The Impact of Music on Social Identity Formation and Intergroup Relations in American-Born Korean Skaters in 2018 Winter Olympics

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Abstract : Music provides opportunities to affirm social identities and facilitate the internalization of one's identity. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of music in breaking down boundaries between the in-group and out-of-group sport participants. Social identity theory was used to guide an understanding of two American-born South Korean skaters—Yura Min and Alexander Gamelin—who used a Korean representative traditional folk song, Arirang, at the 2018 Winter Olympics. This was an interpretive case study that focused on 2018 Winter Olympic participants whose performance and use of music was understood through the lenses of Koreans. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 Korean audiences who watched two American-born South Korean skaters' performances. Data analysis involved the determination of themes in the data collected. The findings of this study are as follows: First Koreans viewed the skaters as the out-group based on ethnic appearances and stereotypes. Second, Koreans' inter-group bias against the skaters was meditated after Koreans watched the skaters as they used Arirang song in performance. Implications for this study include the importance of music as an instrument of unity across diverse populations, including intergroup relations. Music can also offer ways to understand people's cultures and bridge gaps between age and gender across categories of naturalization.

Keywords : impact of music, intergroup relations, naturalized athletes, social identity theory
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