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New Media Practices in Korea

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This article looks at new media practices in Korea, such as the Internet, mobile phones, gaming, and new media production. In spite of Korea's reputation for achieving the most advanced IT and digital media culture, Korean youths' concrete practices of navigating this new techno-sphere are not well known to the rest of the world. To fill this gap in knowledge, this piece synthesizes findings from academic as well as popular sources in Korean and English on Korean digital youth. Studies of Korean youth media practices provide a fascinating means of furthering our awareness about the integral role of culture in shaping technological use and thus contribute to our understanding of the multi-faceted and heterogeneous construction of the global digital media scene.

Introduction

Until the late 1990s, it was hard to imagine that one day Korea would become one of the most powerful players in the global digital media scene. Korea's current prestige as an "IT powerhouse," "global digital test bed," "the most wired country," and "online gamers' heaven" seems to have arrived as a sudden revelation. Since 2002, Korea has been ranked first in the ITU's Digital Opportunity Index (http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/doi/index.html), which shows that Korea is fully saturated in most information communication technology (ICT) sectors, including games, mobile media, and the Internet. As an early adopter of the latest new media services, Korea's local experience has become more significant for understanding global new media culture. As such, Korea provides a fascinating opportunity to understand newly emerging phenomena, evoking our awareness about the integral role of culture in shaping technological use. Moreover, Korea's engagement with new media demonstrates how the local appropriation of technology supersedes the potential of technology. It also reveals the heterogeneous constitution of new media culture, rather than passive adoption of globally standardized universal technology. Eventually, the disruption of power dynamics between the global center—historically Western —and the local—marginalized others—is what explains the shock felt by some regarding Korea's debut in world IT scenes.

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To unearth the hidden secret behind the success of "Digital Korea" seems to be a constant challenge for both academic and industrial researchers in the field (Ahonen & O'Reilly, 2007). However, I believe there is nothing essentially Korean about all these phenomena, nor is there anything miraculously new about our cultural embrace of these technological innovations. I rather see a shift or transition in our media environment and the paradigm of techno-culture on a global scale heading in the direction toward "personal media culture" and "media convergence." Instead of asking why and how Korea has become transformed into an IT powerhouse, I address how these changes in Korea specifically resonate with and take part in the comprehensive shift in our changing media environment. So far, in spite of Korea's reputation for the most vibrant new media culture, Korean youths' concrete practices and tactics for navigating this highly charged techno-sphere are not well known to the rest of the world. This article seeks to fill this gap in knowledge regarding the "locality" of global digital youth culture by drawing from as many studies on Korean digital youth as possible. Through examining Internet use, mobile phones, gaming, and new media production in Korea, I reveal how uniquely Korean discourses intersect with those in other contexts. In this way, I seek to contribute to our understanding of the multi-faceted yet ever converging global digital media scene.

Demographic and Technological Contexts

Korea has slightly fewer than 50 million people, and the youth population (under 25) makes up about 45.4% (KSIS, 2009). About 81% of the total population lived in urban areas as of 2006 (http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/repkorea_statistics.html#46). Such high density of urban residence, intensified by prevalent housing patterns in high-rise apartment complexes, is often considered a favorable factor in wiring the country in a short time. Koreans' passion for higher education accounts for another secret of the digital revolution. With a well-established compulsory public education system and excessive social expectations regarding higher education, the level of educational achievement in Korea is comparatively high. The most recent nationwide survey in 2008 showed that the adult (over 19 years of age) literacy rate is about 98.3%. In 2009, about 93% of Koreans enrolled in tertiary school while the primary school enrollment ratio reached 100% (KSIS, 2009). However, as good performance in school, especially success on college entrance exams, is highly, often obsessively, valorized, private tutoring and cram schools outside of the public education system flourish and other extra-curricular activities for youth are fairly limited. It is reported that Korean adolescents spend their break time after school mostly in after-school programs/tutoring (57.9%), staying at home (15.9%), and gaming (10.2%) (Jang, 2006).

Whether the social fervor for higher education has generated any positive impact on the Korean model of ICT development is still under debate. Suffice it to say, high achievement in public education played a role in rapidly diffusing new media culture in Korea. Thus, it is important to consider the impact of the Korean government's educational policies promoting digital media literacy since the late 1980s, as many countries have implemented similar policies. What accounts for the unique Korean experience is the overarching public discourse on the sociopolitical importance of ICTs, which underscores the strong institutional and systemic push for digital media literacy. As in most developing countries, rapid technological development has long been one of the most urgent collective goals in Korea. Since the 1980s, through the intervention of the state, Korean society has embarked on an accelerated process of "technological modernization" and "informatization," with the expectation that such processes will change

the fate of the economy, national military power, and social well being in the face of global flows (Castells, 2007; Choi, S, 2005; Larson, 1995; Preston & Kerr, 2001). In particular, after the 1997 economic crisis, this techno-nationalistic discourse acquired a stronger voice and underscored overall cultural efforts to implement innovative new media services based on ICTs. While nationwide broadband networks set the key foundation, game and mobile phone industries have crystallized this effort by not only creating new revenue for the national economy, but also affecting everyday cultural practices in Korea, particularly those of young people. This industrial effort paralleled the intensified educational policy on digital media literacy. For instance, the "ICTs in education" law was legislated in 1997 as a national project and still remains effective. Under this law, the Korean government has implemented various policies and regulations to promote the adoption of ICTs at every stage of the educational system and has established a nationwide e-learning system (Korea Education & Research Information Service, 2007).[1]

Figure 1. Korea, Digital capital of World, YouTube (video clip).

Statistics show that this collective drive to advance technologically achieved remarkable success. In 2007, 77% of Koreans used the Internet on a daily basis while young people under 30 made up the

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[1] The initial objective of the ICT in education law is deeply integrated into the national educational policy on digital literacy, which goes beyond the school-based education program for children: It aims to establish the infrastructure and practical policies for incorporating ICTs in education; to promote the development of education methods, curriculum, textbooks, and staff training through the use of ICTs from the industrial approach; and to systematize central/local government, institutions, legislation, human power, and funding. For example, the execution plan of ICTs in education in 2007 illustrates key issues at stake in educational policy. It targets eight areas to promote: 1) e-learning and teaching support system (i.e., cyber home learning system, EDUNET system, EBS online lectures for college entrance exam prep); 2) e-lifelong education support system; 3) the knowledge sharing system of high educational information; 4) e-learning safety network (i.e., education cyber security center); 5) management of the performance of adapting ICTs in education; 6) e-learning and administration support system (i.e., NEIS); 7) U-learning base (i.e., cyber home learning system); and 8) globalization of e-learning.

majority of Internet users, with a usage ratio of 99% (NIA, 2008). Since high-speed broadband service was introduced in 1997, it has quickly become the index of digital Korea. In 2005, Korea ranked first in penetration ratio of high-speed broadband (OECD). More than 14 million Koreans subscribed to high-speed broadband Internet in 2007, which is 30.5% of the entire population (ITU, 2008). However, if we look at the subscription ratio of high-speed broadband per 100 households, the number increased to 91% in 2007 (NIA, 2008). This means that the majority of households enjoy high-speed broadband connection across the country. Currently, there are eight high-speed broadband service providers including Korea Telecom (KT), SK Broadband (Hanaro Telecom), LG Powercom, and Raincom, in addition to local cable service providers, which are all private corporations. With KT leading the market, three major telecoms — Korea Telecom, SK Telecom, and LG Telecom — compete in the growing convergent telecommunications market with diverse product packages that combine broadband internet, IP TV (KT and SKT), mobile phone, landline telephone (KT), and Internet phone (VoIP).

Korean Internet users primarily access the Internet from home computers (96.3%) or from work (33.1%). Commercial sites such as *PC bang* (which literally means, PC room, a Korean form of Internet café) follow, as 20.9% of users frequent these sites. Accessing wireless Internet through mobile phones is increasing, with 4.2 million subscribers in 2008 (NIA, 2008). This diversity of locations for Internet access outside of individual household subscriptions and the ubiquity of Internet networks unconstrained by physical sites are indicators of wired Korea. What is particularly interesting is the age-specific preference of certain access sites. While young people in their 30s are comparatively more adaptive to non-location specific (including wireless) Internet use, those in their teens and 20s significantly opt for commercial sites such as *PC bang* (NIA, 2008). In general, youth digital media culture in Korea is deeply integrated into the existing commercial entertainment industry, which has actively incorporated digital media devices to expand its conventional venues. Research shows that Korean youth use the computer mostly to find entertainment-related information, to play games, and to use email (Jung et al., 2005). Gaming is indeed the predominant online practice among Korean youth (44.6%) (Korean Game Industry Promotion Agency, 2005).

Along with broadband, mobile phones, commonly referred to as *handphone*, emerged as the central player in the midst of the transformation toward digital Korea. Since the Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute (ETRI) and a consortium of corporations launched the world's first commercial CDMA mobile phone service in 1996, Korea has been a step ahead in exploring CDMA-based technological innovations and the latest mobile media services including mobile TV (DMB: Digital Multimedia Broadcasting) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kY31o4PINoo) and Wibro (the first wireless high-speed broadband) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vX9_gM9-drI&feature=related). Currently, three major carriers run Korean mobile phone services: SK Telecom, KTF, and LG Telecom. They use a monthly billing system that charges according to the accumulated minute usage combined with a range of package options for data service. In fact, Korean mobile carriers are known for their quick and innovative adaptation of/experiments with diverse content services and savvy business strategies to operate the most segmented markets customized for various age groups (McClleland, 2004). Voice and text remain the primary communication modes of mobile phones. However, additional features such as camera, multimedia content service, mobile TV, wireless Internet, and video calls are becoming increasingly common.

Mobile technologies are probably the most rapidly updating sector in the Korean techno-sphere; their impacts are immediate and visible as they continuously replace or refurbish old communication and media services. For instance, as mobile phone subscriptions reached 90.2% in 2007, landline telephones have gradually given way to mobile-based telephony (ITU, 2008). In 2006 the teledensity of fixed-line telephones was 65.5, yet it drastically dropped to 46.44 the next year. One of the notable aspects of Korean mobile phones is their continuous evolution toward the personal, portable, and convergent media platform. Since SK Telecom inaugurated its commercial 3G mobile phone service (technically 2.5G with CDMA 2000 1-x system) in 2002, subscribers have gradually increased, so that there were about 33 million in 2008 (NIA, 2008). Mobile TV (http://articles.latimes.com/2009/feb/27/world/fg-korea-cellphone-tv27) is another memorable addition to this trend toward convergence – especially, convergence between telecommunication and broadcasting media culture. Two different formats of DMB, T-DMB (Terrestrial DMB) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_ZaYM_sc5c&feature=relatedand) and S-DBS (satellite DMB), had 11 million subscribers in early 2007.[2] These new media services not only carry out their intended mission to boost the national economy in the global market, but also characterize the multimedia-centered new media practices in Korea.

Internet Use

In 1997, the first major portal in Korea, Daum (http://www.daum.net), began its free email service and subsequently opened Internet cafés (public forums) two years later. Since its early days, online space in Korea has rarely been considered as a purely cyber or virtual space occupied by techno-geeks. Instead, the strong connectivity between online and offline reality defines the Internet as an inextricable part of techno-culture in Korea. While the excessive commercialism of Internet culture often becomes the target of cultural critique, its potential as an alternative public space that not only can harbor diverse voices free from the regulations of authorities, but also nourish new forms of civil democracy attracts the attention of both Korean and foreign scholars. The early buzz about _Ohmynews_ (http://www.ohmynews.co.kr) is a typical example of celebrating a new form of "citizen journalism" (Rheingold, 2002). In Cho's (2007) assessment, these vigorous civil and voluntary experiments characterized the early days of the Internet in Korea (1998-2002) as a "temporary autonomous zone," until it was eventually governed by commercial networks.

Online Communities

In this context, it is not surprising that "online community" occupies the center of discussions in Korea. Since the early 2000s, domestic sites such as I Love School have introduced a new trend of social networking online. The huge popularity of this early generation of social networking sites (SNS), which allowed users to reconnect with their long lost alumni and friends, became a social phenomenon that not only led to the subsequent boom of social media, but also demonstrated the impact of online space on offline reality. Simultaneously, major portals such as Daum and Naver (http://www.naver.net) emerged as the primary space for online activities. These domestic portal sites yielded enormous power in

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[2] Mobile phone is the most common platform to access mobile TV service (95% for S-DMB and 37.6% for T-DMB (Ok, 2008).

structuring Korean Internet culture in unique ways. For example, among general Korean Internet users, Naver is the most popular search engine with its famous *Jishikin*, one of the earliest crowdsourcing search systems, if not the first to incorporate the "collective wisdom." Although Naver's search engine mostly provides information within its own network, Korean users prefer its easy and quick access to useful information garnered from its huge database of individual blogs, public forums, news, and multimedia content. Naver and Daum occupy 88.3% of the domestic search engine market while Google falls short with a 2.1% share (NIA, 2008). At the same time, these sites host numerous user-generated online communities and public forums (i.e., Daum Agora Café) that represent diverse interests and tend to be more influential in shaping public opinion than individual power bloggers. When controversial social issues arise, they quickly become sites for the public debate that often accompanies new forms of political action, such as online petitions, cyber protests, and the relay of banners. In 2008, Daum alone had around 7.3 million cafés running, with an average of 3000 – 4000 new cafés opening daily.

Young people are the main residents of this online space. Their activities in various online communities have become the central focus of the discourse on cyber youth culture. In parallel with the overall changes in the Korean political and cultural sphere since the 1990s, Bae (2003) and Yoon (2001a) argue that the so-called "Net Generation" emerged as a new social group growing out of online communities. In the same vein, W. Choi (2005) contends that Net Generation embodies a new form of identity that blends a newly emerged individualistic lifestyle and anonymous networking in online space, which tends to challenge existing social behaviors of older generations.[3] This socio-psychological approach constructs the image of Korean youth who easily accept cyberspace as an extension of the real world and enjoy exploring diverse new media tools for self-expression (Hwang, 2000; Soh, 2002).

In particular, interest-driven online communities are major playgrounds for Korean youth. They are centers for active knowledge building and informal learning motivated by diverse leisure activities. According to Cho (2006), in 2003, 99.1% of Korean adolescents who used computers daily logged on to the Internet, and 89.1% of them had a membership in more than one online community: Each person belonged to an average of 13.7 communities. The overpowering presence of youth in online communities is increasing each year. In 2003, 77.7% of Daum café users were in their teens and 20s, and they also made up the majority of the café managers (Kang, 2003). Young people join online community activities primarily "to share with same interest and taste" (62.9%), and they continue engaging with them "in order to attain information or knowledge" (39.9%) (Hwang, 2003). Fan communities are full of these shared learning activities. For example, it is common for young people to teach each other basic level Japanese in a typical portable game fan community (Cho, 2006). The popularity of online community-based activities is often attributed to their function as an emotional outlet for youth in Korea, where alternative play culture and the democratic communication structure across generations tend to be repressed in real life. In that sense, youth-targeted online communities such as Sayclub (Kang, 2003) and

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[3] The discussion of Net Generation represents the popular trend of coining the generational identity of young people who emerged as the major players in digital media culture. Such new terms as "Digital Generation," "N Generation," "Cyber *Sinillyu* (new human species: new generation)" "Thumb Tribe," and "Netizen (Net + Citizen)" were employed to characterize the changed social identity of Korean youth.

Damoim (Kim, 2003) meet Korean youths' desire to hang out and carve out their own space outside of adult supervision and social pressures.

*Blogging/*Cying

Figure 2. Cyworld: Mini-hompy.

Blogging is another prevalent online practice. Korea "boasts the second largest number of bloggers in the world, surpassed only by the United States of America" (Choi, 2006. P. 173). However, it is interesting that blogging in Korea is closely linked with the adoption of social network sites. While blogs are considered to be a private space compared to the more public-oriented online communities, young people use blogs primarily "to build and maintain social relationships" rather than to engage in "journalistic or participatory activities" (Kim, Y., 2006; Choi, 2006). *Cyworld*, introduced in 1999 and one of the first SNS services in the world, represents this culturally specific tendency in the Korean blogosphere. Cyworld provides a personal space called *Mini-hompy*, which MySpace adopted in a similar way, and *Il-chon* (literally, the first degree kinship) system, a tool to network with other Cyworld users (an equivalent to "neighbors" in MySpace) (see Figure 1). Although there has been confusion over its identity in relation to blog services – mostly similar to the common blog format overseas – *Mini-hompy* is generally considered a different form of personal media.[4] More than 90% of Korean Internet users in their 20s are members of Cyworld (Yoo, 2005) Its extraordinary popularity and social impact generated a

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[4] In her study of the establishment of Korean Internet culture, Heewon Kim traces the changing public discourse around Cyworld. According to her, in the early days of Cyworld before August 2008, *Mini-hompy* was called "personal media" or "1 person media." With the spread of blog service, however, the term *Mini-hompy* began to be replaced or considered as interchangeable with blog until it eventually regained its independent identity in the public discourse (Kim, H. W., 2004).

cultural phenomenon across generations, ages, and genders as its membership is equal to approximately one quarter of the nation's entire population. Revealing the obsessive use of Cyworld, new jargon such as *Cying* (doing Cyworld) and *Cy-pein* (Cyworld fanatic/geeks) have become popular additions to everyday conversation. In this context, it is not surprising that most studies of SNS and blogs in Korea focus on Cyworld.

Most of all, it is the unique formal aspects of Cyworld that distinguish it from common blog applications and thus show how technology is culturally shaped and appropriated into a specific emotional technology. With cute layouts, avatars, images, virtual goods, and hip multimedia content, Cyworld represents cute aesthetics, the unique operating principle of popular culture in Korea as well as in Japan. Both this culturally friendly system (cute aesthetics, *Il-chon*) and easy application tools allow the user to express his/her identity through the customization of *Mini-hompy* and encourage migratory practices across interconnected digital media spheres (Hjorth & Kim, 2005).

The success of Cyworld is often attributed to cultural factors since long-term human network maintenance is regarded as highly important in the collectivistic and interdependent Korean society. The adoption of blogging as a tool to reaffirm offline social relations is a pervasive phenomenon that is not limited to Cyworld: relation-oriented blogs are generally more popular in Korea (Na, Park, & Kim, 2007). Korean youth also primarily engage with Cyworld to micromanage their social relationships (Kim & Yun, 2007). In fact, according to Jang and Nam (2006), the most frequented type of site for Korean youth is *Mini-hompy*/blog. Café board ranks second and Internet game sites follow. Na, Park, and Kim's (2007) comparative ethnographic study of blog-type young Internet users and game-type users reveals that blog-type interest users tend to valorize relation-oriented activity. However, young people adopt a careful "social" filtering system by utilizing screening tools embedded in Cyworld (Choi, 2006). In this sense, *Mini-hompy* functions as a closed or controlled open space. Recently, the closed usage of Cyworld for securing personal space has increased significantly as 30% of Cyworld users identify themselves as solely diary recorders (Hwang, Kim, & Cho, 2008).

Overall, as in many other national contexts, youth Internet culture in Korea has met with ambivalent responses in public and academic discourse. Blogging or *Cying* is generally received as a positive activity since it motivates young Koreans to build "self-respect" and "self-identity" (Kim, Y., 2006). On the contrary, young people's fun-oriented consumption/reappropriation of multimedia content in online space is more vulnerable to scrutinizing eyes. In fact, the Internet has already replaced old media as the preferred mode of media consumption: creating and sharing multimedia content has become common practice among Korean youth. Before YouTube captured the hearts of global viewers, Korean online space was already flooded with busy file transmissions as soon as domestic media production software and commercial peer-to-peer (P2P) sites and/or user created content (UCC) sites (notably, Pandora TV and GomTV) opened their channels. In a broader context, this play culture that messes around with media content forms part of young people's widespread practice of new media production, which I will elaborate in the following section.

E-politics

Lastly, what is particularly interesting about Korean youth Internet culture is the increasing mobilization of young people for public participation through the use of diverse new media technologies. In 2008, "Candlelight Protests" organized against American beef imports were a watershed moment because teenagers suddenly emerged as new political agents (especially, teenage girls). Active and organized teenagers' participation set off and sustained the event. On the first day of the candlelight protests on May 2, 2008, teenagers comprised 60 to 70% of attendees, and the image of "Candlelight Girls" immediately became the icon of this civil movement (Lee & Jung, 2008). Apparently, the main cause of the protest was the resumed import of American beef without sufficient measures to screen for mad cow disease, which caused concern among teenagers for their future well being. However, public media focused on Korean teenagers' ongoing dissatisfaction with the repressive educational system and fear of intensifying competition driven by the new government's educational policies (such as "Immersive English Teaching Program") as a hidden motivation that triggered their voluntary collective action.

However, Korean youths' "e-politics" is not a sudden phenomenon, as the Candlelight Girls have had several predecessors. Social issues that have mobilized Korean youth to participate in real action are diverse in their scope and scale, from more direct political events such as the 2002 presidential election (Kim, 2004) and the anti-American protest around a middle school girl's accidental death by a GI (Bhuiyan, 2004), to micro-level problems of the educational system. In particular, Lee, Han, Oh, & Phillips (2007) trace the following incidents in which "digital natives" have collectively mobilized through online communities: the "No Cut" campaign (against rigid hairstyle regulations in secondary schools) in 2000; the protest against the reformed university entrance selection system in 2004; and the "National Network for the Protection of Student Human Rights" campaign in 2005. Significantly, the No-Cut campaign was one of the first successful e-political movements of Korean youth in that it led to the revision of official policy.

Korean youth have also brought a new mode of political communication. They have demonstrated savvy use of diverse communication channels in making their voices heard, which is clearly distinguished from the monolithic and centralized mode of the dominant media. While online space provides the main channel for obtaining and sharing information as well as for forming public opinion, mobile phones have played a key role in mobilizing and coordinating actions on the spot as well as recording/live broadcasting events in progress. These multiple forms of news get spread across diverse media channels including *Mini-hompy*/blog, SMS, and portal sites. At the same time, C. Lee and E. Jung (2008) highlight young people's changed attitude toward political engagement, which has become more "fun" oriented. In other words, young people tend to combine participation in social and political affairs with play, parody, humor, wit, and caricature to express their feelings and opinions rather than direct criticism. Memorable scenes from the Candlelight Protests are inundated with creative picket signs of diverse causes and witty performances on a free speech podium (i.e., skits, dancing, and singing). These displays of playful demonstration resonate with the comparatively unrestrained participatory culture of young people on the Internet. However, the significance and implication of these recent incidents and the e-politics of Korean youth are still under discussion and require more thorough analysis. In Park's (2002) critique, while the Internet

provides an alternative public forum for young people to express themselves easily, it does not automatically guarantee the actual attendance of young voters.

Mobile Communication

If mobile phones are the driving force of the convergent media culture in Korea, then *Eomjijok*, the Korean version of "Thumb Tribe," is behind the wheel. Early global youth mobile phone studies have shown that youth mobile phone culture, which is centered on the use of text messaging and play culture, redefined mobile phone technology. Apparently, Korean youth mobile phone culture shares many traits with those in other mobile savvy countries. When the mobile phone was first introduced in 1999, it was mainly businessmen who adopted this new technology as an alternative communication tool (Kim, 2001). With the introduction of the text message, however, the mobile phone quickly became the icon of young people. Their swift texting skills and the use of idiosyncratic code language became typical indicators identifying the *Eomjijok*. In fact, this notion of Thumb Tribe has been popularly adopted throughout East Asia –across China, Korea, and Japan (Bell, 2005). It is hypothesized that the original Japanese coinage of *Oyayubisoku* ("Thumb Tribe") traveled to Korea and was translated as *Eomjijok*.

Eomjijok and *Thumbelinas*

Indeed, *Eomjijok* is another name for N Generation and *Digital Sinillyu (Digital New-mankind)*. Hence, most discussions in the early days of the mobile phone focused on their distinctive cultural identity and their significance in the transformation of Korean society (Kim, J., 2005; Kim, H., 2005). On the one hand, young people's quick adoption of mobile phones was interpreted as reflecting their increasing desire to sustain individualism against the traditionally collectivist Korean culture: young people prefer the mobile phone because it allows informal, personal, and unregulated communication (Kwon & Choi, 2003). In this regard, the exclusive text message culture of *Eomjijok* was considered a part of youth subculture (Park, 2000). However, young people's excessive use of mobile phones was easily criticized as a symptom of addiction. In other cases, their mastery of this new technology presented subversive effects that violated the authority and/or principles of the official educational system. The notorious "SMS cheating scandal on college entrance exam" in 2004 was one of these rude-awakenings for adults (Sung, Park, H. & Park, S., 2006). A group of high school students employed a collective cheating system using mobile phone text messages during the nationwide college entrance exam (equivalent to the SAT in the U.S., but of much heavier social weight in Korean society) in several cities. The police investigated and scrutinized 300,000 random text messages sent that day. It was reported that more than 300 high school students were questioned by police and six suspects were accused in the scheme. The massive scale of the incident and young people's technical mastery of the mobile phone to carry out their misconduct generated a sensational scandal and stirred up social anxieties about the digital gap between generations. On the other hand, research has shown that mobile phones reconfirm young people's peer networks, which continue traditional modes of sociality and cultural identity rather than encroach on them (Na, 2001). Yoon (2003, 2006) argues that this "relation-oriented" usage pattern of Korean youth demonstrates the localized practice of mobile phone use and challenges the general assumption that the mobile phone is an individualistic technology.

If *Eomjijok* defined a newly emerged youth mobile phone culture, then the current young generation has been born into mobile technology culture. As mobile phones have evolved into convergent personal media in Korea, the popularity of the term *Eomjijok* is slowly fading away. Korean youth become savvy mobile phone users in the early stages of their life. According to recent research by mobile phone carrier KTF (2009), Korean adolescents (ages 12–18) own their first mobile phone comparatively earlier than those in Japan, China, India, and Mexico, and 80.6% of Korean adolescents have their own mobile phone (compared to Japan, 77.3%; Mexico, 64%; China, 48.9%; and India, 30.6%). In particular, Korea shows a higher penetration rate among younger groups: 87.7% of 12-year-old Korean adolescents already use mobile phones, which far surpasses other countries (Japan, 50%; Mexico; 45.1%; China, 27.7%; and India 11.6%). All three mobile operators in Korea have already put emphasis on the youth market by offering specialized rate plans and innovative services designed especially for them (Castells, Fernandez-Ardevol, Qiu, & Sey, 2007).

In general, text messaging is still the most preferred mode of communication among Korean youth. Yet the salient use of other mobile phone features—mobile phone imaging, sharing, and MMS messaging—is redefining the culture of *Eomjijok* (Lee, J., 2001; Lee, S., 2003). Recently, diverse multimedia content services such as ring tones, music files, video, games, and location-based services have become the favorite features of Korean youth (Kim, J., 2005). In particular, teenage girls appear to be more savvy consumers and active adaptors of these additional services. Studies show that there have been "major gender shifts through the usage of 3G mobile phone practices that have seen stereotypes such as female users as 'passive' and male users as 'active' dismantled" (Hjorth & Kim, 2005, p. 51). Women are "more active than men in their adaptability and willingness to adopt the multi-media functions of mobile phone" in Korea (Lee & Seun, 2004). Beginning with text messaging, *Thumbellinas* indeed shaped the way in which the mobile phone was appropriated as an "affective digital technology." As girls play with "emotext" (emoticon + text) and "chatting" among their peers, mobile phones serve to increase the sense of intimacy and belonging to their culture (Kim et al., 2006). It is also common for girls to use mobile phones as a "'personal memory box,'" the object of emotional affection in and through which they store and share their pictures and/or various gift items (Kim & Lee, 2007). As observed in other countries, Korean girls are passionate about customizing their mobile phones and consider mobile phones as a tool to display their personal identities, much like a fashion accessory (Hjorth & Kim, 2005; Hjorth, 2008; Lee, J. H., 2004).

Mobile Screen

What is particularly unique about Korean mobile culture is the continuing emphasis on the potential of mobile phones as mobile screen media. Most screen-based mobile media services target young people as their primary consumers. For example, 3G mobile multimedia content service was particularly designed to meet and maximize the demands of young people. In order to satisfy young people's appetite, Korean mobile operators have explored mobile-specific content since 2002: SK Telecom's *mobile cinema* series and *mobile drama* are good examples. In particular, *Five Stars* (2004) is interesting in that it represents the entertainment business strategy of commercializing and appropriating digital youth culture, particularly girls' subculture (Ok, 2008). *Five Stars* was advertised as the first "mobile interactive drama" while simultaneously functioning as a multimedia entertainment project that

included other auxiliary media projects such as Idol Boy bands, digital photography picture books, open source track music files (OST), <u>music video</u>, and even mobile games. Premiering in October 2004, *Five Stars* set the record as the most popular original mobile drama produced in Korea as well as the third most popular drama among all mobile video content on SK Telecom's network. It is reported that 75,000 users accessed its service for the first 15 days and more than 400,000 users have downloaded it. Most of all, its appeal originates from the fact that it adopted the popular Internet novel by *Gwiyoni,* a famous girl writer whose idiosyncratic writings generated a trend since the early 2000s. In this way, *Fives Stars* demonstrates how new media technology — such as the Internet and mobile phones — constructs the commercial yet alternative space for youth and vice versa.

The increasing popularity of PMP (portable media player) and convergent mobile media among youth has intensified this trend toward the personal screen culture, driving young people, who already migrated online for media consumption, further away from conventional media. In 2007, 2.3 million PMP were sold, surpassing the sales of TV sets, at 2.1 million. Chung Seok-Won, vice president of Raincom, credits the dramatic increase of sales of PMP to the "frenzy of downloaded video clips such as American TV shows and UCC (User Created Content) since the beginning of 2006" (*Chosen Daily*, 2008). Due to the comparatively high cost of purchasing these devices and accessing multimedia content, young adults who are in their early 20s more actively engage with the mobile screen. Watching downloaded content (TV dramas, animation, and movies) or browsing TV programs through a mobile TV service during their commute or down time is a typical pattern of mobile screen use (Ok, 2008). Overall, Korean youth usages of mobile phones demonstrate that mobile phone technology allows young people to create an alternative space outside their daily institutionalized environment.

Gaming

It is not too farfetched to argue that the full picture of Korean new media practices cannot be completed without the piece of online games. Online game and *PC bang* (Internet café) are two key words that not only represent Korean game culture, but also explain the rapid penetration of broadband. In the early 2000s, online gaming emerged as the primary mode of gaming in Korea in parallel with the rapid penetration of broadband Internet. In fact, scholars argue that online games were a "catalyst for creating an increasing demand for broadband connection" since the huge success of *StarCraft*, the first phenomenally popular online game title, introduced in 1999 (Huhh, 2008, p. 28). In a short time, the Korean game industry has risen to the top, and online game services have become representative cultural exports of Korea, particularly in the global MMORPG (massively multiplayer online role-playing game) market. For example, since first launched in 1998, *Lineage* (http://lineage.plaync.co.kr/global), the most successful domestic MMORGP, has become one of the largest MMORPG worlds.

Beginning in the early 1980s, Korea had arcade games and video game culture that preceded online games, but their influence was circumscribed due to Korea's complex historical context. As a repercussion of the colonial experience, the Korean government regulated and imposed restrictions on the import of Japanese arcade games, early portable games, and console games (both hardware and software) until 2004. Arcade game parlors, which operated with pirated or copied game software, flourished as popular local hangouts among young people. But console games were not taken up among

Korean gamers as much as in other countries. This social context paradoxically facilitated the growth of domestic online games, which took advantage of both the absence of strong competitors and the latest technology of broadband Internet.

The context of the 1997 economic crisis is particularly important in the development of online games, as with other ICT uptakes in Korea. Huhh (2008) elaborates this unique contextual aspect of Korean online games, showing how with the collapse of conventional industries, human and financial resources flooded into the game industry. The massive population of youth in their teens and 20s transformed themselves into gamers, often unwillingly, because they had more free time to devote to gaming in the unprecedented low-employment conditions. This migration of cultural resources led to the boom of *PC bang* as a new profitable business. Subsequent development and the success of adjacent institutions such as game TV channels (notably, Ongamenet (http://www.ongamenet.com), MBCgame (http://www.mbcgame.co.kr), and Quini [until 2007]) and professional game leagues promoted gaming as a serious leisure activity, so called "e-sports." Like all other ICT uptakes in Korea during this period, the online gaming industry also benefited from the strategic support of the government, whose favorable policies for the industry have become a benchmarking model for other countries such as China and Singapore (Chung, 2008). For this reason, issues of policy/regulations, technological innovation, and the business strategies of game culture have attracted the most attention from both domestic and overseas scholars who either aim to promote the domestic game industry or unearth the secret of its success (Dai & Chee, 2008).

From the beginning, young people were major players in the gaming scene as well as the main residents in the thousands of *PC bangs* on every street corner. Initially, the public discourse surrounding gaming had a rather positive, at least not condemning, tone as Korean youth's mastery of new media technologies was generally considered productive for the future of the nation. However, the emergence of new forms of social problems that were linked to the intensive gaming culture stirred up social anxiety about the "incomprehensible youth culture" spiraling out of control. Such notorious incidents as death by excessive gaming, game item stealing/selling, murder in revenge for PK (player killing within game), and overseas operation of game mines have easily generated the dismissive public debate on the hazards of game addiction and youth delinquency (Sung & Lee, 2003).

Figure. 3. Korean Professional game league: 2009 Starcraft league, YouTube (video clip).

Gamers' Heaven: PC bang

PC bang is perhaps the most discussed topic both in and outside Korea as it represents culturally specific gaming practices in Korea. In 2007, Seoul alone hosted 22,000 *PC bangs*, which are ubiquitous on the second floor of most buildings on the street (Huhh, 2008). Like Internet cafes in other countries, *PC bang* provides the physical place where the general public can have easy access to the Internet. However, *PC bangs* are used mainly for gaming in Korea. Most of all, *PC bang* in Korea is a social and economic institution central to the formulation of Korean business models such as "IP pricing," "no-subscription fee system/micro-transaction," and "GongSungJun" (in-game Guild Warfare often collectively conducted at *PC bangs*) (Yoon, 2003; Huhh, 2008). It is also the cultural space where "collective" gaming was born as the significant practice of Korean gamers. In addition, *PC bang* serves as a local community for gamers. Consequently, it nourishes the future career of young gamers, who then step up into the professional game leagues, and it serves as a bridge between the online and offline game world and the amateur and professional game sphere. In particular, *PC bang* is the center of gaming-related youth leisure culture outside of official educational institutions and after school programs, what Florence Chee defines as "the third place" (Chee, 2005, 2006). Motivations and individual needs vary, but teens mostly go to *PC bang* to socialize with peers, whether it is for gaming and/or for dating (Yoon, 2001). Also, it provides the pseudo/alternative private space for solitary gamers outside of their parents' surveillance (Sung & Lee, 2003a). As high-speed broadband has become more easily accessible at home, however, solitary gaming in the private gaming environment is increasing. In 2005, 76.5% of gamers reported that they played mostly at home (Ahn, 2005).

Playing Together: MMORPG

It is this "social play" of gaming that represents Korean game culture. Most attempts to recuperate the positive effects of online gaming focus on the gamers' extended "sociality." In general, young Korean gamers engage with online games out of such motivations as "drive for power" (Lee, 2002), "easy access" (Nam & Lee, 2005), "stress relief and escapism" (Lee, 2003), "fun" (Jeong & Lee, 2001), and "sociality, entertainment, and escapism" (Lee, 2003). Among diverse online game genres, MMORPG is the most popular genre and the favored subject of academic studies although the online game market has greatly diversified since the sensational success of the casual online game *Kart Rider* (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3T3qgH9VbMs) in 2004. Research findings show that social interaction is the central characteristic of MMORPGs, and the attraction of "networking" is the major factor in the success of the online game genre (Yoon, S., 2001b). In this regard, numerous studies analyze guild activities, the formation of game communities, and pro-gamers centered on specific game titles.

Lineage, the most successful Korean MMORPG game title, is also the most studied from various perspectives in terms of its formal structure, aesthetics, social effects, and gamers' practices. In particular, the issue of the "sociality of *Lineage* players" has generated vigorous discussion (Han, 2000; Hwang, Kim, & Im, 2004; Jang, 2005; Steinkuehler, 2006; Whang, 2003; Whang & Chang, 2004; Park & Yu, 2008). Fifty percent of Korean gamers consider friends whom they meet within the *Lineage* world to be as equally important as their real-life friends, acknowledging that *Lineage* functions as a pseudo real world (Hwang, Kim, & Im, 2004). Experiences in *Lineage* have also proven to nourish gamers' offline

leadership (Lim & Park, 2007), and embedded game activities such as micro-transaction, item trading, and Internet item buying encourage young people to engage in diverse economic activities (Kang, J. U., 2007; Lee, Han, Oh, & Phillips, 2007). Scholars argue that these diverse social activities that are manifested in gaming present possible learning opportunities for Korean youth to extend their social interaction and reaffirm their sense of presence (Um, Kim, & Kim, 2005).

Mobile Gaming

Overshadowed by the dominance of online games, other modes and forms of games have been marginalized in the academic discussion. Recently, the increasing popularity of mobile gaming for a wide range of generations, especially among women, is particularly noteworthy. In Korea, the mobile phone is the common platform for playing mobile games, which are mostly mobile versions of online games provided through mobile content services. Portable game devices such as Sony DSP and Nintendo DS are slowly taking up the attention of casual gamers, regardless of gender. Since Nintendo DS went on sale in 2006, it has sold 2 million consoles as of 2008. The appeal of mobile games based on their female-friendly genres and aesthetics raises an interesting question regarding the gendered aspect of gaming culture (Jeon, 2007a, 2007b; Hjorth, 2006, 2007).

Indeed, female gamers have increased from 29.9% in 2005 to 31.5% in 2006, and they show more preference for mobile games (Korean Game Industry Promotion Agency, 2006). Many women see online and offline game worlds as constructions of masculine space and feel social restraints or societal pressure in navigating these worlds. Jeon (2007b) argues that, for female gamers, mobile games provide spatial freedom from the male-dominant social order in conventional game spaces. However, there exist continuing (cultural) restrictions of mobility for female gamers, as most female mobile gamers prefer to play at home in contrast to male players, who enjoy unrestricted playing at school or at work. Therefore, it is not surprising that "solitary gaming" is the prominent mode among female mobile gamers. The popularity of the "board game" genre, especially on mobile phones, seems to reiterate this tendency. For example, *Gostop,* a traditional Korean card game, was the most popular board game among adult mobile gamers in 2004, and *Gostop* and poker games have continuously dominated the mobile game market (Han, Kim, & Kim, 2005).

Young female mobile gamers play with their peers in a more relaxed environment since the games do not require engagement with collective guild and clan activities found in serious PC-based online gaming. They often exchange text messages or chats with their friends while playing the same mobile games. In this sense, mobile gaming forms part of a "casual intimacy-oriented" youth peer culture (Hjorth, 2007; Jeon, 2007a). Significantly, cute aesthetics of mobile games played a key role in attracting these marginalized groups of gamers, who were already accustomed to the style through other new media services such as Cyworld. At the same time, simple and easy applications of these cute casual games invited female gamers who initially were resistant to serious online gaming due to their lack of technical or social skills. The sensational success of *Kart Rider* is a good example. When it was first launched in 2004, it was hard to predict that this cute online racing game would topple the famous *StarCraft*. Unlike a heavy and complicated MMORPG, *Kart Rider* was also easily adapted to the mobile platform. More than two million individuals play it every day and up to 220,000 users are connected simultaneously during peak

hours (Cho, 2005). Continuing the legacy of Korean MMORPGs overseas, *Kart Rider* also expanded into the global market. Considering that convergent mobile devices are at the center of the changing new media environment in Korea, there is no question that gaming will expand its appeal to a wider population, most likely outside of *PC bang*.

New Media Production

Young Koreans not only consume but also produce content, thus demonstrating their mastery of new media technologies. Many conventional distinctions, such as consumption and production, online and offline, high and low, and mainstream and independent have been tested as young people actively engage with transmedia practices. In 2001, a series of high school girls' eccentric romance stories, *That Bastard was Cool* (*Geu Nomeun Meosisseosda),* sparked teenage readers to flock into Daum Internet café. It was the beginning of the Internet novel syndrome. The phenomenal success of this idiosyncratic and unconventional novel established its author, a 16-year-old high school girl whose Internet ID and pen name were Gwiyoni (which literally means "Cute One"), as the icon of youth Internet culture. *That Bastard was Cool* scored 8 million views online, sold 500,000 copies when later published as a print book, and eventually was made into a movie in 2004.[5] Its popularity even crossed the border to nearby Asian countries, including Japan, China, Taiwan, and Thailand, where the popularity of the Korean Wave (*hallyu*) was at its peak.

The popularity of Gwiyoni's short, comical, lighthearted, episodic stories about everyday school life and teenage romance not only shook the professional literature community, but also the popular media. In fact, the Gwiyoni phenomenon did not come out of the blue. Before the World Wide Web was introduced in Korea, several pre-Internet novels, with similar styles and subjects, attracted young readers to a cyber space that was running on a Telnet system *(PC Tongsin* in Korean) in the early 1990s. Gwiyoni brought this underground youth subculture, particularly girls' subculture, into the mainstream of public discourse (Kim & Kim, 2004).

In general, Gwiyoni's novels were severely criticized and frowned upon by adults due to her constant usage of informal and colloquial language, Internet idioms, foul expressions, and emoticons – all in violation of traditional language structure. However, Gwiyoni's violation of the linguistic code was not new but familiar to young people. The Gwiyoni phenomenon is significant in that it represents the migration/expansion of the youth linguistic code that young people constantly create and share with their peers through mobile SMS and Internet chat in their everyday life (Choi, 2003). This trend of sharing new linguistic codes within their intimate networks dates back to the popularity of *Tongsin Eoneo* (Internet Communication Idioms) in the time of beepers and the early Internet community. While Gwiyoni's informal use of language mostly consists of *Tongsin Eoneo*, there is also a popular trend of using more

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[5] Following up on *That Bastard was Cool*, Gwiyoni published five more Internet novels until 2006. Most of her novels have been adapted to movies that target the teenage girl market by starring popular young actors: *Seduction of Wolf* (*Neukdaeui Yuhok;* English movie title: *Romance of Their Own)* and *That Bastard was Cool* (English movie title: *The Guy)* in 2004*, Doremipasolasido* in 2008, and *To You* currently under production.

radical and broken forms of language, which is called *Oegyeeo* (Alien Words). The creation and sharing of *Oegyeeo* tend to be exclusively limited to young people's intimate networks (mostly, early teens) or special online communities such as "Teusumunja Manddang" (Special Words Heaven, Daum), which has more than one million members. The level of deconstruction for *Oegyeeo*, which dissects and fabricates a grammatical system while mixing and matching foreign words, is so radical that ordinary Koreans cannot understand or decipher their meaning (Yoo, 2003). In this sense, Cho (2007) argues that the Gwiyoni phenomenon illustrates the broader changes in culture, from "print literature based" to "electronic literature based" and the advent of a new form of youth digital storytelling.

In a broader context, Internet novels signaled the expansion of girls' participatory fandom culture, which already existed before the Internet in the form of fanzines (fan magazine) and/or fan art, to the online space. Right before Gwiyoni, writing and sharing fanfics (fan fictions) about pop stars (mostly male idol stars) emerged as a highly visible activity across Internet fan cafés. Daum alone hosted around 9,241 fanfic cafés, and the largest one had more than 300,000 members in 2003. Just like the Gwiyoni phenomenon, girls' fanfic writing also came under public scrutiny, but for a different reason. In 2000, the Ministry of Information and Telecommunication introduced an online content rating system for youth protection, and fanfics, which often contain stories about homosexual relationships, were selected as harmful content to be censored. As fangirls organized online protests against content censorship through Internet cafés, girls' writing culture suddenly emerged as a hot topic in popular media (Jo & Kim, 2005). These examples demonstrate how the Internet provides an alternative space and effective tools for Korean girls to create "communities of fantasy"; those in constant struggle with cultural authorities (Kim & Kim, 2004).

As image producing technologies — such as digital cameras, mobile phone cameras, and editing software/applications — became widely available, literary forms of youth play were complemented by various multimedia productions. Creating and circulating fun content such as parody pictures, often with political satire, emerged as representative of online play culture. Two notable examples are the *Yeopgi* phenomenon and the *JJang* phenomenon. Originally, the term *Yeopgi* referred only to "weird, uncanny, perverted or frightening phenomena," but it now indicates all weirdly funny things and it has operated as a code of light humor among Korean youth since 2000. All sorts of media content — pictures, video clips, and literature — with the *Yeopgi* code has populated the online space, feeding young people's insatiable appetite for unique fun: certain Internet cafés such as "DC inside" acquired a new reputation for their famous *Yeopgi* content. Another example is the *Jjang* (the best) phenomenon, which involves netizens voting online on uploaded self-photos, which often become a "gateway towards stardom" (Choi, 2006). Various types of *Jjangs*, such as *uljjang* (person with the best face) and *mom- jjang* (person with the best physique), have become "catchphrases in society, entertainment business and other areas" in contemporary Korea (Choi, 2006 p. 180).

Recently, various forms of content produced by netizens have been touted in the name of user created content (UCC). In most cases, UCC refers to video content produced and shared by users online. As major portals opened special services for UCC, following the successful models of UCC sites like Pandora TV, UCC became a hot item in the current mediaspace in Korea. Initially, UCC fever was largely based on the prevalent and notorious P2P file sharing culture. In the past, free/illegal downloading and

repurposing were adopted as alternative tactics to share commercially unavailable content. While the media industry is slowly shaping new business models to counteract this practice, the active reappropriation and consumption of popular cultural content from overseas (particularly, Japanese pop music/TV drama/animation) in the form of UCC is still widespread. For example, young Korean fans' various fandom activities around trans-Asian television drama content form a significant part of UCC sites (Kim & Lee, 2007).

Research shows that women, especially female college students, are more active in producing and consuming UCC (Yam, 2008). It is noted that the central motivation to create and share UCC is "self-expression" and "getting recognition from others" (Sung & Lee, 2007). Still, 90%of UCC is repurposed out of existing media content. In this sense, the significance of UCC culture lies more in that it represents a decentralized mode of media distribution (Jeon, 2008). This aspect of UCC, as a potentially democratic media form, becomes more apparent when it serves a journalistic purpose. Indeed, the social implications of UCC, as an emerging form of journalism to monitor and engage both macro and micro-level social issues, is a widely discussed topic in Korea (Kim, 2008; Kang, J. S., 2007; Lee & Kim, 2007). During the 2006 presidential election campaign, UCC appeared as the preferred tool for expressing political views, especially among college students (Ban & Kim, 2007).

However, as the cultural influence of UCC is increasing, the debate over its legitimacy as a viable media form is also intensifying. Various issues, such as policies and regulations on UCC for youth protection and legal copyrights, are still unresolved. A daily battle is fought between the major portals who regularly monitor illegal ripping of media content, media producers who seek additional profits through "one-content-multi-use" strategies, and bloggers who want to repurpose such media content. In the end, although debates about whether these phenomena actually reflect young people's productive use of new media technology still continue, these various forms demonstrate that young peoples' reappropriation of media content with their newly acquired technological mastery has become a predominant practice online in Korea.

Conclusion

The goal of this article was to highlight the everyday practices of Korean youth, who are exposed to one of the most technologically saturated environments in the world. Since the last decade, a period in which Korea transformed itself into Digital Korea, Korean youth have been appropriating the latest new media technologies — from broadband Internet to mobile TV — and continuously making up the rules of use ad hoc. No other generation of Korean youth has had such cultural power through the use of technology. They are major residents and managers of vast online communities, avid gamers who support the world's largest online game industry, and users of the newest mobile media. Korean youths' roles as early adopters and explorers of new media technologies elevate their position as bearers of future hope: social agents who are compelled to continue future national development in an ever-evolving IT Korea. Most of all, studies of Korean youth media practices provide a fascinating lead to further our awareness about the integral role of culture in shaping technological use, by manifesting how the local appropriation of technology prefigures the potential of technology.

Although the majority of studies on youth practices of new media technologies in Korea revolve around the issues of policies and media effects, it is notable that Korean scholars unanimously confirm the centrality of participatory youth culture in the establishment of Korean new media space across every ICT sector. However, as major commercial sites such as portals, Cyworld, *Lineage*, and Pandora TV become the center of academic attention, youth practices outside of these commercially established media spaces remain unexplored. In this context, the recent Candlelight Protest demonstrates how young people quickly took over established media spaces through their salient and creative use of new media technologies, though momentarily, to mobilize public opinion. The dramatic transformation of fangirls into "candlelight *sonyeo* (girls)" during the Candlelight Protest suggests the further potential of new media technologies in cultivating a new mode of civic engagement and political communication.

Under current circumstances where the Korean government and media industry are increasingly blatant and more direct in their control of the creation and distribution of online media content, it is not certain that Korean youth online culture is heading toward a bright future that fully maximizes the promise of Korea's renowned technological progress. The notorious "Minerva Case" in early 2009 — in which a star power blogger was persecuted for his critical posts about the current government's economic policies – shows that the power of online space as an alternative channel to expand freedom of speech is still vulnerable. This tension between regulations and disruptions in regard to the public adaptation of new media technologies is not new. On a brighter note, as young people continue to respond to and intercept these attempts at restriction with more creative tactics, a new form of public knowledge on how to counteract or limit this centralizing hegemony will accumulate accordingly.

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