

A Long Way From Home?

The Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Korean and South African Migrants' Experiences and Imaginaries in Auckland, New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

In line with recent calls in the transnational discourse for more work into middling transnationalism this article investigates the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the experiences migrants from South African and the Republic of Korea to New Zealand. Interviews were conducted with individuals who migrated at various times over the past 30 years to explore what if any difference ICTs have made to how they have settled in New Zealand's largest city, Auckland. While ICTs are recognised as a core contributing factor to transnationalism few researchers have actually investigated how migrants are using them. Consequently, this article focuses on two aspects. First the migrants use ICTs to inform their geographical imaginaries concerning the new spaces of Auckland and secondly, their changing use of ICTs over time in their negotiation of contact with family and friends "back home". The findings disrupt conclusion that have been drawn in the literature, findings too often based on research into migration from developing to developed countries. When imaging Auckland personal contacts were favoured over the Internet demonstrating that the latter is not always the preferred information source. In negotiating communications back home the migrants cultural backgrounds influenced their ICT use signifying the importance of locality. Finally none of the migrants remained politically active or sent remittances back home demonstrating the need for new indicators of transnationalism.

INTRODUCTION

THE EXPERIENCE OF MIGRATING IS FRAUGHT WITH MIXED EMOTIONS such as loss, a fear of the unknown, and anticipation of new experiences. Sensations which are increasingly being mediated by an expanding range of information and communications

technologies (ICTs). ICTs have radically altered migrants' ability to be interconnected globally and though transnationalism is not a new phenomena the "scope and complexity of transnational relations" (Smith 2005, 239) are now much greater. In this article I draw strongly from what Rogers terms a "second wave of transnational research" (2005, 430) in particular work from the 2005 special issue of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* edited by Conradson and Latham. This body of work is highly critical of the transnational discourse's initial focus on transnational elites and the movement of migrants from developing to developed countries, particularly the United States (Conradson and Latham 2005). The issue raises the need to focus on *middling* transnationalism or the everyday practices of middle class migrants (Smith 2005) as they move to "hidden, less obvious, sites of urban change" (Friesen, Murphy and Kearns 2005, 366).

This article specifically focuses on the ICT practices of migrants from South Africa and the Republic of Korea (referred to from here as Koreans) to Auckland, New Zealand a less obvious, middle city (Friesen, Murphy and Kearns 2005; Rogers 2005). I reveal the roles ICTs are performing in the migrants' imagination and negotiation (Panagakos and Horst 2006) of moving to and settling in Auckland. My focus on two such disparate migrant groups is in recognition of Vertovec's (1999) and Panagakos and Horst's (2006) assertion that more comparative studies are required to draw out any differences in how various migrant groups appropriate ICTs. By selecting migrants who moved to Auckland at different times over the past thirty years I also uncover the consequences of the changing ICT landscape on such appropriation practices. Wilding (2006) identifies a clear "historical progression in the typical mode of communication" (2006, 130) and her work provides a useful basis from which to expose the South African and Korean migrants ICT practices, particularly due to its Australian backdrop; a country with a similar lifestyle appeal and immigration policies to New Zealand.

The transnational discourse is quick to identify ICTs as a core driver behind the increasing interconnectedness that shapes what it is to be a transnational migrant (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999; Vertovec 1999; Kivisto 2001) but there has been very little that has gone beyond simply stating this fact to actually investigate how ICTs are used migrant's transnational practices. Panagakos and Horst (2006) argue that part of the reason for this lacuna stems from the apprehension of appearing technologically determinist. I intend to avoid such determinism by focussing not on what the ICTs have lead the migrants to do but by revealing how the migrants are choosing to use or not to use the ICTs available during their migration experiences. Smith, in particular, proposes some vital questions regarding the role of ICTs which I seek to address, "Do instantaneous communication by telephone and e-mail, and more frequent back and forth movements across space and place trans-locally, make a difference in the everyday lives of transnational migrants? If so, what differences do they make and for whom do they matter...Does simultaneity promote 'transnational culture' or rather does it foster the reproduction of multiple localisms?" (2005, 240).

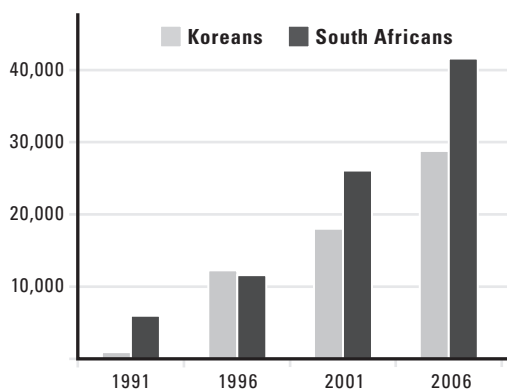
A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

Methodologically my own positionality was a key driver in conducting this research. My parents migrated to New Zealand in the late 1970s, and growing up, letters and the occasional phone call were the main forms of communication with my family overseas. From my own experience I know that the rapidly expanding range of ICTs has changed not only how I communicate with my extended family but the types of transnational bonds my parents have reformed with friends and family back in England. I was therefore interested to investigate this as a wider phenomenon.

Until the neoliberal reform period of the 1980s and early 1990s New Zealand's immigration policies were centred on what was seen as traditional sources from its colonial past i.e. the United Kingdom and Ireland (Bedford, Ho and Lidgard, 2000). Various amendments to the Immigration Act throughout the 1990s replaced the selection of migrants by occupational needs with a system based on points awarded for skills, age, education, and evidence of a job offer (Winkelmann, 1999). According to Bedford, Ho and Lidgard "New Zealand's reliance on immigration from Asian countries and from parts of Africa will become greater during the early twenty first century as the flows of skilled New Zealanders [emigrate]" (2000,29). This is evidenced by the increasing number of South African and Korean migrants moving to New Zealand. Figure 1 illustrates the exponential growth of both groups since 1991 and according to the 2006 Census, South Africans now account for 1 percent and Koreans 0.7 percent of New Zealand's approximately four million people (Statistics New Zealand 2007).

The South Africans and Koreans are very different culturally. South Africa has experienced significant political upheaval resulting in clear disparities and prominent digital divides (Servon 2002). A racially complex nation I endeavoured to acknowledge

Figure 1.
Population Increase of Koreans and South Africans
in New Zealand



Census Night Population Data by Birthplace Usual Residents
(Excludes visitors and those overseas on census night)

Source: Data compiled from Statistics New Zealand (2001; 2007)

this by conducting interviews with migrants from the major racial groups that have settled in Auckland: Afrikaans, South African English, South African Indians, and South African Coloureds'. However, the striking inequalities evident in South Africa were not reflected in the migrants I interviewed as New Zealand's migrant entry requirements meant that they were all middle to upper class, falling into the middling identity Conradson and Latham (2005) describe. Korea

is recognised internationally as a technological leader (OECD 2004) and this was a key factor in choosing Korean migrants. Unlike the South Africans there are not the racial tensions in Korea though the Korean War and the tensions with North Korea also mean it is a country that has undergone significant political upheavals in its recent past. Again due to the entry requirements these migrants could also be classified as middling. There is a common perception, iterated by the migrants spoken to, that New Zealand and South Africa share similar lifestyles. This perception is driven by the fact that most South Africans are taught English from an early age, and share a colonial past and propensity towards outdoor and sporting activities with New Zealand. The Koreans on the other hand have a very different culture from New Zealand and English is not their first or often even their second language. Differences that Portes (1999) identifies can present considerable barriers to new migrants.

Two methods were used to recruit the migrants. Emails containing a participant information sheet explaining the research and an interview guide, both requirements of the University of Auckland's ethics committee were sent to the two main ethnic organisations that represent each group, The Korean Society of New Zealand and the South African New Zealand Charitable Trust. Over half of the twenty four migrants interviewed were recruited using this process. The remainder were recruited through a snowballing technique whereby the initial participants were asked for contacts. In total semi structured in-depth interviews were conducted with ten Koreans and fourteen South Africans. Originally the same numbers were to be interviewed from each group but I was more successful recruiting the South African migrants. Despite providing all the information in Korean and providing a translator for interviews² the language barrier was a problem with some Koreans contacted declining on the basis they didn't feel they could contribute adequately. In all but one case I was invited into the home of the migrants to conduct the interviews and I made a point of relating my own immigrant background, which, I found provided a bridge of understanding and enabled a more personal dialogue.

As introduced earlier, in selecting the participants I aimed to recruit individuals who had migrated both before 1996 (pre Internet) and after 1996 (post Internet) to investigate the changes to migrants experiences and views of ICTs over time. Consequently, the earliest migrants were a Korean who arrived in 1973 and a South African who arrived in 1976 and the most recent were in 2005 and 2003 respectively thus covering a 30 year time span. 1996 provided a useful dividing year in terms of the migrants ICT experiences as this was when Internet and email became readily available in New Zealand. Those in the pre Internet group comprised of five South Africans and six Koreans.

Two other factors that played an important roll in my research were the age and gender of the migrants though the participants were not selected on the basis of either. Just under half the Korean migrants were in their twenties (the remainder were aged

between thirty and sixty), whereas all of the South Africans interviewed were over thirty. The high percentage of younger Koreans was due to a preference for learning English and obtaining a New Zealand tertiary qualification. There was also an unintentional gender bias towards women, more significant among the Koreans with only two male participants. Though there was no clear reason for this, the gender imbalances identified by authors such as Panagakos and Horst (2006) however were not evident. All the women interviewed were competent ICT users and there was no gendered demarcation when it came to using different ICTs.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: THE TALE OF THREE COUNTRIES

Adams and Ghose identify that “To understand the ‘effects’ of a new technology, one must understand the context(s) in which it diffuses and is adopted” (2003, 417). It is important therefore to develop the telecommunications context of South Africa, Korea and New Zealand as the differences between them coloured how the migrants used ICTs as they imagined and negotiated their experiences. This focus on place as Friesen, Murphy and Kearns recognize contradicts transnationalisms emphasis on “movement and linkage” (2005, 386) and I also draw on Albrow’s (1997) concept of socioscapes to explain this. Albrow (2007) demonstrates the importance of locality, arguing that Appadurai’s description of ethnoscaapes which emphasises flow and movement in contrast to stable communities is problematic due to the assumption that localities are stable. He argues that “sioscape comprises mainly the lived experience of the social relations of people in a locality” (2007, 328) and identifies that “Local spaces are inhabited by [a range of] residents... Their local relations with each other are close or distant, but are mediated by their global relations.” (2007, 328). It follows therefore that these migrants experience of ICTs in South Africa/Korea will play an ongoing roll in their perceptions and use as they move to a new locality, in this case New Zealand.

Table 1 provides comparative statistical data from the International Telecommunications Union on the telecommunications capabilities of New Zealand, South Africa and Korea at different points since 1995³. The clearest illustration of the differences between the three nations is the number of Internet subscriptions via broadband. Korea clearly leads in this area, although it is interesting to note that in 2005 New Zealand and Korea had equal numbers of Internet users per 100 people. This demonstrate that it is the means of accessing the Internet that is important, New Zealand has a high level of dial up access⁴ (Statistics New Zealand 2007), rather than the level of access. New Zealand’s high level of dial up has been attributed to the fact that all local calls are free, see Table 1, making it a more affordable option than broadband (Statistics New Zealand 2007). When the telephone subscriptions’ costs in Table 1 are compared however, this perception that New Zealand local calls are free could be questioned.

The statistics in Table 1 were clearly reflected in the migrants’ responses when asked to compare their experiences of technology between their country of origin and New

Table 1.

A comparison of New Zealand, South Africa and Korea's telecommunications for various time intervals since 1995, based on International Telecommunications Union (ITC) Data

ITU Statistics	New Zealand	South Africa	Korea
Population	1995 3,673,400	1995 41,894,030	1995 44,553,710
	2005 4,029,000	2005 47,432,000	2005 48,294,140
Internet subscribers (total broadband) per 100 inhabitants	2000 0.12	2000 0	1995 8
	2005 8	2005 0.3	2005 25
Internet users per 100 inhabitants	2000 5	2000 0.67	2000 0.82
	2005 68	2005 11	2005 68
Total telephone subscribers (fixed + mobile) per 100 inhabitants	1995 57	1995 11	1995 45
	2005 131	2005 82	2005 129
Mobile cellular telephone subscribers per 100 inhabitants	1995 10	1995 1	1995 4
	2005 88	2005 72	2005 79
Residential monthly telephone subscription (USD)	1995 22.73	1995 11.72	1995 3.24
	2005 28.06	2005 13.67	2005 5.07
Price of 3-minute fixed telephone local call (peak rate USD)	1995 0	1995 0.06	1995 0.04
	2005 0	2005 0.19	2005 0.04
Mobile cellular price of 3-minute local call (off-peak USD)	1995 0.98	1995 0.56	1995 0.42
	2004 0.97	2004 1.25	2004 0.16

Source: Data compiled from the International Telecommunications Union (2007)

Zealand. One of the younger Korean females who worked in the telecommunications sector described how,

“in Korea mobiles and landlines to mobile are very cheap because there is a lot of competition. Here it is not as cheap so they complain about the calling rates... there are frequent outages... especially the older people, they spend time on the Internet downloading dramas or Korea TV programs and then they can't do that so they feel like they are lost... they are not happy when it happens [sic]” (Korean, Young Female, Pre 1996 Migrant 1).

Another older Korean female who had returned to Korea for a year before moving back to New Zealand described the emotions that the speed of technological change occurring in Korea evoked in her.

“[When I went back] it was very different, the Internet speed was really different. I still remember when I came to New Zealand first time I got really, really frustrated because the Internet was so slow... I went back to Korea ... I found I couldn't really catch up... I went to the shop and when I filled out the form I didn't know what I was filling out so many new technologies had come out. So when I came back to Auckland I feel kind of comfortable [sic]” (Korean, Older Female, Pre 1996 Migrant 1)

The South African migrants' responses again reflected Table 1. Most of the post Internet migrants commented on the similarity of technologies available but identified New Zealand as more affordable and advancing faster, as one of the recent migrants stated

“The phone system in this country is better – not paying for local calls... New Zealand is a little bit more advanced in terms of technology... South Africa... is more expensive. Mobiles – pretty much the same price, there were three networks in South Africa so competition was a bit stronger than here” (South African, Older Female, Post 1996 Migrant 1).

While an increasingly abundant range of ICTs is emerging Table 1 demonstrates that the choice and availability of these can vary greatly between countries. Moving on to the ways in which these ICTs are being adapted by the Korean and South African migrants as they imagine and negotiate their migration experiences I will now demonstrate how the everyday transnational interconnections being played out are sensitive to the locality as identified above, without the necessary baggage of terms like community (Albrow 1997).

IMAGINING A NEW HOME

Once the decision to migrate is made an information gathering process begins as the migrants try to construct the new environment using their geographical imaginations. Whatmore contends that such imaginations “alert us to a world of commotion in

which the sites, tracks and contours of social like are constantly in the making through networks of actants-in-relation that are at once local and global... and always more than human” (1999, 33). The increasing ubiquity of ICTs implies that the migrants’ geographical imaginations are increasingly more than human as the Internet provides a much greater range of information from which to imagine. Wilding however cautions against the assumption that the Internet is an inherently desirable point of reference as this “fails to capture the complexity with which the Internet, like all consumer products, is rejected, adopted, extended or ignored by specific individuals” (2006, 127).

To explore how the migrants geographical imaginings of Auckland were shaped I asked them how they found out about New Zealand, in particular what if any ICTs they had used. Table 2 breaks down the primary information sources used by when they migrated. An equal number of the South Africans used either the Internet or personal contacts and this was clearly contingent on their time of migration. The Internet users described how while they used tourist sites to picture the environment they primarily focussed on job websites as employment was a key determining factor in whether they moved. In several cases online job applications were successful and many commented that the ease and ability to communicate frequently had been essential. Given the dominance of the Internet in Korea it was somewhat surprising to find that it was not a major information source, as illustrated in Table 2. Only three Korean migrants directly referred to using the Internet and two of these relied primarily on information from friends living in New Zealand. Overall, while there was some diversity present, Table

Table 2.
The type of ITC medium used by each migrant group to garner information for their geographical imaginations of New Zealand.

ITU Medium	South African Migrants		Korean Migrants	
	Pre Internet	Post Internet	Pre Internet	Post Internet
Primarily internet		6		1
Primarily family and friends living in New Zealand	5	1	2	4
Primarily others e.g. newspaper adverts, immigration agencies		2		3

2 illustrates a preference for information from family or friends experiences of living in New Zealand. There may be other reasons for this outside the scope of this research such as the quality of New Zealand migration websites and the level of trust participants had in the Internet as an information source. What these findings do reveal is the importance of not falling into the technologically determinist trap that Wilding (2006) identifies in the assumption that the Internet is a desirable source of information.

NEGOTIATING CONNECTIONS “BACK HOME”

Retaining connections with family and friends back home in their country of origin is an important aspect of migrant’s negotiation of their new surroundings and Voigt-Graf contends that the kinship connections made through such communications are a “precondition for transnational networks to emerge” (2005, 376). Such connections are also a core component of Albrow’s (1997) socioscapes, as an individual’s ability to extend their networks is dependent on their access to and use of ICTs. Consequently, I asked the migrants about their changing use of ICTs to communicate back home since they had moved to New Zealand. Figure 2 summarises the findings in a conceptual diagram. It shows that initially both the South Africans and Koreans used similar ICTs but as time has progressed and more ICTs have become available, the types of ICTs preferred has diverged and diversified between the two groups. Figure 2 also reflects Wildings (2006) findings that individuals tend to layer ICTs, rather than completely substitute them. Various factors played a determining role in why the migrants chose to retain their use of certain ICTs while changing their use of others.

The pre Internet migrants were obviously more limited in the ICTs available, the most common forms of communication being letter writing, phone calls, and later on the fax machine, as shown in Figure 2. The least expensive of these, letters, were often written on a monthly basis to account for the delay in replies. In most cases letters have been superseded by email; however, many people commented on how they still sent cards or letters on special occasions as one recent Korean migrant put it

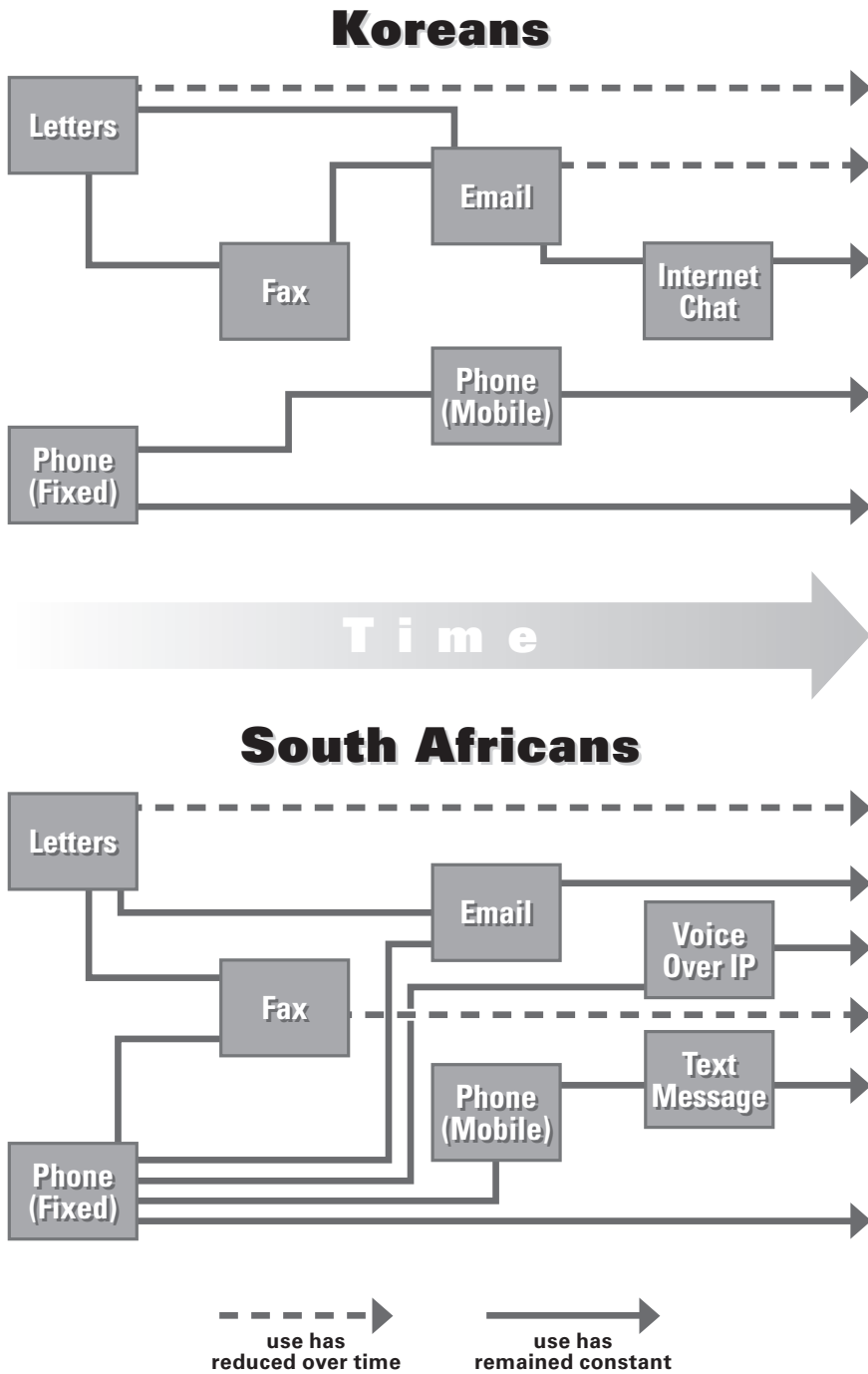
“I think letters are very intimate... because they are more friendly... I can feel their love... it is more valuable than Internet I think [sic]”. (Korean, Young Female, Post Internet Migrant 2).

An older South African migrant commented on the fact that

“It tells you that someone is prepared to take the time and make the effort to buy the paper... it is extra effort and you appreciate that” (South African, Older Female, Post Internet Migrant 2).

The pre Internet migrants also described how phone calls were very expensive and that they would only call on important occasions such as birthdays or when there were special offers. The telephone has remained a prominent communications medium for

Figure 2.
Preferred ICT Use Over Time by Korean and South African Migrants



the migrants, as shown by its persistence in Figure 2. A significant reduction in the price of calls and the emergence of low-cost calling cards, have both contributed to this phenomenon. Several of the interviewees also described how the phone allows them to hear the other persons' expressions and intonations providing both a more personal and more informative experience. The other pre Internet ICT, the fax machine, was often used to circumvent postal delays and long letters were often sent this way. Figure 2 illustrates that a number of the South Africans still use fax machines to communicate, primarily this is with parents who weren't able to or had chosen not to use email.

Figure 2 also shows that distinctly different shifts in communications mediums have occurred between the two migrant groups over time. I would like to propose that since there is more availability and choice in how to communicate, cultural differences and the technological advances in their country of origin are being reflected more strongly than ever before in what they choose to adopt. Korea has especially advanced Internet (OECD 2005) and an increasing number of specialist blogging networks have emerged, in particular Cyworld which came to prominence in the early 2000s. Cyworld is, in part an Internet portal providing limited shopping and news services but primarily an online community which over 13 million Koreans utilise (Kim 2006). Structured around personal homepages or *minihompy*, it differs from those encountered on sites such as My Space in several ways. Most significantly to register for a homepage a person must use their Korean national identification number which means you can search for anyone if you have their surname and birth date, removing the anonymity often associated with web blogging. Further, each *minihompy* is a virtual room and different levels of access to information can be established. Users can invite friends and family to become *il-chon* best described as relatives, allowing them to view private areas and make modifications. *Minihompy* can also be customised with decorations such as wallpapers but these must be purchased directly from Cyworld, an expensive process particularly as there is a constant pressure to update. All of the Korean participants were familiar with Cyworld and eight had *minihompy*'s. In all cases it had replaced much of their email correspondence and most of them checked it regularly throughout the week. Interestingly, for those who migrated prior to Cyworld emerging it was pressure from friends and family back in Korean that made them join up, as one of the younger Koreans stated "If I don't do that I have no way to communicate with them [sic]" (Korean, Young Female, Post Internet Migrant 2).

The trend in communications mediums has been quite different among the South Africans with an increasing preference for Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) facilities like Skype. Founded in 2003 Skype allows people to make local and international phone calls via the internet to other people signed up to Skype for free, or to landlines for a minimal charge. Although there have been some issues over the quality of the service (Chen, Huang, Huang and Lei 2006) it is very popular. According to Chen et al (2006) there are over 85 million Skype users worldwide and this is growing by more than

100,000 per day. Of the South Africans interviewed five used Skype quite often, and three were thinking about getting it, as one participant stated

“We use it for almost all our overseas calls now even though [not all] our friends have Skype you can phone a phone and it is much cheaper” (South African, Older Female, Pre Internet Migrant 1).

Interestingly of the six most commonly available land line based calling cards, the rates to South Africa were some of the more expensive offered and three times that of the rates to Korea. This may in part explain why Skype is such an attractive option for the South Africans. The South African migrants appreciated the added value of being able not just to speak but also to see one another, as one of the older South African migrants described it,

“we have the whole family around us so its fantastic, that’s a change that I have seen, my husband and my sisters husband, and her sons and my daughter wouldn’t phone each other they would send emails... in any 12 month time they wouldn’t talk to each other...where as since we’ve had Skype they would be in the room with me and I would connect with my sister and her family would be with her and at some point we wouldn’t even communicate with one another they would do it but to pick up a phone and have a one on one communication with one another feels odd, my daughter would say ‘what should I say’... With Skype we have that whole joking humorous conversation which is lovely.” (South African, Older Female, Post Internet Migrant 2)

The South Africans have also engaged in more intense mobile phone communications, primarily text messaging. This was not an option for the Korean migrants as the New Zealand and Korean mobile networks are incompatible. The South Africans often employed texting to send quick messages and jokes back home to family and friends. They appreciated the convenience of letting someone know in real time that they were thinking about them without the complications of time differences or computers. Text messaging also often performed a coordination role allowing them to arrange a better time for a phone call or to use Skype.

Despite some increasingly divergent preferences in the types of ICTs the two migrant groups used over time two distinct commonalities were present. Firstly, many of the participants described feelings of empowerment that they attributed directly to the accessibility ICTs provided. This feeling stemmed from their response, when given the rapid increase in available ICTs, they were asked to speculate what their migration experience would have been like if they had moved out either earlier or later than they did. None of the participants were high intensity ICT users; however they appreciated the choice and information that these provided. Several migrants commented that simply knowing the technology was there if needed was enough to make them feel less isolated and more empowered. They all agreed that had they moved out at a different

point in time it would have had a considerable effect on their experiences. As one of the earliest Korean migrants explained,

“Definitely... in my day when a friend left me that would be the end of that... goodbye and maybe never see you again. But these days they keep in touch by Internet, msn, it is just amazing. They can keep their relationships going and I wish that kind of technology was available to me way back when we first emigrated because it was really difficult. I had already formed good relationships with my relatives before we left Korea so for me to suddenly loose all that networking and family ties it was really difficult and I think that if we had Internet back then I would have been able to keep up the quality of the relationships more. Even though the ties are still there, I remember when I went back the first time after 7 or 10 years so much had happened to their lives in Korea that we had missed out on. I though oh what a shame. I think that if we had had that technology we wouldn't have missed out on so much of their lives and vice versa” (Korean, Older Female, Pre Internet Migrant 2)

The more recent migrants expressed similar sentiments in terms of an appreciation of what ICTs have enabled them to do, as summed up by this South African migrant.

“I think it would have been amazingly different because I don't think I would have come out without a job offer and I wouldn't have been able to get a job by the Internet in those early days. So probably what we would have done is to come here and to negotiate work in person and that would taken much more costly effort” (South African, Older Female, Post Internet Migrant 2)

Secondly, all of the migrants described a lessening of communication over time particularly with friends. This is despite having more means to communicate than ever before. All of the participants had at least one computer at home, over 90 percent had broadband, and most often all members of their family had mobile phones. The migrants described how at first they had many new experiences and information to share with family and friends but over time as they settled into a daily routine there was less need for regular communication. This decline was also attributed to the loss of shared experiences with those who had been 'left behind' as two of the male South African migrants described it,

“When I first came over sent I newsy emails back, very much. That has tapered off now, it was because everything was so new and because I had very little to do... when you first arrive your sense of dislocation is so great. The only anchor you still have is what is behind you. The future is blurred” (South African, Older Male, Post Internet Migrant 1)

“you grow apart... there is nothing in common anymore. I don't think they are interested in what is going on here, they heard when we came over.” (South African, Older Male, Post Internet 2)

These differences and similarities in how the migrants are maintaining their transnational bonds through communications with family and friend back home complicate some of the core assumptions in the transnational literature. Portes (1999) argues that the strength of the transnational bonds formed by such communications directly feed off migrants initial motivations for migrating and how they are then perceived by those in the destination country. The Korean migrants were motivated predominantly by personal factors such as obtaining a good education for their children, learning English, moving to a less high pressure environment, and a better climate. According to Portes (1999) they should therefore have weaker transnational bonds than the South Africans who would be classified more as subject to political pressures as they raised crime and safety issues as predominant motivation factors. However, the Koreans have faced significantly more racial discrimination since they settled in Auckland (Small 1996) than the South Africans, something that according to Portes (1999) should strengthen the Koreans transnational bonds. This demonstrates that perception of strength is a complex issue. What I have revealed in this research is that both the Koreans and South Africans transnational bonds were comparable and did not appear to be greatly influenced by either of the factors Portes (1999) identifies. I argue that this is in part because Portes (1999) work is primarily focussed on migration from developing to developed countries. The second wave of transnational research now emerging strongly critiques the emphasis on migrants' "economic rationalist motivations" (Voigt-Graf 2005, 368) which has been driven by this developing to developed nation sampling bias, particularly the movement from South America and the Caribbean to the United States (Conradson and Latham 2005; Smith 2005; Voigt-Graf 2005).

This assumption of economic rationality was further disrupted when the migrants were asked if they sent any remittances back home. The response was an overwhelming negative from all the migrants. Instead a few migrants commented on sending money as presents but emphasised that none of their family back home was financially dependent on them, a similar finding to Voigt-Graf (2005) in her study of Indian migrants in Australia. Further, virtually none of those interviewed were still politically active in their country of origin. Most felt it was not relevant to their current lives and that they would be out of touch with what was occurring anyway. It appears therefore that such indicators are not such effective gauges of the development and maintenance of transnational bonds among middling transnationals.

CONCLUSION

This article contributes some empirically grounded observations on the way particular transnational migrants, Koreans and South Africans, are using ICTs to imagine and negotiate the migration process. Rogers (2005) argues that the second wave of transnational research currently emerging is both broadening and narrowing the field. This broadening is evidenced by the increasing concentration on middling transnationals

(Rogers 2005) to which this article contributes. There is growing criticism of the predominance of research into migrants from developing countries such as South America to developed ones like the United States within the transnational discourse (Conradson and Latham 2005; Voigt-Graf 2005). In this article I have demonstrated that the common indicators such as remittances and political activities are not always applicable to the maintenance of everyday transnational bonds when the movement is between middle class migrants in developed countries. Furthermore, Portes (1999) arguments regarding what determines the strength of transnational bonds are also more difficult to relate when dealing with this type of migrant.

The narrowing that Rogers identifies is also evident. Firstly, this was demonstrated by what Rogers terms “posing more specific questions” (2005, 405), in this case about the migrants actual use of ICTs rather than just taking for granted their role in the formation of transnational relations. I have demonstrated that while ICTs have clearly altered the South African and Korean migrants’ experiences are being very selectively used. This was demonstrated in the way both migrant groups preferred to inform their geographical imaginations through personal contact rather than the Internet. Supporting Wildings (2006) caution against the technologically determinist stance that the Internet is an inherently desirable source of information. Secondly, this narrowing was evident in the continuing importance of locality and spatiality (Albrow, 1997; Smith 2005) present in these findings. The telecommunications situation in each of the three countries fed into how the migrants changed their use of ICTs over time demonstrating how locality and culture are now being reflected more strongly in the choices made. This was shown by the Koreans adoption of Cyworld, which was primarily driven by pressure from friends and family in Korea, and the South Africans retention of older ICTs such as fax machines in response to their parents either not having or active choosing not to use email. Other factors such as the incompatibility of the Korean and New Zealand mobile networks and the relative expense of calling cards to South Africa also demonstrate the influence of their “lived experience” (Albrow 2007, 328) in New Zealand.

Finally in the introduction I quoted a series of questions posed by Smith (2005). First, “Do instantaneous communication by telephone and e-mail, and more frequent back and forth movements across space and place trans-locally, make a difference in the everyday lives of transnational migrants? (2005, 240). I would answer both yes and no. The migrants were quick to recognise the advantages or disadvantages of the ICTs available at their time of migration and how this had fed into both their experiences and their ability to form transnational bonds. This is also reflected in the sensation of empowerment most of the migrants described. They all valued the fact that if they needed to communicate faster, in more detail or using a more personal means the technology was available for them to do this. On the other hand no matter at what point the migrants had arrived in Auckland there had been a steady decrease in their level of communication back home to family and friends. This was driven by the loss of shared

experiences, something often overlooked in the hype over the of choice and accessibility ICTs provide.

Smith then went on to ask “what differences do they make and for whom do they matter?” (2005, 240). As stated the Koreans and South Africans use of certain ICTs has diverged over time reflecting the influence of locality and culture. This aspect requires further study and I would like to reiterate Panagakos and Horst’s (2006) and Vertovec’s (1999) call for more such comparative studies. Finally Smith asked “Does simultaneity promote ‘transnational culture’ or rather does it foster the reproduction of multiple localisms?” (2005, 240). This is a difficult question to answer. In focusing on middling migrants the traditional gauges of transnationalism are not so evident suggesting that the “reproduction of multiple localisms” (Smith 2005, 240) may be truer. Yet the post Internet migrants’ experiences were different because of ICTs and the possibility of developing transnational bonds is now significantly greater even if it is not always followed through. Clearly much more research needs to be done.

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ENDNOTES

¹ There are very few South African Blacks or Zulus living in Auckland, and unfortunately I was unable to interview any from this group.

² In the end only one interview was conducted using the translator.

³ The ITU datasets prior to 1995 are incomplete for these three countries.

⁴ ITU dial up statistics were unavailable for the three countries.

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