

**Jaz Hee-jeong CHOI**

***Searching the Self in Seoul***  
***Trans-youth and Urban Social Networking in Korea***

The university entrance exam is a rite of passage in South Korea. This is a time when many young South Koreans are temporarily emancipated from the traditional pressures of collective belonging, providing a social break that allows self-reflection. This in-between demographic, or trans-youths, are neither children nor adults; they are also situated on the delicate border zone between digital natives and digital immigrants in Prensky's (2001) term. This paper reports on a research project that is investigating the mobile play culture of trans-youths in Seoul. Drawing on in-depth interviews with trans-youth, I analyze their search for identity through urban social networking. The discussion illustrates the self-searching of Seoul trans-youths, arguing that technological, socio-cultural and environmental (urban) contexts frame how mobility and ubiquity are (re)created in Seoul, one of the most connected densely populated and rapidly transforming metropolises in the world. The research provides an unprecedented insight into the lives of trans-youth, in turn illuminating the role of Seoul as a new urban social network.

References

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. Retrieved August 6, 2006, from <http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf>.

**Jaz Hee-jeong CHOI** is a doctoral candidate in the Creative Industries Faculty at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. Her research interests are in playful technology, particularly the ways in which various forms of playful interaction are designed, developed, and integrated in an Asian context. Her current research is on the trans-youth mobile play culture of South Korea at the intersection of play, culture, technology, people, and urban environments. Her website is located at [www.nicemustard.com](http://www.nicemustard.com). E-mail: [nicemustard@gmail.com](mailto:nicemustard@gmail.com).

