

SOUTH KOREAN'S OPENNESS TO FOREIGNERS

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Abstract: *Foreigners have become more and more present in South Korea as the country is becoming a hub for fashion, cosmetics, education, and all kinds of business. Considering the fact that for a long period of time the country had been isolated from the rest of the world, the question that arises is how Koreans feel and think about the increasing number of foreigners hanging around. To answer this question, data were collected by means of a questionnaire survey of 322 Korean adults (of both genders and various ages and professions), in January 2021. The questionnaire responses were analyzed by means of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 23.0); frequency and cross-analysis were conducted, and a t-test was applied for the groups of respondents established in accordance with their sex, age, and level of education. The research findings indicate that despite the continuous but slow accommodation of foreigners, many of the Koreans still exhibit a certain degree of racism, considering that their homogeneous culture and society would be strongly affected by globalization.*

Keywords: *culture; foreign population; racism; South Korea*

1. INTRODUCTION

Korea is one of the most ethnically homogenous countries in the world, with a population of more than seventy-one million people. The Koreans are extremely proud of their racial purity. As Cumings (2005, 1.095) states, “[t]he perceived purity of the *minjok*, the ethnic people, gives the Koreans a long, continuous history, culture, and durability of which they are deeply proud.” Thus, the country has only recently experienced cohabitation with people of different cultures, races, and religions, and every new experience seems to have problematic beginnings.

The human landscape of the country started changing at the beginning of the previous century, when Korea was colonized by Japan. During WWII, the Koreans also got in touch with the American GIs, some of the latter marrying Korean women and taking them to America. Another factor that contributed to the breaking of the monolithically ethnic Korean society was the one- or two-children policy in the 1950s, which brought about a shortness of working force, especially in the domain of agriculture. Then, because of the preference for sons over daughters, many (would-be) mothers made recourse to abortion or female infanticide, which eventually led to a shortage of Korean women as potential marriage partners for Korean men. This affected especially the rural area of South Korea where marriage-age men, who

outnumbered the eligible women, sought wives in countries such as China and Vietnam. As Seth (2010:261) contends, “[b]y 2006, more than a third of male farmers married foreign women.”

In order to solve the shortage of work force, Korea initially accepted migrant workers who were of similar ethnic stock and who came from poorer Asian nations (i.e. China, Mongolia, Vietnam, Nepal, and Bangladesh). According to Seth (2010: 262), “they were often treated harshly, doing what Koreans called ‘3D-jobs’, dirty, difficult, and dangerous.”

More recently, the birth rate decline¹ and the aging population, as well as marriage migration involving women from nearby countries have led to a large influx of foreigners. Nowadays, the types of migrants have multiplied and diversified. On the one hand, South Korea has become a hub for cosmetics, fashion, education, and various types of business. Foreign nationals from all over the world come to work, to study here, or to simply visit the country. On the other hand, there are refugees from countries in which the political situation is critical. Thus, in 2018, 500 Yemeni persons landed on Jeju Island, in the southern part of South Korea, stirring the rage of the natives, who immediately feared

¹ According to figures released in February 2023, the fertility rate in South Korea is 0.78, the lowest in the entire world (<https://datacommons.org/place/country/KOR?category=Demographics>.)

that the refugees might commit various crimes. Another wave of refugees came in 2021, when the Taliban regime took control of Afghanistan. According to Lee & Slavney (2021), “390 Afghans who had worked at the South Korean Embassy and other Korean agencies, along with their family members arrived in South Korea under the status ‘special contributors’” (no page). Thus, since the beginning of the 21st century, the peninsular country has become more ethnically, racially, religiously, and linguistically diverse. According to *Statistics Korea*, in 2022, the number of *de jure* foreigners was 1.302 million (<https://kostat.go.kr/synap/skin/doc.html?fn=73a66247d579f3f449ad516cfc274e91c764bcea881775124263973f6a0135e5&rs=/synap/preview/board/11733/>), but the *de facto* foreign population in South Korea reached over two million. And as the number of foreign population is on the rise, so are the social issues such as the cultural adaptation, social integration, learning the language, and getting a job, issues that have been studied quite intensively by scholars.

Many of these research studies (Shin 2013, Brown and Koo 2015, Khameneh & Lee 2022) have pointed out that South Koreans oppose the influx of foreigners, irrespective of whether they are migrants, refugees of ‘special contributors’. But within the large community of foreigners living in the peninsular country, ethnic groups are treated differently. As Shin (2013: 372) stated, “the Koreans’ treatment of other ethnic groups is based on their perceived status: white people are admired for their symbolic, cultural and economic power, while darker-skinned people from developing countries are viewed as inferior to Koreans” and are disrespected. The latter, mainly from Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, or Cambodia, will receive a better treatment from the Koreans if they speak English, as the Koreans think that anyone who is fluent in this language is both wealthy and highly educated.

Despite the rapid economic and technological development of Korea, some aspects of the society seem to have been slower to change, one of them being the natives’ attitude towards the foreigners. According to Im (2020), “since the early 2000s, the [Korean] government has embraced more liberal immigration policies and actively promoted multiculturalism. Seoul’s goal is not only to persuade the country’s predominantly Korean population to accept this shift but also to make South Korea a more appealing draw for labor migrants, foreign spouses, and international students” (no page). The present paper is trying to investigate how open the Koreans have become in

the past 30 years to people of other cultures. The roadmap of the endeavor is as follows: section 2 presents the research methodology; the data analysis is contained in section 3, while the last section is dedicated to the conclusions.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Data collection. In order to find out the Korean’s opinions about and attitudes towards foreigners, I have employed a questionnaire². The reason behind opting for this research tool was three-fold: first, given the fact that the data was collected in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, I could administer it online, giving Koreans from all over the world the chance at expressing objectively their thoughts. The questionnaire was uploaded on the 5th of January 2021, and within a week I had 322 responses. Second, questionnaire surveys do not require a significant budget³. Third, and most importantly, as McDonough & McDonough (1997:171) contend, in devising a questionnaire “[t]he knowledge needed is controlled by the questions, therefore it affords a good deal of precision and clarity.”

As the questionnaire was designed for a larger-scale project, it also covered other aspects of the Korean society, such as education, marriage and family life, career, traditions and customs, but for reasons of space, this paper focuses only on the Koreans’ openness and attitudes to foreigners and foreign languages.

In devising the questionnaire, I relied on Kahn and Cannel’s (1957) idea of ‘funnel sequencing’ of the questions: I started with three general questions related to changes in the Korean society in the past 30 years, which asked the informants to state whether they had witnessed changes in various areas and if they perceive these changes to have been positive or negative. Then, the questions gradually narrowed down to specific issues related to each of the investigated domains. The section of the questionnaire devoted to identifying the Koreans’ attitude towards people coming from other corners of the world was divided into two parts: the first contained 7 questions related to

² I am indebted to my colleague, Luiza Meseşan Schmitz, from the Faculty of Sociology, who helped me in producing the first draft the questionnaire. Also, many thanks to Ana-Maria Cazan for her encouragement and enlightenment on some statistical issues.

³ The available budget was used to offer each participant in the survey a coupon for a cup of coffee at Starbucks, once they have submitted the filled-in questionnaire.

Koreans' openness to foreigners and to foreign languages, whereas the second one contained 6 questions by means of which I tried to find out how the inhabitants of the peninsular country feel/think about foreigners. These were "scaled questions", or rather statements on the basis of which informants were requested to express their agreement or disagreement on a scale with 5 alternatives: strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), undecided (U), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA).

I initially aimed for 200 respondents, but already a week after having launched the questionnaire on *Naver*, the Korean equivalent of Google, I had 322 filled-in questionnaires.

2.2. Participants. The Korean informants differed along a number of variables, such as *gender, level of education, age, job/work place, and travel experience*. Thus, in terms of **gender**, 92 males (28.6%) and 230 female (71.4%) participated in the study. As far as **age** is concerned, the participants were divided into 5 age-groups: people in their 20s (n=52, representing 16.1%), 30s (n=67, i.e. 20.8%), 40s (n=62, i.e. 19.3%), 50s (n=89, representing 27.6%), and people over 60 years of age (n=52, representing 16.1%). The informants were grouped into 3 classes according to their **level of education**. Thus, 54 of them (16.8%) were high school graduates, 166 (51.6%) had graduated from college, whereas 102 (31.7%) held an MA or a PhD.

The data obtained from the questionnaires concerning the Korean people's attitude towards the foreign population in their country were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0, by means of which frequency and cross analyses for the investigated domain were conducted. Finer-grained statistics were obtained by means of the t-test, which was performed along the four dimensions (variables) that differentiated our informants, mentioned above. The analysis of the data is presented in section 3 of the paper.

2.3. Hypotheses and research questions. The hypothesis underlying the current study is that no matter how strongly the Koreans have been opposing the influx of foreign citizens, their number is increasing from year to year. Derived from this hypothesis, the following research questions will be addressed: (1) Which factors have triggered changes (positive or negative) in the Koreans' attitude to foreigners? (2) Are there striking differences in the responses offered by the

informants in the study in terms of the variables (age, gender, degree of education, and profession)?

3. DATA ANALYSIS

This section of the paper is dedicated to the analysis of the data obtained from the online questionnaire survey. First I will be dealing with the frequency analysis (section 3.1.), while in section 3.2. I will try to find a correlation between the 4 variables and the responses provided by the participants in the survey, which will contribute to a more accurate presentation of the current attitude of the Korean people towards foreigners and their openness to the foreign population in their country.

3.1. Frequency analysis. As stated in section 2, the first questions in the questionnaire survey were meant to obtain a general idea concerning the Koreans' perceptions related to the changes that affected the Korean society in the past 30 years, with a specific focus on their openness to foreigners. Thus, the results of the frequency analysis indicate that a large number of respondents agreed (n=186/57.8%) or strongly agreed (n=67/20.8%) that the Korean society has undergone meaningful changes in the manner in which they perceive foreigners (see table A-1), the majority of them (n=284/88.2%) stating that these changes have been in favor of the foreign citizens, irrespective of their reasons for coming to South Korea (see table A-2 below).

Table A-1: Korean people's awareness of the changes in openness to foreigners.

Issue	S.D. ⁴	D.	U.	A.	S.A.	Total	Average
There has been a meaningful change in openness to foreigners	0 (0.0%) ⁵	11 (3.4%)	58 (18.0%)	186 (57.8%)	67 (20.8%)	322 (100%)	3.96

⁴ The abbreviations in the table should be read as follows: S.D. = strongly disagree, D. = disagree, U. = undecided, A. = agree, S.A. = strongly agree.

⁵ The figures in the table should be interpreted as follows: the first figure stands for the number of respondents, whereas the one in brackets indicates the percentage of the respondents in the total: e.g. 11 respondents from a total of 322, representing 3.4% of the total.

Table A-2: Koreans' perception of the changes in the attitude towards foreigners in their country.

I don't know	Negative changes	Positive changes	Total
24 (7.5%)	14 (4.3%)	284 (88.2%)	322 (100%)

In the second part of the questionnaire, the investigation was narrowed down to specific details concerning the changes in the domain of investigation. I first looked into the Korean people's openness to the non-Korean ethnics living in South Korea (statements S1-S7) and then into the Koreans' thoughts and opinions related the citizens coming from other cultures, who reside in the peninsular country (S8-S13). Let us have a look at **how open** to foreigners the Korean people are. The responses provided by the informants depict a somewhat contradictory picture (see table A-3 at the end of the paper).

Out of the total of 322 respondents, a rather small number (94 altogether, out of which n=11/3.4% strongly agree and n=83/25.8% agree) consider that foreign friends (S1) are better than Korean ones. This finding is not surprising at all, given the fact that a large amount of the Korean population still displays a somewhat reserved attitude when it comes to persons of other ethnicities, faiths, and races living in their country. This collective / group-inclusive feeling is reinforced by the opinions provided by the informants to statement 2 which refers to the language in which Koreans like to communicate in. More than half of the participants in the questionnaire survey (altogether 177, out of which n=145/40.5% agree and n=32/9.9% strongly agree) feel more comfortable in using their own language in the process of communication, rather than a foreign one. A possible explanation for this situation could be the informants' low proficiency in foreign languages, coupled with the feeling of shame they experience if they feel they do not understand correctly their foreign interlocutors or do not manage to speak correctly and fluently with them. Only 46 participants (n=6/1.9 strongly agree and n=40/14.4% agree) of a total of 322 expressed their ease at communicating without problems in a foreign language with their interlocutors, while a larger number (n=159/49.4% agree and n=25/7.8% strongly agree) mentioned that they felt uncomfortable when they could not understand a foreigner (statement 5).

Despite the reticence at communicating in (some of) the languages spoken by the foreign citizens, the Koreans do not request that these should necessarily speak Korean (statement 6), since if they do not master the language, the foreigners will lose face in front of the Koreans. Only a small percentage of respondents expressed their dislike to foreigners who do not understand or speak Korean (n=52/16.1% agreed and n=7/2.2% strongly agreed).

In all countries of the world that have received migrant population, the natives have perceived the foreigners as a threat to their culture, their peace and well being, South Korea having been no exception in this respect. A surprising finding of the questionnaire survey is that in the past 30 years, the Koreans' opinion regarding the possible problems that the foreigners may cause in their country has changed (statement 3). The large majority of the respondents (altogether n=213) did not feel at all threatened by the foreigners living in their area. At the same time, most of them are of the opinion that if there is mutual respect and tolerance for each other, it does not matter if the people in a certain district/area/city in South Korea speak a different language or have a different culture. Only a very small percentage of the participants in the survey (altogether 8) suggested that their country would be better off without foreign population, whereas 47 of the respondents were undecided in this matter.

When it came to international and inter-racial marriages (statement 7), the findings show that currently the Koreans are not as much against them as they used to be in the previous century. More than half of the respondents (n=43/13.4% strongly agree and n=141/43.8% agree) seem to approve of such marriages, while only 45 respondents prefer marriages between Korean partners.

In order to find possible reasons for why Koreans could have a negative attitude towards foreigners, the participants in the survey were asked to express their opinions/feelings/thoughts on a number of finer-grained statements.

Table A-4: Koreans' feelings concerning various aspects related to foreign nationals.

Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	Average
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to interact with foreigners, while only 26 respondents of the total of 322 stated that this is extremely important for them.

And as exposure to foreign cultures may occur both within and outside South Korea, data about the informants' overseas experience, the purpose of their travelling, as well as the length of their sojourn abroad were also considered important in determining their attitude towards foreigners. Of the entire group of participants in the study, only 33 have never left South Korea. The ones that travelled abroad did it for various purposes: to study (n=30/8.6%), to work (n=35/10.1%), to spend their vacations (n=255/73.7%), or for various other reasons that were not specified (n=28/8%). Their exposure to a foreign culture varied between 3 and 21 days or was even longer than that.

The partial conclusions that can be drawn thus far indicate that in the past 30 years, the Korean people seem to have adopted a more open attitude towards fellow citizens from other cultures, they would not mind having them as their co-workers or even neighbors. Despite being aware of the differences in mindsets, Koreans are willing to compromise and assimilate the foreign ethnic groups living in South Korea. A possible factor that made the South Korean mainstream society open to non-Korean ethnics could be the exposure to foreigners in various contexts, as well as some knowledge of foreign languages, which may enable the communication between the two groups of people that study, live, and work in South Korea. Nevertheless, in certain circumstances the language barrier could be an excuse not to communicate with them, not to mention the fact that most Koreans still prefer co-nationals as their friends and co-workers. Despite a higher degree of acceptance of foreigners, Koreans are not totally open to them. This is determined to a large extent by the structure of the Korean society. As Kohls (2001: 9) contends, "Koreans assign overriding importance to whether someone is a member of their ingroup or not and then treat the person accordingly. Ingroups may be blood relatives, schoolmates, classmates, or members of the same organization. Those who belong to your in-group are treated with respect and concern. Those who are not are invisible; they are nonentities. Koreans think of them as 'unpersons'."

Let us now see if the respondents' demographic characteristics may have affected their opinion about and attitude towards non-Korean ethnics.

3.2. Difference verification according to the variables.

(a) Gender. As far as the gender dimension is concerned, it appears that the female population in the survey had a slightly higher average value than the male respondents concerning the meaningful changes that occurred in Korean in the past 30 years in what concerns the native population's attitude towards foreigners. This difference is, however, statistically insignificant (see table B-1).

Table B-1. Correlation between the respondent's gender and their perception of openness to foreigners in general.

Domain	Mean value±standard deviation		t
	male (N=92)	female (N=230)	
There has been a meaningful change in openness to foreigners.	3.93±.796	3.97±.696	-.389

As a result of the cross-analysis aimed at finding out the correlation between *gender* and how the Koreans perceive the changes to be (positive or negative) with respect to openness and a friendlier attitude to foreigners, the significant probability (p) value was .865, which indicated a statistically insignificant difference. Looking at the frequency of crossover between groups (male and female) and items ('I don't know', 'Negative change', and 'Positive change') (see table B-2), the results show that both the male and the female respondents were of the opinion that the change in the Koreans' attitude towards foreigners has been a positive one (male respondents 87% and female respondents 88.7%). Only 4.3% in each category of informants in the survey thought that the changes were for the worse.

Table B-2: Correlation between Korean respondents' gender and the way in which they perceived the changes of attitude towards foreigners to have occurred

Gender	I don't know	Negative change	Positive change	Total
male	8 (8.7%)	4 (4.3%)	80 (87.0%)	92 (100%)
female	16 (7.0%)	10 (4.3%)	204 (88.7%)	230 (100%)

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total	24 (7.5%)	14 (4.3%)	284 (88.2%)	322 (100%)
$\chi^2=.289, df=2, p=.865$				

The next step was to apply the independent sample t-test to each of the statements in the questionnaire. The results of the correlation between gender and openness to foreigners indicated that for each item in the questionnaire, the mean value of the male group was slightly higher or higher than that of the female group (see the figures in table B-3 below).

Table B-3: Correlation between respondents' gender and their opinion on each statement concerning Koreans' openness to foreigners.

Statements	Mean value±standard deviation		t
	Male (N=92)	Female (N=230)	
1. Korean friends are better than foreign friends.	3.14±1.023	3.04±.924	.832
2. I like to communicate with people who speak the same language as I do.	3.49±.932	3.48±.895	.058
3. Problems may arise if there are foreigners with different languages and cultures living in my area.	2.55±1.031	2.17±.879	3.115**
4. As long as there is respect and tolerance for each other, it doesn't matter if you speak a different language or have a different culture.	4.13±.759	4.00±.773	1.328
5. Most Koreans feel uncomfortable when they cannot understand a foreign language.	3.64±.897	3.43±.862	2.000*
6. Most Koreans don't like it when foreigners don't understand Korean.	2.78±1.098	2.48±.895	2.330*

7. Most Koreans do not agree to marry a foreigner (international marriage).	2.65±1.053	2.37±.850	2.329*
*P<.05, **P<.01			

Nevertheless, the difference is not statistically significant. A possible explanation for it could be the fact that in the Korean society women spend more time at home, having less chances than men to meet and interact with foreigners.

When the independent sample t-test was applied to each item concerning the Korean people's thoughts and opinions about foreigners, the results of the two groups were different. Thus, for statements 9 and 13, the mean value of the male respondents was higher than that of the female group. For statements 10 and 11, the males' mean value was only slightly higher than that of females, whereas for statements 8 and 12, the female respondents had a slightly higher average than their male counterparts. Still these differences between the two genders were not statistically significant (see table B-4).

Table B-4: Correlation between respondents' gender and their thoughts about foreigners.

Statement	Mean value±standard deviation		t
	male (N=92)	female (N=230)	
8. My values and beliefs differ from those of foreigners.	2.46±.942	2.46±.802	-.042
9. If I get to work with foreigners, I can do well.	3.87±.828	3.63±.781	2.483*
10. I can easily make friends with foreigners.	3.59±.772	3.40±.870	1.797
11. I prefer to work only with people from my own country.	2.53±1.124	2.39±1.000	1.105
12. Foreigners have a different way of thinking than	3.05±.976	3.21±.887	-1.371

Koreans.			
13. You can learn a lot from foreigners so I think that working with them is helpful.	3.99±.763	3.80±.694	2.098*
*P<.05			

The conclusion we could draw on the basis of these results is that the gender variable could only have had a minor influence on the Koreans' openness to foreigners. The male respondents being the breadwinners of the family could be more exposed in their daily activities to meeting and interacting with foreign people and have more chances than women to know them better, to see if they represent a threat to the Korean society or not, to figure out if they are reliable and worth befriending.

(b) Age. At this point I remind the readers that the subjects in the questionnaire survey were divided into five age groups: people aged 20 years (n=52), 30 years (n=67), 40 years (n=62), 50 years (n=89), and 60 years and more (N=52).

A cross-analysis was performed in order to find out the correlation between the age of the respondents and their perception regarding the changes in the Korean society (positive or negative) towards foreigners. A look at table B-5 below will reveal that in all age groups, a high percentage of respondents are of the opinion that in the past 30 years, the Korean people have shown a better attitude towards foreigners than at the end of the previous century. The percentages vary from 82.1% for the people in their 30s to 93.3% for the persons aged 50 years. The higher percentages of the elderly respondents (40s, 50s, and 60s - over 90 % for all three age groups) are not surprising, as only by passing through life for a longer time are we able to perceive the changes that occur in the society.

Table B-5: Correlation between the age of the respondents and their perception (negative or positive) of the changes in the Koreans' openness to foreigners.

Distribution	I don't know	Negative change	Positive change	Total
20s	6 (11.5%)	3 (5.8%)	43 (82.7%)	52 (100%)

30s	7 (10.4%)	5 (7.5%)	55 (82.1%)	67 (100%)
40s	4 (6.5%)	2 (3.2%)	56 (90.3%)	62 (100%)
50s	5 (5.6%)	1 (1.1%)	83 (93.3%)	89 (100%)
60s and over	2 (3.8%)	3 (5.8%)	47 (90.4%)	52 (100%)
Sum/total	24 (7.5%)	14 (4.3%)	284 (88.2%)	322 (100%)
$\chi^2=8.430, df=8, p=.393$				

When it came to the two sets of statements in the questionnaire by means of which I tried to identify the openness of the Koreans towards foreigners and their opinions/feelings about them, there was one item in each set where a significant difference appeared between two specific age-groups: the respondents aged 20 and those aged 50.

Table B-6: Difference in age concerning two issues related to Koreans' openness and opinions about foreigners.

Issue	Mean value±standard deviation					F	post-test
	20s (N=52)	30s (N=67)	40s (N=62)	50s (N=89)	60s and more (N=52)		
3. Problems may arise if there are foreigners of different languages and cultures in the area where I live.	2.54±1.075	2.40±.922	2.27±.890	2.00±.812	2.37±.991	3.458**	d<a
10. I can easily get to know foreigners	2.54±1.075	2.40±.922	2.27±.890	2.00±.812	2.37±.991	3.458**	d<a

One of the items concerned the possible problems that may arise if people of different cultures would be encountered in the Koreans' neighborhood (statement 3); the second one was related to the ease of meeting foreigners (statement 10). For both statements, both age groups had the same mean values: $M=2.54$ for the youngest informants and $M=2.00$ for those aged 50 years.

This difference could be accounted for by the fact that the young respondents have more opportunities to meet foreigners than their parents' generation. People in their 20s may have foreign fellow students or professors at the universities where they study, they may be exposed to people of other cultures and races if they study abroad, and this is quite a trend among young Koreans. At the same time, they may befriend foreigners in clubs or in various volunteering activities. On the other hand, the elderly people may only occasionally interact with foreigners in their workplace. The conclusion we could draw is that the younger generation is more open to foreigners than the older people. Knowing a little about the Koreans' mindset, I could speculate on the possible reasons for this openness. On the one hand, the physical difference between the Asian people and those coming from the West (Caucasian) is pretty striking and may be appealing to them. On the other hand, for some young Koreans, a foreign acquaintance would be like a "prize" to boast about in their entourage, as a sign of rebellion against the old Korean tradition. Finally, for some young girls, foreigners, especially Americans or Canadians, could be considered a good marriage option.

(c) In terms of their **degree of education**, the respondents in the survey were classified in three groups: those whose highest level of education was high school (HS), university (U), and MA/PhD holders.

A first aspect I wanted to investigate was whether the three groups had the same or different perceptions regarding the openness of the Koreans towards foreigners. Thus, the one-way ANOVA test showed a statistically significant difference between the groups of respondents.

To understand this difference between the three groups in detail, a post-test using (equal variance/Dunnett T3 (bivariate) was conducted. The results indicate a meaningful difference between the respondents whose level of education is lowest (HS) ($M=3.72$) and those holding an MA or a PhD ($M=4.11$). This difference is not at all surprising as I assume that many Koreans may have obtained their degrees abroad or in their country, where more and more Korean universities

hire foreign professors. Thus, the respondents in the latter group may have had a greater exposure to foreign people and to more chances to collaborate with them and to learn from them, all this contributing to a better opinion about foreigners.

Table B-7: Koreans' openness to foreigners in terms of the respondents' degree of education.

State	Mean value+ standard deviation			F	Post-test
	High school (N=54)	University (N=166)	MA or PhD (N=102)		
There has been a meaningful change in open perception of foreigners.	3.72±.899	3.95±.654	4.11±.702	5.197*	a<c

When analyzing the correlation between the level of education of the respondents and each statement in the questionnaire, the results of the one-way ANOVA test indicated a statistically significant difference between MA and PhD holders and the other two groups only for statement 3 (problems may arise if there are foreigners with different languages and cultures living in my area). Thus, highly educated respondents disagree with this statement more than the other respondents ($M=2.50$ for MA and PhD holders vs. $M=2.10$ for each of the other two groups). At the same time the respondents with the highest level of education are also more convinced that Koreans and foreigners could co-habit in South Korea if there is mutual respect, understanding and tolerance (statement 4). In my opinion, this kind of wisdom comes with education.

There were no statistically significant differences between the three groups of respondents and their opinions about foreigners. Thus, we may conclude that the level of education did influence the respondents' perception and attitude towards foreigners, but only to a small extent.

(d) The statistic analysis also checked variance in terms of the **profession/occupation** of the respondents in the survey. According to this variable, the participants were grouped into 7 categories: professors, white-collar workers,

students, self-employed persons, public officials, housewives, and others.

The results of the one-way ANOVA test, run to see the correlation between the respondents' occupation and their general perception of the changes in the Koreans' attitude to foreigners, indicated a statistically significant difference between the subjects involved in education ($M=4.13$) and the group of housewives ($M=3.57$). This difference is not surprising, because, as mentioned previously, the Korean housewives have fewer chances than professors to meet foreigners and to form an opinion about them. Probably one opportunity may emerge in the parks, where they usually take their children to play. But given the language barrier and that fact that Korean women are not supposed to interact with unknown men (whether from Korea or from abroad), the possibility of coming to have an opinion about or an attitude towards foreigners is reduced.

The cross-analysis performed to find a correlation between the respondents' occupation and how they felt the attitude of the Koreans to foreigners to have changed (for the better or for the worse) did not reveal any statistically meaningful difference. All respondents, irrespective of their occupation, agreed in a proportion of at least 85.7% that Koreans treat the non-Korean ethnicities better than before. The highest percentage of agreement emerged from the public officials, and an explanation for this figure (96.2%) could be attributed to the fact that they may interact with foreigners more frequently than the members of all the other professional categories.

No significant differences were found for the correlation between the groups of professions and the items in the questionnaire aimed at identifying the extent to which Koreans are more open to foreign people. Still, some differences appeared between the groups in connection with their opinions and thoughts about members of non-Korean ethnicities. Thus, the one-way ANOVA indicated differences in connection with 4 items (S2, S3, S5, and S6). Therefore, in order to understand these differences between the groups in more detail, the Scheffe (for equal variance)/Dunnnett T3 (bivariate) test was applied. The results of the post-test indicate statistically meaningful differences only for S2 and S3 between the public officials ($M=3.31$ for S2 and $M=3.08$ for S3) and the respondents involved in the field of education ($M=3.89$ for S2 and $M=3.58$ for S3). A possible explanation for why professors have a better opinion with respect to working together with foreigners (S2) and even befriending them

(S3) is that they deal with educated people from various cultures who may be willing to adapt to the Korean norms and values or, at least, try to understand them. On the other hand, public officers have to deal with foreigners of different social and educational backgrounds, who may not have always been respectful. That is why this category of Koreans is more reluctant to work with foreigners or befriend them.

4. CONCLUSIONS

As compared to the negative, rather hostile attitude of the Korean people towards non-Korean ethnics that emerged from the introductory part of the paper, the analysis of the questionnaire data depicts a more positive perspective in the sense that nowadays, most of the respondents do not feel threatened by the fact that the foreign people who choose to stay and work in South Korea would radically change the Korean culture, its values and customs. Thus, many natives of Korea wouldn't show any reticence in working or socializing with foreigners. The factors that have contributed to this favorable change in attitude could be the positive personal experience of the survey participants regarding interaction with members of other ethnic groups residing in their country.

With respect to the second research question, the results of the statistical analysis of the differences in responses in terms of the informants' age, gender, degree of education, and profession have shown that, in general, these were not statistically striking. There were, nevertheless, some minor differences determined by the respondents' gender, which showed that Korean men's opinion concerning foreigners may have been influenced by their more frequent exposure to persons from other countries than their female counterparts. This finding does not really come as a surprise, given the fact that many women in the Korean society decide to become housewives after they marry and have children, which reduces their socializing activity and the chances of meeting foreigners.

The age variable could have tilted the balance in favor of a better opinion about and attitude towards non-Koreans. Thus, the respondents in the youngest group (20s) indicated that they have more chances than the generation of their parents (50s) to meet and know foreigners. Moreover, also in opposition with the people aged 50 years, the youngest respondents in the survey felt that the cultures and languages spoken by non-Korean ethnics do not pose a threat for the majority population in South Korea.

SOUTH KOREAN'S OPENNESS TO FOREIGNERS

The two factors that seem to have a greater impact on the Koreans' positive change in their attitude towards foreigners were the level of education and their occupation, which seem to be correlated. Thus, statistically meaningful differences between MA and PhD holders and the subjects with a lower level of education (HS and U) emerged in connection with only two items in the questionnaire (i.e. fear of problems caused by foreigners in South Korea and the possibility of cohabitation between the South Korean mainstream population and the ethnic minorities if there is mutual respect and tolerance). The most educated informants seem to be more optimistic with respect to these issues than the university or high-school graduates.

What the profession variable revealed was that university professors, who interact with foreigners that have a higher degree of education, seem to be inclined to be more trustful in collaborating with students and professors coming from other parts of the world. The Korean public officers, on the other hand, who are exposed more to migrants that may

be less educated, who know only their mother tongue and cannot communicate at all with the native Koreans, are more distrustful towards them.

With the continuous and ever-growing influx of migrant workers, foreign students and tourists, and international brides, the Korean population is currently exposed, more than ever, to social, racial, and cultural diversity. And while three decades ago, the large number of foreigners was not "proportional to the Korean public's tolerance of and openness to non-Korean cultures and values" (Shin 2013: 370), within a time span of almost thirty years, the Korean people have started to understand, accept, and respect the ethnic heterogeneity of their country. The picture that emerged from the data analysis is that the general attitude of the South Koreans towards foreigners has become relatively positive. This change is of great importance not only in the establishment of political, economic, and cultural relations between Korea and other countries, but also for the well being of all the people residing in the country.

Table A-3: Koreans' openness to foreigners and foreign languages.

Statements		S.D.	D.	U.	A.	S.A.	Total	Average
1	Korean friends are better than foreign friends.	11 (3.4%)	83 (25.8%)	119 (37.0%)	90 (28.0%)	19 (5.9%)	322 (100%)	3.07
2	I like to communicate with people who speak the same language as I do.	6 (1.9%)	41 (12.7%)	98 (30.4%)	145 (45.0%)	32 (9.9%)	322 (100%)	3.48
3	Problems may arise if there are foreigners with different languages and cultures living in my area.	62 (19.3%)	151 (46.9%)	68 (21.1%)	38 (11.8%)	3 (0.9%)	322 (100%)	2.28
4	As long as there is respect and tolerance for each other, it doesn't matter if you speak a different language or have a different culture.	6 (1.9%)	2 (0.6%)	47 (14.6%)	185 (57.5%)	82 (25.5%)	322 (100%)	4.04
5	Most Koreans feel uncomfortable when they cannot understand a foreign language.	6 (1.9%)	40 (12.4%)	92 (28.6%)	159 (49.4%)	25 (7.8%)	322 (100%)	3.49
6	Most Koreans don't like it when foreigners don't understand Korean.	37 (11.5%)	131 (40.7%)	95 (29.5%)	52 (16.1%)	7 (2.2%)	322 (100%)	2.57
7	Most Koreans do not agree to marry a foreigner (international marriage).	43 (13.4%)	141 (43.8%)	93 (28.9%)	41 (12.7%)	4 (1.2%)	322 (100%)	2.45

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