge and utilization of digital means in their daily lives, such as internet surfing via computers and smartphones. Additionally, fluency in English was required, and their migration had to be deemed voluntary rather than a result of critically endangered or politically forced conditions.

Although these criteria were not initially set by the researcher, the process of recruitment naturally led to the selection of mid-to-high-skilled migrants as interviewees.

3. Interview Process

- Introduce the aim of the study
- Introduce yourself
- Inform interviewees of confidentiality
- Inform interviewees of anonymity
- Inform interviewees of the right not to answer a question if they do not wish to
- Get consent (verbal or written) to participate
- Get consent for video recording

4. Questions with the necessary information to be included

Q1. A brief understanding of the interviewee's background in migration:

- What brought you here/ what do you do?
- How long would you stay more?

Q2. Digital Accessibility

- Do you freely use the internet in your daily life? How often?
- What do you usually do on the internet?
- What kind of digital devices do you use most?
- Have you used the internet/online networks in your migration process?

Q3. Sense of Belonging in the destination society

- Could you share your overall impression of living in the destination society, including both positive and negative aspects, particularly in comparison to your home?
- On which occasion do you feel that you are welcomed or not welcomed? Why?
- Any cases that you feel frustrated, while you are trying to settle in?
- How did you deal with the feeling/situation? How did you overcome it?
- Which social/working communities do you feel belonged these days?
    - How do you usually spend your free time? With whom?
    - Do you often get along with natives?
    - How do you find out your groups to get along?
- In the destination country, how do you see yourself in relation to the society?
    - How do you think other people in the society perceive you?
    - How would you describe yourself to the people in Germany?

Q4. Public Service Delivery in daily lives

What kind of public services were necessary in your migration process?

- Anything you found useful in your migration?
- Anything you found difficult or unnecessary for your migration?

- Were you already aware of what kind of social benefits and public services will be available in the destination society before you migrated?
    - If so, how did you get to know them?
    - If not, how did you figure it out after you migrated?

- What are the good things/bad things about public service in the destination society?
    - Do you think it affects your satisfaction with migration? Why?
    - Do those good things/bad things affect your future plan to live in the destination society? How?

Q5. Digital Public Service Delivery and the relation with a feeling of belonging/welcomed?

- Any public services that made you feel welcomed/unwelcomed to the destination society?
    - Why did you feel welcomed/unwelcomed?
    - How did you deal with those cases?
    - Did you try to use online means for dealing with it? Why?
    - Do you think such experiences have changed your attitude towards the destination society? If so, How?
- Have you experienced any digital public services in the destination society?
    - Do you in general enjoy digital public services actively?
    - How did you find it?
    - Do you think digitalisation helps you understand and use the service better? Why?
        - If so, does it make you feel more considered/welcomed than offline means?
        - If not, what would be the way to make it easier to access?
- Finally, what would you suggest for the betterment of access to public services for migrants?

5. Closing process

- Concluding statement
- Collect demographic information
- Thank the respondent
- Inform them of what will happen after the interview
- Provide contact information if they need to contact the organisation about the study

The share of contributions for each study

Study	Author/ Share	Year	Title	Journal/ Status
Study 1	Park, S./ 100%	2024	Exploring the Role of Sense of Belonging in Response to Ethnic Stereotypes: A Case of Koreans in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic	Ethnicities/ Under review
Study 2	Park, S./ 100%	2023	"Who Are Us and Them Today?" Dynamics of Korean Migrants' Identity in Their Online Social Movement in Germany	ASIEN – The German Journal of Contemporary Asia/ Published
Study 3	Park, S./ 70% Gerrits, L./ 30%	2021	How Migrants Manifest Transnational Identity Through Online Social Networks: Comparative Findings from a Case of Koreans in Germany	Comparative Migration Studies/ Published
Study 4	Park, S./ 100%	2024	The Impact of Digitalising Public Services on Migrants' Sense of Belonging – A fsQCA Analysis of Highly Skilled Migrants in Germany and the Netherlands	Comparative Migration Studies/ Under review