

BRAND NAME MULTICULTURALISM:  
THE DYNAMICS OF THE EMERGING SOCIAL TREND OF MULTICULTURAL  
AWARENESS IN SOUTH KOREA

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### *Abstract*

“Multiculturalism” has been gaining momentum as a buzzword in Korean media and government discourse for the past decade. With Korea’s relatively low ranking in the 2008 Nation Brand Index, President Lee Myung Bak commissioned the Presidential Council on Nation Branding to raise the overall image of Korea to the world by highlighting multiculturalism as one of its key focuses. Foreign brides, multicultural enclaves, and multicultural citizenship have now become important factors in facilitating Korea’s growth as a globalized nation. With this new emphasis on “multiculturalism,” how much has the situation for foreigners really improved? Koreans are not strangers to collective consciousness, as a history of trauma has shown, and combined with the high connectivity of Korea’s modern media, issues surrounding multiculturalism are more readily absorbed by society when the national agenda is concerned. By analyzing 4 examples of multicultural issues in the Korean media, the dynamics of the multicultural voice, societal awareness, and emerging trends in multiculturalism can be explained.

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## ***Introduction***

Over the past half century, South Korea has rapidly grown from an impoverished war torn country to one of the leading economies of Asia. In this age of globalization, Korea's compressed modernity has in effect taken a mostly economic approach while many cultural cues have not yet caught up to par. Ethnic solidarity in the form of nationalism has long been engrained within the Korean social imaginary due to Korea's history of invasion and colonialism. In the present post-modern era, Korea's growing multicultural population is becoming a prominent reality in the face of Korea's long standing notions of mono-ethnicity. The frequency of foreign brides from Southeast Asia are growing each day, more and more migrant workers are arriving to do the low paying work that most Koreans have moved beyond, and most of all Korea's blossoming economy is attracting all types of foreigners in the chase for the "Korean Dream."

In 2008, the Korean government began a national branding campaign in an attempt to raise its low ranking of overall image compared to its high level of economic development. A main component of this branding campaign is presenting Korea as a "global village" where Korea's growing multicultural population is recognized as a welcome sign of modernity. "Multiculturalism" has become the new buzzword in the Korean media spotlight charged with modifying pre-existing notions of an ethnically based national identity in order to promote a harmonious coexistence amongst all people in Korea. But, although Korea has been quick to re-

brand itself, there has been little cultural preparation. Ninety-eight percent in a population of nearly fifty million are still ethnically Korean with native cultural moors still dominant throughout the country (Han P36.) Discrimination and racism have long gone unchecked and most foreigners are still viewed as walking talking stereotypes. The dynamics of being a multicultural citizen in Korea calls for careful navigation within the structure of Korea's evolving societal norms, traditional expectations, and racial politics in the face of an inevitable multi-ethnic future. With all of this emphasis on multiculturalism in the media and government, how much has the ground level multicultural situation improved since the beginning of the nation branding initiative? What factors influence change? In this paper I argue that, *since the initiation of the Presidential Council on Nation Branding, changes in Korea's social consciousness in regards to multicultural issues and awareness have developed in correlation with the level of media exposure pertaining to specific multicultural subjects, and their perceived importance toward the betterment of the nation.*

### ***Importance***

When Barack Obama was elected president of the United States in 2008, Obamamania was in full swing across the globe. Korea was no different, with President Lee Myung Bak associating himself with Obama by commenting about wearing the same brand of suit or highlighting how Obama used to frequent a Korean dry cleaner in Chicago (KoreAm 2008.) Most of all, what Obama's election did was show the world that multiculturalism and modernity

go hand in hand. Korea's race for modernity vis-à-vis economic growth left societal issues of multiculturalism aside. Since the recent years push for a new brand image, Korea has made top down efforts to promote a positive multicultural atmosphere with new laws, programs, and media attention, but how has this resulted on the ground level? It is important to understand how much change has occurred towards addressing Korea's multicultural community's issues because in a globalized sense, modernity is measured by how a country treats its citizens-*not only the ethnic majority, but all of its citizens*. In order for Korea to project itself as a modern globalized country, it has to re-examine its image of who qualifies as a Korean. Through my research, I try to identify how Korea's campaign for multiculturalism has affected multicultural people living in Korea. As Korea continues to rapidly move forward in the global economy, it is important to see how Korean society's multicultural identity progresses in the race to catch up to globalized standards of racial modernity as indicated by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ohchr.org.)

### ***Methods of Approach***

In order to capture the dynamics of the multicultural situation in modern Korea, I begin by identifying the Presidential Council on Nation Branding and describe the reason for its formation, its approach, and its goals. The last two goals on the Presidential Council on Nation Branding's 10-point plan for improving Korea's national brand image provide the framework for

the analysis of the multicultural issues reviewed in this paper: 9) *Treat foreigners and Multicultural families better* and 10) *Help Koreans become “Global Citizens.”* In the following section I define the notion of National identity in the historical context of Korea. Looking at how it was formed through traumatic experiences and why Korean ethnicity and National identity had become synonymous. Next, I construct an emerging notion of National identity that is free from ethnic ties and based in public surveys and military policy. The following section is divided into four case studies that upon further analysis aim to tease out concepts of race, space, identity, beauty, gender, and law. Throughout the case studies I often refer to sociological theories in order to provide grounding for my analysis. The case studies highlight specific issues, incidents, and subjects that pertain to multicultural awareness in Korea that have taken place since the Presidential Council on Nation Branding has been active. First, I examine the issue surrounding the proposed closure of the Filipino multicultural area known as “Little Manila.” Second, I review the “Bus incident” involving racist remarks directed at Indian research professor Bonojit Hussain and his female Korean colleague Ms. Hahn. Third, I take a look at the gentrification of the Itaewon area and the resulting decline in the African population in their established multicultural zone. The Itaewon case study serves as an example of some of the loopholes that negatively affect multicultural peoples living in Korea who are already at a disadvantage when it comes to equal opportunity in Korean society. Lastly, I examine the popular Korean television program *minyodeului suda* (*minsuda* for short) aka “Chatting with Beauties” and analyze how the evolution of the show challenges established social norms while simultaneously framing new ones. In the next section, I take a look at the push and pull factors that influence a diaspora’s level of assimilation into Korean society vs. retention of the homeland culture. To do this, I first de-construct the notion of *Koreanness*, and then look at the pressures

for assimilation faced by foreign brides. Furthermore, I put the issue of “assimilation vs. cultural retention” within a framework of diasporic studies by using Itaewon’s African population as an example. Throughout the four case studies, I highlight different theories in the examination of each case that best suits the discussion of each issue. Although I do not utilize all of the theories discussed in each section, they are applicable to all the issues covered in the various sections of this paper. Finally, I connect theories of media effects and collective consciousness to explain the media’s influence in facilitating progressive ideas, new values, and positive changes in the domain of multicultural awareness in Korean society. Throughout this paper, I sometimes refer to my own personal experience in Korea as a framing mechanism to bring out the issues under analysis. My own bi-racial ethnicity of African-American and Korean (born in Seoul, Korea and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii) allowed for a firsthand account of the ground floor multicultural experience in Korea and also allowed me a unique positionality in addressing these issues. My experience mostly draws upon my semester abroad during the Fall of 2010 at Sogang University in Seoul, South Korea.

### ***What is “Multiculturalism?”***

In modern Korea, “Multiculturalism” has become a household word. It evokes thoughts of a myriad of subjects pertaining to those in Korea who are not of the ethnic Korean majority, but are steadily becoming more visible in society. The Korean word for multiculturalism, *damunhwajui* (다문화주의), literally translates to “all-culture-the practice.” In the Korean

context, the word “multiculturalism” has been borrowed from western discourses about how different cultures may coexist in peace and cooperation within a country. Difficulties between ethnic groups are concerns for nearly every nation in the world and the debate over the enactment of multicultural policies is constantly evolving. For Koreans, multiculturalism is a fairly new term within the social imaginary. The “practice of all cultures” is a notion that has previously been counter-intuitive within the country due to Korea’s high level of homogeneity and historic tendency for ethnic identity being equated with national identity. With the growing number of international marriages, migrant workers, and diasporic settlers, Korea is facing a projected ethnically diverse future. To help facilitate the integration of multiculturalism in Korean society, the government has assigned the issue to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Korea’s compressed modernity has shown a tendency to quickly adapt to change in an effort to move the nation higher up the global ladder. In this sense, the Korean government takes on a similar compressed approach when addressing multicultural issues by attempting to quickly respond to issues that arise when they arise. As multicultural policies are applied, the practice of multiculturalism in Korea becomes an ongoing experiment where real time results dictate how multiculturalism may be successful or challenging. It is in this respect that “multiculturalism” is explored within this paper and viewed as an all-inclusive term for those in Korea who do not make up the ninety-eight percent ethnic majority.

## *Koreabrand.net*

In 2008, the results of Simon Anholt's Nation Brand Index sent South Korean leaders into a frenzied mission to improve Korea's image on the global stage. According to the NBI (Nation Brand Index), South Korea ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> among 50 developed nations that were comparatively tested on their overall "charm." To the Korean leadership, this result symbolized a loss of face in respect to Korea's own perceived position in the global pecking order. Thereafter, improving the overall image of Korea as a marketable brand began to gain prominence in the national agenda.



*Figure 1 Factors considered in brand image.*

In order to quantify the overall qualities of a nation's brand image, "Anholt, in collaboration with New York-based GFK Custom Research North America, measures the power

and quality of 50 countries' brand images by combining exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism and investment and immigration (Kang 2009.)” See **figure 1**. One of South Korea's biggest hurdles within the domain of nation branding is its common pairing with North Korea in the global imaginary. The negative imagery that surrounds the reclusive North coupled with the current lack of a formal ending to the Korean War and nuclear disputes, still unwittingly resonates with most outside media outlets. However, South Korea's leaders were greatly concerned about how their country could rank marginally among developed nations while financially holding the position of one of the strongest economies in the world. South Korean President, Lee Myong Bak remarked, “Korea is the world's 13<sup>th</sup>-largest economy with some \$20,000 in per capita income but ranks only 33<sup>rd</sup> in the global brand index. . . This is a big problem (Glionna 2009.)” In order to address this issue, President Lee commissioned the Presidential Council on Nation Branding on January 22, 2009. “The council comprises 47 members, 16 of whom are senior government figures” while 31 make up a virtual who's who of big business CEOs within Korea and abroad (Dinnie P101.) Its goals were to initiate government led strategies and policies with the main objective being to “promote Korea's global image; to right misconceptions about Korea, its culture, its products, and its people; and to raise respect for Korea so as to support Korean businesses and nationals abroad (Koreabrand.net)” The council employs a large team of experts including university professors, marketing specialists, artists, and musicians, in order to formulate a concrete multifaceted strategy for offering a re-imagined concept of Korea to the world. The institutional connectivity of the Presidential Council on Nation Branding allows it to act as an umbrella organization that has the capacity to take quick action in modifying and initiating policies while providing oversight throughout

different government branches. The council's platform of concerns, initiatives, and progress is showcased in their website *www.koreabrand.net*.

Merely two months after its formation, the Presidential council on Nation branding released a 10-point plan aimed at raising Korea's image over the next several years. The plan was presented in this order:

1. Promote tae kwon do
2. Dispatch 3000 volunteers abroad each year
3. Adopt a "Korean Wave" program on TV
4. Introduce the Global Korea scholarship
5. Adopt the Campus Asia program
6. Increase external aid
7. Develop state-of-the-art technologies
8. Nurture the culture and tourism industries
- 9. Treat foreigners and multicultural families better**
- 10. Help Koreans become "global citizens"**

*(Dinnie P101)*

This ambitious undertaking encompasses a wide range of tangible aspects toward raising Korea's national image in the international arena. Even though issues such as *9. Treat foreigners and multicultural families better* and *10. Help Koreans become "global citizens"* lay at the bottom of the agenda, their inclusion highlights a notable emphasis on the importance of Korea's multicultural citizenship and Koreans' general concept of themselves in relation to the outside world. Since the NBI was fashioned with the perception of foreigners in mind, the

council is engaged in marketing Korea as a community that is welcoming and incorporating of other ethnicities to promote a vision of a true cosmopolitan society. On the other hand, Korea's ground floor concept of nationalism and identity must be addressed due to the heavy underlying remnants of colonial memory that has left Korea with a slight tendency for cultural introversion. In this respect, the aim of the council is to broaden the Korean people's perspective of the global community by promoting a variety of initiatives through scholarship, volunteer work, media, and cultural interaction. The Presidential Council on Nation Branding oversees government affairs at both a local and national level while providing special consideration to media issues that deal directly with components crucial to the 10-point plan. The connectivity of the various government ministries that comprise the Council allow for swift action to be initiated by removing many of the bureaucratic boundaries that could otherwise cause hold ups due to red tape. Therefore, the Council's positioning allows it to accommodate pre-existing issues as well as respond to new social issues that may arise.

The media is one of the primary sources that the council uses to gauge public awareness of multicultural issues. At the same time, it uses instances of media sensationalism to make a national response which showcases the Korean government's answer to the issue. Such as the case of Bonojit Hussain and the introduction of anti-discrimination laws that will be discussed in later sections (Kerry 2010.) This usually speedy response serves as a notable example to show the people of Korea that the solution is not just an isolated response, but should be honored and followed by all of Korea's citizens for the greater good of the nation. This sense of unity through the power of a collective society, as valued over the individual, is not something completely new to Korea, but it is a unique cultural development that finds its roots in Korea's historical experience.

## National Identity

Modern Korea's national identity can be traced back to the seeds of ethnic nationalism that grew out of the colonial experience with imperial Japan. From 1910-1945, Korea's national identity was dictated by Japan's assimilationist policy in an attempt to absorb the Korean populace into Japan's model of the East Asian Co-prosperity sphere. "Racial categorization legitimized Japan's colonial rule on the grounds that Koreans were an inferior race needing the guidance of a superior race to bring about 'civilization and enlightenment' (Shin P42.)" This new atmosphere of Japanese dominance did not go without resistance. Korea's colonial experience prompted a strong nationalist response that championed ethnic solidarity. Korean nationalists prized native traditions as a means to maintain Korea's unique culture. "The use of Korean was prohibited in public places including schools, and Koreans were forced to change their names to Japanese ones (Shin P51.)" Hangul, *Tangun* (The mythical progenitor of Korean civilization), and a rediscovery of a native history independent of China became symbols of Korean nationalism.

The March 1, 1919 independence movement was one of the first major markers of Korea's national unity in the face of Japanese hegemony. This show of "people power" forced the Japanese to relax their assimilationist policies by allowing more liberalities in Korean newspapers, literature, and culture. The resulting response was an explosion of ethnic nationalism, limited by Japanese censorship, which gained wide ranging support as a social movement. The sentiment in celebrating native language, art, history, and heroes became one of

the only ways for the Korean people to subvert Japanese hegemony. The emphasis of Korea's blood purity became combined with ethnic solidarity in order to create a direct lineal link to historical anchors such as *Tangun*. It is in this context that the term "*minjok* (the ethnic nation) [became] the basis of Korea's new identity and culture, calling for the recovery of *minjok chongsin* (the national spirit) (Shin P47.)" After the ending of WWII and Japanese colonial rule, Korea's indoctrinated ethno-nationalist anti-colonial foundation became a major part of the ideological dichotomy of the political climate that split the nation. In this regard, Korean ethnicity became synonymous with national identity and continued to be reinforced through much of Korea's modern history vis-à-vis education, politics, and media.

The modern assertion of *minjok* in the national consciousness as the cornerstone of Korean society has come into question during the latter stage of Korea's compressed modernity with the growing influx of foreigners residing in the country. Korea's foreign minority has steadily been on the rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. International marriages between mainly rural farmers and Southeast Asian women have been viewed as an answer to Korea's declining birthrate dilemma (Kim P104.) The emphasis on social status in the job market has left a vacuum of unattended labor jobs that migrant workers have readily filled. Established multicultural communities are growing ever stronger with more and more international residents arriving to chase the "Korean dream." With these new developments, the notion of defining Korea's national identity begins to take on a slightly nuanced form.

Although the realities of a growing multicultural presence are brought to light by the current state of affairs, Koreans tend to view the country's hosting of the 1988 Summer Olympics and the later 2002 World Cup soccer tournament as the focal points of modern Korea's awakening to the global arena of multiculturalism on its home soil (Lowe-Lee 2010.)

In essence, the world was brought to Korea's doorstep and the awareness of foreign cultures became a physical manifestation of athletes from numerous countries rather than the pre-existing enclaves that dotted the Seoul metro area. Korea itself also occupied the global spotlight. With most of the world watching the World Cup tournament, issues surrounding Korea's ethnic homogeneity and national identity began to surface within the Korean public sphere. The phenomenon of the "Red Devils" (Korean World Cup Soccer fans known for wearing red t-shirts) became a widely popular social movement during the World Cup. Spawned by Korea's high level of Internet connectivity, "a cumulative twenty-two million people came out to the streets of Seoul and other major cities in Korea" in support of Korea's seven World Cup matches (Lowe-Lee 2010.) The Red Devil phenomenon was inclusive of foreigners in Korea as many foreign residents donned red shirts and joined in support of the Korean World Cup team. The notion of Korean identity becoming inclusive of foreigners and mixed-race persons did not resonate well with North Korea's ideals of racial purity (Meyers P72.) While South Korea views its growing multicultural population as an answer to its declining birth rate, North Korea views South Korea's multiculturalism as an end to Korea's pure-blood ethnic identity. "The party daily [North Korea's main newspaper] condemned the South Korean government for welcoming an American star football player [Hines Ward] of half Korean parentage and for tolerating miscegenation (Meyers P72.)"

The homecoming and celebrity status of African-American/Korean Super Bowl XL Most Valuable Player awardee Hines Ward (2006) highlighted Korea's own internal struggle to come to terms with its treatment of people of mixed-blood (*honhyol*.) The offspring of US military personnel and Koreans have long been viewed as a stain on Korea's coat of ethnic purity and also physically embodied Korea's history of US involvement on the Korean peninsula. The

positive attention given to Hines Ward's *honhyol* ethnicity and issues of mixed-race also shed light on the eventualities of Korea's growing trend of international marriages (Cho 2006.) How would a new larger generation of *honhyol* be integrated in Korean society? The answer to this question can be found in recent developments in a rite of passage in terms of nationalism and the standardization of manhood in Korea: compulsory military service.

The Korean War concluded with an armistice agreement that left the peninsula in a stalemate and without a formal ending. Since North and South Korea are still technically at war, every male on both sides of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel must complete a government mandated contract of military service in defense of their country. To South Koreans, this military service is considered an honorable duty to the nation and also a rite of passage for Korean men. Furthermore, military service is seen as a component of nationalistic camaraderie that connects all men in Korea by instilling a standardized notion of manhood that is reflected in the civilian realm through social and business networks throughout Korea. It is in this respect that *honhyol* and other naturalized citizens have previously been exempted from military service on the grounds of their ethnic heritage being viewed as a disruption to the harmony of the Korean mono-ethnic majority in military service. For pure-blooded Koreans, the only exemptions allowed for military service are based on disabilities such as a physical handicap, mental illness, homosexuality (which also falls under the category of mental illness), and excessive tattoos (Cosgrove-Mather 2003.) Therefore, citizens of mixed blood or non-Korean ethnicity were categorized by the government as possessing debilitating factors that would ultimately obstruct the harmony of military duty.

2011 has brought about interesting developments in the Korean government's definition of national identity in terms of compulsory military service. A legislative bill (first introduced

in 2009) aimed at reversing the military ban on peoples of mixed-race was signed into law in January 2011. “The military says the changes reflect the shifts in Korean society, which is becoming increasingly multicultural (Kim 2011.)” Since the revision of the military service rule, more than 100 men of mixed-blood heritage have been assigned to active duty and that number is expected to multiply into the thousands by the end of this decade. Another revision taking place in the Korean military is the mandatory pledge that is sworn in oath during the enlistment ceremony for military personnel. “Article 5 of the law governing military service stipulates that new officers and enlisted soldiers have to swear ‘utmost loyalty to the nation and the race as a soldier of the Republic of Korea’ (Kim 2011.)” The point of contention in the oath of service lies in the word “minjok” or the ethnic Korean race. The word was replaced by “shimin” or citizens. This modification of military service eligibility rules and the specific wording of the oath of service signify a larger government level initiative to transform societal notions of a mono-ethnic national identity into a multi-ethnic concept that identifies the ground level realities of Korea’s future. A glimpse into one of the ground level multicultural realities that has challenged Korea’s mono-ethnic hegemony is the example of the Sunday Filipino market in Seoul where Filipino diaspora have carved out a niche in the city and fought to keep it.

### ***Little Manila: The Sunday Filipino Market in Seoul***

In fall 2010, while sitting in the terminal at the Incheon International Airport, a young Filipino man sat in the chair next to me, smiled and began ranting to me in Tagalog. He had

mistaken me for a fellow countryman, but when I answered in English and relayed that I didn't speak Filipino, he chuckled and then switched to English saying, "Could you take a look at this receipt for me please?" I obliged and while I inspected his currency exchange receipt he introduced himself as "Manny" and explained that he had been working on a farm about 2 hours outside of Seoul for the past 3 months and earned nearly \$1000, only to lose almost \$150 by exchanging his Korean money to Philippine pesos at the airport. He continued by telling me how his sister had married a Korean farmer and had helped arrange a short contract job for him at a neighbors farm where many other Filipinos were employed. Manny laughed off his currency loss and said, "It's ok, I made enough money this time. I won't make the same mistake next time." I said, "When do you think you'll be coming back to Korea?" Manny replied, "My visa status as a Filipino worker will not allow me to return for another 3 years, so I will have to wait till then."

Looking deeper into Manny's story uncovers many aspects of the Filipino community in Korea. The connectivity of extended family, migrant labor, foreign brides, and a strict visa policy that favors developed western nations over Korea's Southeast Asian neighbors, but most importantly, his story resonates with the nearly 46,000 Filipinos living in Korea who make up the 5<sup>th</sup> largest ethnic group in the country. Many of whom regularly visit the Filipino market in the Hyewha district of Seoul called "Little Manila."



**Figure 2: Little Manila Sunday Market in Seoul, Korea.**

The Sunday market in Little Manila got its start in 1995 when the Hye-hwa Catholic church began mass services in Tagalog to cater to the growing Filipino community within the greater Seoul region. The market soon developed as a post-church service tradition which followed suit with the normal custom in the Philippines where churchgoers commonly shop for weekly supplies on Sundays after church. “Many Filipino workers from different parts of Korea travel to Seoul on Sundays just to go to church and shop at the market (Garcia 2010.)” Over the years, what first began with a few street vendors selling various goods from the Philippines soon developed into an open air style market place that stretched 100 meters down the street fronting the church. All types of local fairs can be found at the market, ranging from traditional delicacies such as *lumpia*, *balut*, and *pansit* to domestic goods such as CDs, DVDs, and magazines. “People buy and sell goods, but more importantly they exchange information about jobs, and celebrate their ethnic food, language (Tagalog and English), and culture (Kim 2008.)”

Throngs of Filipinos, along with a growing number of Koreans and other foreigners, flock to the market on Sundays between the hours of 9am to 5pm to get a taste of the Philippines.

In February 2010, the Jongno district office made official notice of the projected closing of the Little Manila Sunday market by March 2010 citing neighborhood complaints about the general overcrowding and lack of cleanliness in the Marketplace area. Residents were concerned about unhygienic conditions with street food vendors and the flooded streets as thousands of Filipinos exit the church to head to the market. Moreover, taxi cab drivers were upset about what began as a sidewalk market spilling into the actual street itself thereby obstructing their normal customer pick up stands. Jongno District officials expressed the desire to begin a type of re-development project in the market area which involved re-paving the sidewalk and installing a scenic waterfall. The District office proposed that the Sunday market be re-located to a newly designated multicultural street in Nakwon-dong which would be significantly farther away from the church. This proved to be problematic for the Filipino community because many believed that the current location of the market had been well established over the past 15 years and the proposed relocation would disconnect the church as an integral component of Filipino tradition. Father Alvin Parantar chaplain of the Hyehwa-dong Filipino Catholic Community stated, “It’s a Philippine way of life. We go to church, then go to the market to buy provisions and meet friends. It’s an expression of Philippine culture. The national government has a policy about supporting multiculturalism in Korea, but there seems to be a contradiction with the district office’s plans. The church and the market should go together and not be separated (Garcia 2010.)” Members of the Filipino community offered to address the issue of order and cleanliness of the market by expressing the vendors’ willingness to cooperate with the district office by restructuring the size of individual vending areas instead of complete

closure or relocation, but at that time the district office had finalized its order for the markets discontinuation. Koreans and Filipinos alike signed a formal petition to allow the market to continue as a unique area “to experience the local culture of the Philippines (Korea Tourism Org 2010.)” The Filipino community also enlisted the aid of the Philippine embassy in Seoul as well as media coverage of the situation which gained national and international (Philippines) attention.

In March 2010, the Jongno District office announced that the closure/relocation plans for the market would be placed on hold pending agreed upon improvements by the street vendors concerning order, size, and cleanliness. Later, in September 2010, the Jongno district office’s final decision on the matter allowed for the market to remain at its current size and location fronting Hyehwa Cathedral, but implemented special “rules” for vendors. Vendors were allowed to have a four square meter area, marked by white paint on the ground and “if any of the items go past the white lines, the officials will confiscate the items (Garcia/Kwon 2010.)” Furthermore, the most peculiar new rule “requires vendors to be married to a Korean spouse before being allowed to sell at the market (Garcia/Kwon 2010.)” This rule serves to benefit Filipino/Koreans while discriminating against migrant Filipino vendors. A former Filipino vendor said, “They said I’m no longer allowed to have a stall because I’m not married to a Korean. What kind of rule is that? Isn’t this market supposed to be for Filipinos (Garcia/Kwon 2010.)” Aside from the adoption of new policies, the resistance and subsequent victory by the Filipino community in continuing the established parameters of the “Little Manila” Sunday market display the tenacity of the minority voice and quite possibly the open ears of the Presidential Council on Nation Branding.

Looking deeper in to the issue surrounding the Little Manila Sunday market reveals how the campaign for accommodating multiculturalism on the national level differs from the local district level. The original motion by the Jongno district office to close/relocate the Sunday Market as a means of curbing congestion in the neighborhood does not take into account its 15 year history or its cultural significance to the Filipino diaspora in Korea. The decision by the district office was, in essence, an attempt at gentrification for a district in Seoul that is steadily gaining affluence. One that they had hoped would be accepted by the Filipino community without complaint, but this was not the case. The savvy of the Filipino community in enlisting multiple media outlets in bringing the Sunday market closure issue under the national and international lens shows both cleverness and courage.

The success of the Filipino community in keeping the Sunday market in its current size and location fronting the Hyehwa Cathedral can be explained by the “Social Capital Theory” coined by L.J. Hanifan in reference to social cohesion and personal investment in the community. Hanifan describes social capital by stating,

“I do not refer to real estate, or to personal property or to cold cash, but rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of people, namely goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit. If he may come into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community (Hanifan P130.)”

In the context of the Filipino community in Korea, the transnational cohesion of extended family values centered on the Catholic religion empowered the community and its members with social capital to contend for the diasporic space it had carved out in a foreign land. Even with the pressure to remain quiet, due to many Filipinos having overstayed their visas in order to

continue to work, the involvement of the Filipino community vis-à-vis legal/illegal residents, migrant workers, foreign brides, and the Philippine embassy in resisting forced changes shows the value of the combined social capital in giving a voice to Filipinos residing in Korea.

Normally, the individual cases of Filipino brides and migrant workers who are faced with discrimination or abuse often go unheard. This reflects Korea's underlying attitude toward Southeast Asians as those who are trying to escape from third world poverty in order to occupy jobs that most Koreans label as 3D-dirty, disgusting, and difficult. The main character in the Korean literary work "The Road to Yangsuri" by Kim In-suk sums up a Korean stereotype about the Southeast Asia region when he contemplates a prospective relocation:

"Didn't they say that living costs for the middle class were several hundred *won* a month at most? If I go, I'll live like a rich man, for sure. There's bound to be a black market even over there. I'd still be able to buy whatever I want... Submissive servants who'd practically cut out an organ for you for a piddling little tip. Tales from that land were the essence of wonder and curiosity-stories of how even riding on the roof of the bus exacted a half-price fare; how butcher shops keep meat without refrigerators; how their custom was still not to use toilet paper after a bowel movement; how lizards crawled over the walls and ceilings at night (Kim P 328.)"

Barriers in language, legalities, and fear of deportation have kept many Filipinos on the margins, but centered on tradition with the Hyehwa Cathedral and the Sunday market as the focal point, the Filipino community has successfully rallied to maintain their cultural island. As a group, multicultural minorities in Korea may have a voice in affairs that pertain to them as a whole, but what about individual incidents of racial discrimination and abuse? The next section discusses the "bus incident" of Bonojit Hussain and his crusade for social justice.

### *Riding on the margins of change*

On a warm summer evening in July 2009, an Indian man and a Korean woman boarded a bus in the Seoul metro area. After sitting down, a Korean man wearing a suit and tie sitting behind them began to shout, “Hey you bastard, you stink! Are you an Arab (Hussain interview 2010?)” The Indian man tried to ignore the Korean’s tirade, thinking that he must be drunk, but the verbal assault continued not only against himself, but now included his Korean female friend. The Korean man exclaimed to her, “How does it feel to be with a black guy?” Thereby making an even more inappropriate sexual innuendo towards the pair, who were in actuality faculty colleagues at Sungkonghoe University in Seoul.



Figure 3: Bonojit Hussain.

This is the story of Bonojit Hussain (see **figure 3**) and Hahn Ji-seon, the Indian man and Korean woman, who were riding the bus that evening only to be verbally attacked because of race. The story continues with Mr. Hussain and Ms. Hahn physically dragging the Korean culprit off of the bus at the next stop and taking him to the nearby Bucheon district police station along with another middle aged Korean woman bus rider who accompanied them as a witness. When Mr. Hussain brought the disruptive man to the police and explained that he wished to press charges of racism, he was told that racism does not exist in Korea, there were no laws on the books to charge the man with, and finally that Mr. Hussain and the Korean man should just say sorry to each other and be done with the situation. Mr. Hussain refused to give the matter up. At first the police would not consider even filing a report of the incident, but Mr. Hussain and Ms. Hahn insistently continued to argue the case at the police station for most of the night until the police finally made a formal report. However, the police would not charge the man with any crime. “Finally, Mr. Hussein filed a petition with the Human Rights Commission (국가인권위원회) after the police made it clear that they had no desire to punish (Kim 2009.)”

The story was soon sensationalized by the Korean media who exposed the incident on a national level through newspaper, magazine articles, and television interviews. News of the incident eventually gained the attention of the Korean National Assembly who initiated two new laws against racial discrimination that specifically highlighted instances in reference to Mr. Hussain’s case while also giving a clear definition of how violators may be prosecuted. Mr. Hussain was given the opportunity to speak before the National Assembly in a public hearing where he reiterated his experience and those of others on the ground level of racism in Korea while emphasizing the need for Korea to re-evaluate its outlook and plan for this issue. Mr. Hussain’s Korean lawyer, Hwang Pil-gyu, reinforces this sentiment by saying, “I believe that

there must be investigations of both the laws which said this was not discrimination and other laws which are themselves discriminatory and foment prejudice (Kim 2009.)”

Since the new anti-discriminations laws were not ready to take effect at the time of the incident, Mr. Hussain’s persistence in pursuing the case brought about the indictment of “the suit and tie man,” known as 31 year-old Mr. Park, on charges of “criminal insult.” An offense punishable with no jail time, but with a fine between 500,000-1,000,000 won (roughly \$500-\$1000.) The Hussein case was the first prosecution for racism in Korea’s modern history. In response to this case, the two new anti-discrimination bills introduced to the National Assembly “provide that racial discrimination on the basis of race, nationality, ethnicity, and skin color would, at the order of the National Human Rights Commission, be punishable to up to two years in prison and a fine of up to 10,000,000 Won (Kim 2009.)”

Mr. Hussain’s initial interaction with the police proved to reinforce the already underlying tones of race in Korea because as Mr. Hussain states, “The police spoke very kindly to the Koreans but spoke to me in *banmal* (Kim 2009.)” According to Korean etiquette, the use of *banmal* (informal speech) is considered impolite and a sign of disrespect when used between people that are not well acquainted or when talking to elders. The use of this type of speech by the police signifies contempt for Mr. Hussain, whom at first was mistaken for a migrant worker and later identified as a research professor. In the perception of the police, this unexpected juxtaposition of perceived roles from migrant worker to university professor did not change their level of speech, but it did in fact give Mr. Hussain a new sense of credibility. This revelation coupled with his persistence finally made the police file an incident report.

In Korea, the recent influx of migrant workers from South/Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East adds to the pre-existing notions of social hierarchy based on Confucian ideology in the Korean social imaginary (Mitchell 2010.) Migrants are mostly known to work in the industries that are unpopular to modern day Koreans such as farming, factories, and construction work. “3D” jobs require little education and a substantially lower wage by Korean standards. Although, for a migrant worker from a less developed nation, what might be considered a less than average wage in Korea could be an extremely high wage in their own countries. While not carrying the extreme earning potential of a salary man working for one of Korea’s conglomerates, the occupation of *paksa* (University professor or PhD) carries with it the high prestige of a learned scholar which is derived from Korea’s Confucian tradition. Mr. Hussain’s status as a university professor challenges Korean notions of the stereotypical South/Southeast Asian’s perceived position in Korean society. Therefore, Mr. Hussain describes his persistence in prosecuting Mr. Park for his racial remarks as not a personal vendetta against Mr. Park, but more so as a voice for the multicultural community. “There are 1.1 million migrants in Korea, mostly factory workers and mail order brides, and they are not in the position to speak up [about issues of racism in Korea] (Hussain interview 2010.)” The landmark case of Mr. Hussain has brought Korea’s underlying issues of racism into the spotlight and the resulting conviction of his antagonist followed by the subsequent introduction of new anti-discrimination legislation has set a new precedent against racist behavior in Korean society.

The bus racism incident and resulting introduction of anti-discrimination legislation can be explained by critical race theory which “questions the very foundations of liberal order, equality theory, and legal reasoning” by “studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power (Delgado P3.)” The racism that Mr. Hussain experienced on the bus was

micro-aggressively continued at the police station with his treatment by the authorities. This experience mirrored situations that foreigners, especially those of color, navigate on a daily basis. The initiative of Mr. Hussain in pursuing legal action in an attempt to set a new precedent on racism in Korea strived to advance a social justice framework that previously did not exist. By enlisting the help of a lawyer and garnering large-scale media attention, Mr. Hussain began a movement that started on the ground level and rose to the top. Critical race theory suggests that a ground up challenge to racism vis-à-vis legal action can be a difficult task, but the speed between the incident and the introduction of anti-discrimination laws exemplifies a near optimal result. Is it possible that the Korean model of compressed modernity is also applied to social issues as well?

A less publicized dynamic of the bus incident is that Mr. Hussain was not the only person to press charges against Mr. Park for his obscene remarks. Ms. Hahn (Mr. Hussain's Korean female colleague) also adamantly pursued prosecution for the charge of "criminal insult." Overlooked by the news media, the underlying issue of gender politics in Korea is racialized when Korean women are perceived to be in a relationship with a non-Korean man. This was the case for Ms. Hahn. Although she was not verbally attacked for her race, she was morally ridiculed by Mr. Park who insinuated that she was a prostitute because of her association with Mr. Hussain. Remnants of Korea's history of Confucian gender expectations still permeate Korean society today. In the Korean male imaginary, the Korean woman is an exclusive right to Korean men and to Korean men only. The source of this mentality can be traced back to traditional Confucian gender politics where virtuous women were expected to abide by "samjong jido" (Three rules of obedience), which prescribed that a woman, before marriage, should obey her father; after marriage, her husband; and after the husband's death, her son(s) (Kim Packet P4.)" Furthermore, the "principle of 'bloodline' or *jus sanguinis* still defines the notion of

Korean nationhood and citizenship, which are often inseparable in the mind of Koreans (Shin P234.)” Confucian doctrine posits that Korean women are to follow the lead of Korean men while Korean men act as the protectors of Korean women and their virtue. This ideology combined with the emphasis on pure-blood dictates male privilege in the Korean social imaginary thereby constituting the reasoning behind the traditional preference for Koreans to exclusively marry other Koreans. Mr. Hussain describes this inclination when he says, “Whenever I’ve walked with Ms. Hahn or other Korean women, most of the time I felt hostilities, especially from middle-aged men (Choe 2009.)” Also, the dynamics of the U.S. camptown paradigm that evolved through Korean government sponsored prostitution near U.S. military bases in the years following the Korean War, added to the stigma of a Korean woman being seen with a foreign man being viewed as a prostitute (Moon 1997.) In a survey released in January 2011 by the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, “57 percent of [Korean] people said they would marry Koreans rather than foreigners. . . and 41.9 percent of parents said they were against their children marrying foreigners (Kim 2011.)”

Looking at the case from Ms. Hahn’s point of view highlights the perspective of Korean women who are harassed in public while in the company of foreign men. They too are subjected to “the stinging gaze and insults from Korean middle aged men (Schwartzman 2009.)” An article at the Korean internet media site “New daily” reflects some of the ideas that Korean men have about protecting Korean womanhood from foreign intrusion by describing the club scene in Itaewon as a place where “blacks and Southwest Asians hide their nationalities and approach [Korean] women saying they’ll teach them English. They want one thing-sex with Korean women. And that, too, is perverted sex (Chun 2010.)” The same article goes on to say that “most of the foreigners prowling about Itaewon are ‘losers’ with no proper social life in their

own countries (Chun 2010.)” What some Korean men fail to realize is that Korean women are going to dance clubs in Itaewon on their own accord and in some cases to meet foreign men in an area that is well known to be challenging to most Koreans’ notions of respectability. Therefore, the significance of the new anti-discrimination laws are not just freedom from racial insults, but also protection of Korean women’s right of choice in the ethnicity of their acquaintances. The district of Itaewon itself provides a fertile multicultural atmosphere for men and women of various ethnicities to mingle without taboos. This is especially true for Africans and African-Americans who have become established in the Itaewon district, but whose population is declining due to planned changes in the area.

### ***Itaewon Revival and African Exodus***

While studying abroad in Seoul in the fall of 2010, I came across what appeared to be a typical urban African-American style barbershop on the notorious “African Street” in Itaewon. Upon entering I encountered two black men, one sitting in the chair getting a haircut, and the other man giving the haircut. The man in the chair turned out to be an African-American soldier stationed at the Yongsan garrison who was getting a haircut to prepare for the following day’s inspection. The barber, named Nukuna (who preferred to be called Paul,) revealed to be the owner of the establishment and was originally from Cameroon in West Africa. When my turn came around to get a haircut, I sat in the chair and began a light conversation of the casual sorts

such as, “Where are you from? How long have you lived in Korea? How do you like it here?” After I asked the last question of “how do you like it here...” Paul sighed and replied that it was “so-so.” Paul and his wife had come to Korea eight years prior and had run the barbershop for most of that time, but his nostalgia for the fresh produce and ethnic foods of his homeland partially had him longing to return. He went on to tell me, “Sometimes it’s hard to deal with Koreans, as soon as they find out that you are from Africa their attitude changes.”

According to Koreanbrand.net, the district of Itaewon-dong is home to 3 multicultural communities: African Street, Muslim Town, and African-American Town. On one hand, Itaewon is known for having the highest concentration of black residents in Korea, but on the surface Itaewon is more commonly known as the “Foreigner district” of Seoul. Over the years, Itaewon has mostly catered to U.S. military personnel with a high concentration of shops, restaurants, dance clubs, bars, hostess bars, and brothels. This has left the area with a negative image among Koreans as a seedy place with a propensity for crime and violence. Day time in Itaewon represents a foreigner friendly zone where various ethnic foods can be tasted, designer fake goods are in abundance, and walking the streets feels like a cosmopolitan island in a sea of ethnic homogeneity. Itaewon at night is a different story. Loud music, intoxicated soldiers spilling out of bars and clubs, military police foot patrols, and the catcalls of prostitutes hidden behind partially open doorways, envelope the area during the late night hours.



Figure 4: "Itaewon Murder Case" Movie Poster (2009).

Itaewon's association with foreigners makes it synonymous with crime in the overall Korean social imaginary. (See figure 4.) A recent blockbuster Korean film, *itaewon salinsagon* or *Itaewon Murder Case* (2009), reignited suspicion of foreigners and the Itaewon district with its portrayal of a still unsolved murder case of a 22 year-old Korean college student who was stabbed to death in a Burger King restaurant. Allegedly, by two American teenagers of whom the prime suspect fled to America and is to this day unable to be prosecuted by Korean authorities due to a loophole in US extradition laws. "Many South Koreans [have said] their fear of foreigners-particularly American soldiers-has kept them from shopping or eating in Itaewon (Rowland 2009.)" 27 year-old Byun Ji-Hong reflected on his first visit to Itaewon in December 2008: "It's scuzzier, filthier, messier and poorer than I expected,' said Byun, who came to Itaewon to help a friend buy a fake Christian Dior leather jacket. His friend expected to spend

about \$300, compared to \$1,200 for a real Dior. He said, '*the area will become nicer when the U.S. troops leave Seoul*' (Rowland 2009.)"

The Yongsan garrison, of U.S. military personnel, is scheduled to be relocated to the city of Pyongtaek to the South of Seoul by 2012 and with these plans in mind, the Yongsan district office has begun a gentrification project in Itaewon that has steadily gained momentum from 2007. The impact of Korea's national brand status in 2008 and its emphasis on the foreigner's perspective has also jumpstarted the revitalization of the most notorious foreigners' district in Korea. The plans include opening high end name brand fashion stores along the main Itaewon thoroughfare, various beautification projects such as new sidewalks and storefronts, inviting upscale restaurants to open in the area, developing high-end residential areas, and "turn the garrison into a massive park that business owners say will draw more South Koreans to the area (Rowland 2009.)"

The number of Africans living in the Itaewon area has been on a steady incline over the past decade. "A total of 706 Africans were registered as residents in Itaewon in 2009, a sharp increase from 385 in 2004, according to the Yongsan Ward office (Park 2010.)" The vast majority is composed of Nigerians who make up 70% of the total number. 2010 marked the first year that the number of African residents in the Itaewon area had significantly "declined [by] 18.8 percent (Lee 2010.)"

The reason for the exodus is not due to illegal aliens leaving Korea because the official count from the Yongsan district office is of legally residing Africans, but more so due to African residents relocating to other foreigner friendly districts in the greater Seoul area in order to gain an overall better quality of life. More and more longtime African residents of Itaewon are

finding it difficult to remain in the place that *Koreanbrand.net* has designated as a multiculturally specified “African” zone. Yongsan district officials believe that a “large-scale crackdown on Nigerians and other African nationals in November [2009] to apprehend those who had overstayed their visas or were suspected of being involved in terrorist groups ahead of the G20 summit [in] November [2010] was the main cause of the exodus (Lee 2010.)” However, the Honorable Enoch Davis Obinna (president of the Nigeria Community in South Korea) suggests that many Nigerians in the Itaewon area are leaving because the recent re-development project in the surrounding area has caused soaring costs of living and also due to unjustified discrimination. “Just because we are Nigerians, we are asked to pay the security deposit twice as big as the one other nationals pay. Itaewon is a great place for us to live. But, it has become too expensive to stay in the area (Lee 2010.)” He goes on to cite difficulties with stereotypes and racial profiling when dealing with Immigration officials in the city, “The Seoul office is known to take a harsher stance toward us [Nigerians] (Lee 2010.)” Another African worker from Mali expressed his discontent with the social stigma of being ‘African’ in Korea, “Korean people think that all of Africans are AIDS patients. Korean television reports that AIDS are diffused all over the Africa. Therefore Korean people avoid Africans (Han P169.)” This type of stereotype is not something new for Africans residing in Seoul and the cultural diversity of Itaewon has served as a refuge from mainstream racism, but as Africans disperse further into the periphery of Seoul, only time will tell if attitudes towards them progress.

Discrimination against blacks in Korea has taken an interesting divergence since the homecoming of Korean/African-American football star Hines Ward in 2005. African-Americans in the Itaewon area are typically U.S. military personnel along with a growing number of English-as-a-second language instructors and foreign exchange students. The image of African-

Americans in Korea is largely reinforced by the US entertainment and sports industry where musical talent, dancing ability, and athleticism are the norm. Many of the vendors who line the main street of Itaewon sell sports jerseys, baseball caps, and oversized belt buckles to a readily absorbing clientele of US military personnel, Africans, Koreans, and tourists alike who identify with popular hip hop aesthetics. Some of these same images hold true in the typically smoke filled dance clubs of Itaewon where many African-Americans can be found in specific clubs that cater to hip-hop and RnB music such as UN Club and Bedlam. What is interesting to note is that alongside many of the African Americans in the dance clubs are also Africans who look nearly identical in physical appearance with baseball hats, jeans, and Nike shoes. The major difference can be identified in their speech, which still carries an African accent underneath the subtle ebonic twang. On the streets of Itaewon, the line between the physical appearance of an African and an African-American is commonly blurred. Aside from traditional dress for special occasions, many of Itaewon's Africans have adopted the outer appearance of African-American urban styles and in doing so may possibly help them to dodge certain negative stereotypes while navigating the city of Seoul. "In fact, many African workers from Anglophone countries introduce themselves as American. They experience totally different responses from Koreans. One Nigerian worker said, "Koreans adore Americans! American blacks are treated in a different way (Han 169.)"

This phenomenon of sharing identity cues is explained by the social exchange theory, popularized by George Homans, which posits that human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis. For Africans in Itaewon, social exchange is undergone in their physical and verbal adoption of African-American aesthetics. The cost is rather minimal because the basic phenotypic characteristics are already in place. The benefit is the more positive

association of African-American *blackness* over the negative association of being an African in Korean society.

African-Americans, in relation to U.S. military personnel, are not associated with permanence because of their fixed period of duty stations that usually change every 2 to 3 years. For U.S. military personnel, Itaewon is seen as a leisure area, while for Africans it is a residence and diasporic enclave. This holds true in the Korea social imaginary where Africans in Itaewon are seen as more of a permanent fixture who are trying to take jobs, escape poverty, and generally bring a sense of low socio-economic baggage (*i.e. HIV*) from their less developed home country. Where on the other hand, African-Americans are still considered a part of the larger U.S. military presence which represents American influence in Korea that is the rallying point for anti-American sentiments such as the beef issue along with many others (Choe 2008.) Overall, US military personnel in Itaewon make up a large consumer base that is a major part of the local economy and in recent times, a consumer base that will soon be leaving the area when the Yongsan garrison completes its scheduled relocation. This leaves the African community in an interesting predicament. The *Koreanbrand.net* website lists Itaewon as a multicultural zone where it is implied that there is an abundance of Africans and African-Americans. With the closure of the Yongsan base in 2012, it is most likely that the African-American contingent of Itaewon will drastically decrease. This leaves the African population as the last black ethnic group to enculturate the area, but the continuing intensification of the gentrification project coupled with the exit of the U.S. military will most likely see the area evolve into an upscale shopping district with multicultural restaurants visited by mainly Koreans. One can only speculate if the African community of Itaewon will be able to survive in their established

community with the rising costs of living and re-development of the area or maybe follow the current trend of relocating to other so called “foreigner districts” in the greater Seoul periphery.

### **Chatting with Beauties: foreign women and ideals of beauty**

Last year in Seoul, I was having a late night snack of ramen noodles with a Korean classmate at a local shop visited by mostly taxi drivers. As I ate my hot noodles, I watched a late night Korean sitcom on the television. In it, a middle-aged Korean man was lying in bed dreaming about being awakened by a young, blonde, Caucasian woman in a bikini. My classmate joked, “We called that *baekmal* (white horse), its every Korean guys dream to ride the white horse.” At this point, the television had the attention of everyone in the noodle shop, including the female proprietor who quickly changed the channel.

During the past decade, the growth of the international community in Korea inspired the Korean Broadcasting Station’s (KBS) creation of the Korean hit television show: *Minyeodeului suda* formally known as “Global Talk Show,” but more commonly called “Chatting with Beauties.” The show first aired in October 2006 with the intention of showcasing young foreign women living, working, and studying in Korea. They discuss their experiences in Korean culture and society with the exclusive use of Korean language. “Although these programs have been criticized for limiting topics to the trivialities of everyday life and for occasionally airing risqué remarks, they offered sharp critiques of Korean culture from foreign perspectives, thereby enhancing the possibilities of constructive cross-cultural interactions (Han P32.)” The first series

of shows featured mainly western and eastern European women with a small contingent of women from other Asian countries. As this highly popular bi-weekly show continued to evolve, the foreign cast members became celebrities in their own right, soon leaving the show to pursue other entertainment related ventures such as modeling, acting, and singing. In 2008, “Chatting with Beauties” had gained a new cast of fluent Korean speaking young foreign women from a wider pool of ethnic backgrounds than in the previous year. By 2009, coinciding with Korea’s nation branding campaign, even more ethnically diverse women from countries such as Cameroon, Thailand, Malaysia, Nepal, India, and Colombia, occupied dominant positions on the show. The popularity of the show was also compounded by the frequency of male celebrity Korean actors and pop music stars who would discuss questions, such as “what do you like/dislike about Korean men” or “how do you say, ‘I love you’ in your native language?” As the show’s popularity increased, the Korean Broadcasting Station produced an alternative show of the same format, but this time featuring a panel of fluent Korean speaking young foreign men involved in similar banter. By the time of its last episode in December 2010, the evolution of “Chatting with Beauties” reflected a change in the social atmosphere of acceptability in regards to foreigners of different ethnicities.

Taking a closer look at the chronology of the television series “Chatting with Beauties” shows an initial correlation and then a later transformation of norms in the Korean social imaginary. The title of the show, *minyoduelui suda*, literally translates to “Talks with Beautiful women.” Thus indicating that the women featured on the show represented an ideal of beauty in the Korean sense. The emphasis on western looking women in the first year of the program kept in line with already established notions of beauty that were prevalent in Korea’s popular culture. Physical features such as large round eyes with double eye lids, pointed nose, and a strong chin

have been highly eroticized in Korean culture by celebrity actresses who have commonly undergone plastic surgery to achieve previously uncommon looks among the Korean populace. Today, cosmetic surgery is so common place in Korean society that students are often rewarded with cosmetic procedures as graduation gifts from their parents (Ko 2002.) The idealized look tends to follow Eurocentric standards of beauty that have been ingrained through globalized media saturation of western influence. This diverges from pre-Korean War notions of beauty that were highlighted by an oval face and small features as described in Yi Kwang su's novel *Mujong*.



**Figure 5: *Minyoduelui suda* 2007**

The original panel of western women on “Chatting with Beauties” exemplified the Korean male gaze in regards to the eroticization of foreign women. This is explained by the “Charisma Man effect,” a derivative of the contrast effect theory, which describes an average (typically Caucasian) foreigner in an Asian country to be viewed as inherently exotic, attractive and charismatic due to the contrast of their physical appearance when compared to the norm in

the host society. This is derived from the “Charisma Man” comic series that popularized the adventures of a skinny nerd-like western man in Japan who transforms into the muscular, fluent Japanese speaking, and universally charming Charisma Man when around Japanese women. Statistically, Korea’s population of foreign women still make up less than one percent compared to the total population and western women comprise a fraction of that. This vacuum of western women, who are stereotypically viewed in a similar context as western media icons such as Paris Hilton and Britney Spears, makes them highly prized by Korean males. Some of Korea’s largest internet sites, namely “naver.com” and “daum.net” have café type blog/chat rooms entitled “ilovewhitegirl” and “meetwhite,” the latter having over 14,000 members as well as a “tips and info” section. Considering this type of atmosphere, it is easy to see how “Chatting with Beauties” was readily absorbed by some segments of Korea’s mass audience. But, as the demographic of foreigners in Seoul evolved, so did the cast of the show.

In 2008/2009, as the foreign cast of “Chatting with Beauties” began to expand to compensate for the loss of previous panelists who moved on to other celebrity ventures, the panels became more ethnically diverse thereby branching out from euro-centrism and adopting a preference for multiculturalism and hybridity. This signified an emerging trend that coincided with nation brand marketing strategies that emphasized Korea as a “Global Village” and a diverse multicultural community. Popular panelists began to include women of mixed heritage such as Japanese-Polish (Eva Popiel), Korean-Japanese (Saori Chang), Equadorian-Korean (Diana Kwon), and a whole slew of ethnically mixed Asian/Russian/Tartar women from countries in the central Asia region such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan (KBS TV 2006.) Many of these panelists have since rode the wave of their celebrity and moved on to become actresses and models in the Korean entertainment industry.



Figure 6: *Minyoduelui suda* 2009

At the same time, young women of color began to take more active roles on the program. Leslie Benfield (USA), Punam Neupane (Nepal), Krista Kamga Yuen (Cameroon), Monica Samal (India), and Meaza Eshetu (Ethiopia), to name a few, are women whose prominence on the program displayed an alternative example of beauty that contrasted from earlier norms (KBS TV 2006.) Earlier in the decade, the female K-pop group “The Bubble Sisters” had showcased some of the underlying Korean stereotypes of black women by performing in blackface caricatures. Unwittingly associating black physical features with ugliness by describing their look as an attempt “to undermine the typical Korean band, who are pretty, but don’t have any talent (Temidire 2003.)”

One of the most interesting evolutions of “Chatting with Beauties” was the introduction of a foreign male panel towards the end of 2009. The popular TV show once dominated by the male gaze had upgraded to accommodate the female gaze. This was a completely groundbreaking event in terms of the multicultural image of Korea because it was the first time that a group of ethnically diverse foreign men were exoticized on Korean national television. Gender bias has long been an issue in Korea due to the traditional foundation of Confucian values and its control over the female body. Male privilege has dominated the social arena in the sense that a foreign woman seen with a Korean man is looked at as exotic, while a Korean woman with a foreign man is thought of as morally questionable. The emergence of foreign men as counterparts to the foreign women on “Chatting with Beauties” shows the culmination of a gradual change of perspective on the level of national media. Beneath the surface, the statement that is being made is that inter-cultural relationships between men and women in Korea are socially acceptable within the ideals of attractiveness, wit, and most of all- fluency in Korean language. This notion of the acceptability of inter-cultural relationships is showcased by the program in an idealized circumstance where there is a level of safety provided by the overall entertainment context of the interactions. “Chatting with Beauties” gives an example of a positive multicultural experience that is brought to Korean audiences in the comfort their living rooms, but may not necessarily reflect the ground floor progress associated with inter-cultural relationships when considering the realities of pre-existing social stigmas.

There is a disconnection between the status of the foreign women on “Chatting with Beauties” and “foreign brides” found in Korea. The foreign women on the show have come to Korea by their own means, are independent, usually students, are familiar with Korean culture, and are fluent in Korea language. All choices freely decided by independent women whose stay

in Korea is full of options. This contrasts from the typical “foreign bride” who has come to Korea out of necessity, must learn Korean out of necessity, must assimilate out of necessity, and are expected to serve their husbands out of necessity. The images of the foreign women in “Chatting with Beauties” do not realistically reflect the majority of foreign women who permanently reside in Korea as foreign brides. In some ways, the show creates an illusory image of the average foreign woman in Korea, but in other ways the show poses an ideal of an independent new woman (*sinyoja*) that foreign brides from poor countries may strive to achieve.

### ***Assimilation vs. Cultural Retention***

Foreign residents in Korea face a number of push-pull factors in regards to assimilating into Korean society. Questions arise such as, “What constitutes *Koreaness*? What level of attachment is there towards the homeland/native culture? Where is the threshold between assimilation and cultural retention? How much can someone integrate in to Korean society without discarding their native culture? There are no easy answers to these questions.

Foreigners come to Korea for different reasons and while some reside temporarily, others are permanent transplants. But, for every foreigner living in Korea, the challenges of *otherness* in the face of an ethnically homogenous majority can be navigated by adapting in some degree to the hostland. The level of this adaptation can be measured within the scope of *Koreaness*.

For the purposes of this research, *Koreaness* can be defined as the overarching qualities that constitute a Korean person thereby allowing one entrance into the socio-cultural order of the nation. In the traditional sense, Koreaness has been defined by the shared trauma (*Han*) that the Korean people have endured throughout its history: 16<sup>th</sup> Century Imjin (Japanese) Invasion, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Japanese colonialism, the Korean War, and subsequent authoritarian regimes. Also, the emphasis on pure-blood and connective family lineage has been credited with sustaining a prolonged cultural revival that has considerably outlasted the threat of Japanese assimilationist policies.

Nowadays, in a free world democratic Korean nation (aside from North Korea), the once seemingly concrete notion of *Koreaness* is becoming re-defined in response to globalization, multiculturalism, and modernity. “Koreans today do not base their perceptions of ‘Koreaness’ on bloodline or ethnicity alone (Choe P26.)” In the 2008 Journal *Koreana*, Dr. Hyun Choe describes the findings of a survey of Seoulites ranging from ages 20-30s who were questioned on the requisites for being recognized as a Korean. The aim of the survey was to find out what factors (i.e. bloodline, political/legal, personal) were most important in defining national identity. The results showed that the majority of respondents chose “Thinks of himself as a Korean” and “Has attained Korean citizenship” as determining legal and personal factors, followed by the ability to speak the Korean language (Choe P25.)” Furthermore, over 50 percent of those interviewed believed that, like the United States, anyone born on Korean soil should be given Korean citizenship. Another defining factor of *Koreanness*, for Korean men, is compulsory military service. This rite of passage for Korean men was previously exclusive to ethnic Koreans leaving “those who look distinctively biracial [to be] exempted from service (Lee 2009.)” Since January 2011, the lifting of the exemption of mixed-blood or non-ethnic naturalized citizens in

serving in the military indicates a re-imagining of *Koreanness*. A new image defined by citizenship, speaking ability, and self-determination instead of bloodline alone. An image continuously being re-defined with the rise in international marriages and mixed-blood children.

The pressure to break out of the mold of novelty by conforming to the status quo can be an easy task for a foreign exchange student, but for foreign brides, the expectations are enormous. Foreign women often leave their native country to begin a new life with a Korean spouse that they hardly know while also in an unfamiliar land (Kim P41.) The wide spread popularity of *Hallyu* (The Korean Wave) has broadcast a dynamic Korea that can be enticing for some, but the main motivation for foreign brides is the allure of a better quality of life with financial security. The prize for Korean men is a “wife.” Finding a spouse was once easily orchestrated through traditional arrangement or even through the contemporary student environment, but nowadays it has become commonly difficult for Korean men to find a wife after reaching post-college age. This is especially true for rural farmers in Korea’s countryside. However, international marriages are also growing in urban areas as well. Many of the foreign brides come from less developed nations in the Asia/Southeast Asia region. Countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, China, and Mongolia are popular destinations for Korean marriage brokerage agencies. Korean Television programs have helped to exoticize foreign women by highlighting how easily they adapt to life in Korea. Brokerage firms have added to these stereotypes by labeling Vietnamese women as having traditional Confucian values and Filipino women as having traditional Christian values therefore making them ideal spouses for traditionally minded Korean men. Many international marriages place a heavy expectation on the wife to conform to the stereotypes of docile domesticity. This can prove to be problematic because many of these foreign women are leaving their countries full of ambition and with hopes of achieving the

“Korean Dream.” Moreover, marriage brokers have been likened to human traffickers in the sense that foreign brides are commodified for profit. Until recently, the absence of regulation and proper screening of marriage brokerage companies led to unstable (mentally ill) men abusing their brides and sometimes committing murder (Park 2011.) The biggest barriers for new foreign brides are language and general cultural differences. In 2010, “12,500 divorce suits were filed with the [Family] court and 42.4 percent, or 5,300 cases, were between husbands and wives of different nationalities (Lee 2011.)” The Korean government seeks to remedy this situation by saturating funding into multicultural support centers in areas with a high frequency of international marriages.

“As most married immigrants have been found to be suffering from linguistic difficulties, social prejudice and discrimination, as well as difficulties concerning child education, the Center for Multicultural Families (under the Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs) has been working to create an infrastructure to help incorporate multicultural families into society and to provide services, such as Korean language education to help them adapt to society (*koreabrand.net.*)

These support centers provide a means of facilitating the assimilation of foreign brides in to Korean culture through language, cooking, and culture courses. “However, what the Korean government wants from the multicultural family is a family based on traditional family values, that is, one that upholds patriarchy and emphasizes reproduction (Kim P101.)” Having mix-blood children compounds the pressure for foreign brides to assimilate into Korean society because the government is going to great lengths to consider mixed-blood children as official Koreans and consequently raise them as such. One of the critiques of assimilating foreign brides is the common practice of officially changing their names to Korean names. The children of foreign brides almost always have traditional Korean names as well. The pressure for assimilation and the multicultural support network are viewed by the Korean government as

necessary for family unity, but beneath the surface, the efforts show an uncanny resemblance to the assimilationist policies of the Japanese colonial era.

“Multiculturalism” is a word that reflects the gaze of the hostland (Korea) upon other ethnicities that reside in the country. Using the word “Diaspora” better reflects the lens of Korea’s ethnic other in terms of how they relate to Korean society as a community. Taking a step out of the multicultural box and examining Korea’s ethnic communities from a diasporic perspective allows for an inverted look into how multicultural people navigate within Korean society. According to Kim Butler, a group’s diaspora status can be distinguished within “five dimensions of research (Butler 2001)”:

- 1) Reasons for, and conditions of, the dispersal
- 2) Relationship with homeland
- 3) Relationship with hostlands
- 4) Inter-relationships within communities of the diaspora
- 5) Comparative studies of different diasporas

In order to explain Butler’s model for diasporic study in relation to Korea, I refer to the example of the African Diaspora in Seoul’s Itaewon district. African’s have been migrating to Korea since the 1990s in search of better opportunities than what is available in their homeland. Although many Africans in Korea have come to fill labor positions, many of them “had received some kind of college level education (Han P166.)” The “Korean Dream” is the reasoning for the dispersal because many migrants who have returned to Africa do so with economic success built by capital earned while working abroad.

For Africans in Itaewon, the relationship with the homeland is one of nostalgia and (aside from permanent residents) eventual return. Many Africans maintain close networks with their home countries in order to establish trade businesses. “Making a container” is viewed as one of the most lucrative investments where usually used cars, auto parts, computers and electronics are sent back to the homeland to be sold for a profit. Africans in Itaewon make a clear cultural distinction by forming community organizations such as “The Nigerian Community in South Korea” and “The Ghanaian Union Association.” An example of the inter-relationship between communities of the diaspora can be found in the network of Itaewon’s African street. Africa Street is home to a variety of African restaurants, shops, and churches, and acts as an open networking arena where jobs can be found, information can be exchanged, and relationships can be formed.

The African diaspora in Korea have often found it difficult to navigate society due to the negative imagery associated with Africa in the Korean social imaginary. “Whenever they introduce themselves as African, Korean people relate Africa to poverty, famine, and tribal war (Han P168.)” In Itaewon, many of the established African residents speak, at the very least, basic Korean, while other’s I have met have taken specific university level courses designed for foreign learners and are fluent beyond my imagination. This signifies a functional level assimilation with the hostland that is done out of basic necessity rather than coerced.

Compared to Filipinos, the African diaspora in Korea receive much less multicultural support from government resources. The population of residents from African nations living in Itaewon is currently near 1000, just a fraction of the Filipino population known to frequent the Hyeonwa cathedral and Sunday market. Also, the frequency of foreign marriages between Africans and Koreans is also extremely low compared to Filipinos. For the majority of inter-

ethnic marriages that do occur between Africans and Koreans, it is usually an African man marrying a Korean woman, as opposed to Korean men marrying Filipino brides. Both Filipino and African communities have a migrant worker foundation, but the difference lies in the frequency of multicultural marriages which determine the level of assimilation vs. cultural retention.

The threshold between assimilation and cultural retention is distinguished by the individual role of foreign diaspora in Korea. On one hand, a foreign bride invested in marriage and family will have more pressure to assimilate into Korean culture than a migrant worker. On the other hand, a migrant worker will be more inclined to integrate into Korean society while retaining their culture as their goal is to one day return to their homeland. However, both foreign brides and migrant workers share a commonality by maintaining social networks with other diaspora in the local community and sending money back to their homeland.

For Africans and other non-Koreans who are distinctively unable to phenotypically pass as Korean/Asian, the idea of assimilation leans more towards integration. Especially when considered outside of marriage and children. Beginning in 2011, prospective migrant workers must pass a higher level Korean language proficiency test than in previous years (Ha 2011). This further illustrates the emphasis placed on language ability when considering potential candidates for entry into the Korean work force, and subsequent integration into Korean society. Many permanently residing foreign residents in Korea have achieved fluency in the Korean language, and also attained a general understanding of Korean culture, but still maintain grounding in their native culture. This is true for many Arab restaurateurs and business persons who regularly attend Seoul's Central mosque. Acculturation becomes the key issue in regards to how foreign residents integrate in to Korean society without completely diverging from their native traditions

and values as found in growing popularity of ethnic restaurants and multicultural districts in the Seoul metropolitan area. Here, native culture is exchanged with the host culture through the medium of ethnic foods and acts as a safe introduction to foreign cultures.

In Korea, cultural enclaves serve as an important link to the homeland. In recent years, Korean sponsored events aimed at fostering cultural exchange by highlighting foreign cultural uniqueness have shown support for cultural retention. Events in Seoul such as the “Annual Migrants Festival,” “The Migrant Worker Film Festival,” and the “Ms. Multicultural Society Beauty Pageant” have shown a surface level trend for tolerance of other ethnic groups that have become a mainstay in Korea’s metropole. Although, the underlying notion involved in these types of multiculturally specific events is that migrant workers and foreign brides are not as inclined to participate in traditional Korean cultural events do to a lack of cultural relevance. For the Filipino community, there is the Hyehwa Cathedral and Sunday market. For the African community, Itaewon’s “African street” is the cultural anchor. Both distinct cultural zones provide the basis for an imagined community separate from the homeland where “the nation is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (Anderson P6.)” Established multicultural zones carve out a semi-indigenous space in a foreign land by offering an oasis of native food, language, a public sphere, and a connection to goods and services that cater to the needs of diaspora.

## *Media Influence and Collective Behavior*



**Figure 7: Korean Taxi driver watching DMB TV while driving.**

In his 2011 State of the Union address, President Barack Obama declared, “South Korean homes now have greater Internet access than we do (McDonald 2011.)” This statement only served to reinforce the position of Korea as having the world’s fastest Internet service and the most wired homes (Lowe-Lee 2010.) It is safe to say that Koreans are well acquainted with the Internet. From Professional video gamers that earn salaries on par with sports stars to kids learning to speak English, the Internet is utilized in a myriad of ways throughout everyday life. The Internet is not the only media source in Korea’s light speed technological arsenal. Digital Media Broadcasting (DMB) is a free national television service that is subsidized by the Korean

government. No cables or monthly bills are necessary. Anyone with a DMB capable cellphone, laptop, tablet etc...can watch television 24 hours a day. Koreans watch DMB TV in places unimaginable to most Americans. On the bus, in the train, in the taxi, while driving the car, and walking down the street. This abundance of media access signifies Korea's close relationship with media phenomenon whose information can be shared en masse like never before.

This process is explained by the media effects theory which proposes that mass media can affect how its audiences think and behave (Bryant, Oliver P254.) In this view, the saturation of media exposure in Korea can influence an attentive public. A narrower version of media effects theory is the hypodermic needle theory which suggests that "mass media has a direct, immediate, and powerful effect on its audiences (Bryant,Oliver P114.)" Applied to the Korean context, the hypodermic needle theory only describes the media aspect of the perceived social consciousness, but the audience aspect is explained by the collective consciousness theory popularized by Emile Drukheim. Collective consciousness theory hypothesizes that "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own (Allen P108.)" In the Korean context, this means that the collective consciousness of the Korean people is an independent entity that is characterized by shared beliefs. This is why social movements have consistently evolved throughout Korea's modern history and the receptiveness of social commentary in media has led to heightened awareness when it comes to national issues. An example of Korea's collective consciousness can be found in its history of trauma and its modern day embodiment: *Han*. *Han* can best be described as a sullen state of mind that reflects on Korea's traumatic past as universally identifiable by all Koreans. Some Korean scholars suggest that *Han* can be compared to African-American feelings of struggle in regards to the hundreds of years of slavery compounded with Jim Crow and a lack

of civil rights (Lie P5.) Korean taxi drivers may throw punches at one another over a fender bender, or middle-aged women may yell at each other on the street for trivial annoyances, but as last November has shown with North Korea's mortar attack on South Korea's Yeongpyeong island, when a traumatic event occurs, all bets are off and the interests of the people, embodied as a whole, take precedent.

The March 1, 1919 independence movement saw the mobilization of a million Koreans' in the face of Japanese oppression. The democratic revolution of 1987 saw millions of people across the entire country band together to challenge the government. The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis (aka IMF Crisis) caused "legions of workers to be laid off and prompted citizens to donate their gold to the national treasury. It was a collective trauma that is remembered [in Korea] on the scale of the Great Depression in the United States (Fackler 2011.)" All these historical events point toward the presence of an underlying collective consciousness that has its basis in the welfare of the nation. This suggests that every Korean should do their part in bettering the nation.

The combination of these two theoretical concepts, the hypodermic needle theory and the collective consciousness theory, describe a correlation with the level of media coverage surrounding an issue and a resulting change in societal views. By framing the four examples discussed in this paper (Little Manila, Bus Incident, Itaewon Revival, and Chatting with Beauties) within the theories of media effect and collective consciousness, it can be inferred that high level media support can influence an adjustment of the Korean social outlook towards an issue. With this in mind, the overarching reach of the Presidential Council on Nation Branding guides the issues of multicultural awareness, tolerance, acceptance and support as important factors in the

national agenda and therefore makes them synonymous with the progress of the nation in the social imaginary.

The example of the proposed closure of Little Manila's Sunday Market shows how the combined voice of the Filipino community has become strong and unified. Especially in vocalizing the cultural significance of the established Sunday Market in being an integral component of church related Filipino tradition. The involvement of the media coupled with the petition campaign and Philippine embassy support brought the issue in to the public sphere. Although there was a slight disconnect between the local Jongno district office and the national agenda concerning multicultural support, the Jongno office eventually backed down from its proposal, showing a continuity of the nation brand agenda. But, they didn't leave without making an imprint. The new regulations stating that only Filipinos who are married to Koreans are allowed to sell goods in the market applies a Korean legal framework that mirrors the national citizenship policy on to the Filipino market that was previously governed by Filipinos as an autonomous once a week entity. The case of the Little Manila closure exemplifies mid-level media attention which caused a sufficient amount of social awareness to result in a top-down change.

The bus incident in July 2009 was the first the real test of the Presidential Council on Nation Branding's resolve in regards to taking a ground level issue concerning both multiculturalism and Korean's own perceptions of foreigners, and addressing it at a national level. The media wave that followed the incident was in direct contrast with the image of multicultural harmony that the council was trying to promote. The high level of media saturation and sensationalism was pivotal in bringing the issues of "racial insult" to the center stage of Korea's public sphere. Although the bus incident involved only a hand full of people, its

implications for social justice included the greater multicultural community. The government's response of initiating concrete action vis-à-vis tough new laws designed to protect people from public racism and discrimination serve as a high level example to a readily absorbing nation that these types of occurrences are unjustified, and will no longer be tolerated.

The case of Itaewon's revival and African exodus gives an example of low level media coverage. Itaewon's gentrification agenda is a common theme that is taking place around many of Seoul's aging districts. Korea's compressed modernity and elevated economic status has created a market for bourgeois re-development. This is especially the case with the Itaewon area because of its years of negative connotation with the U.S. military, foreigners, crime and violence. Positive media imagery surrounding the revitalization of the Itaewon area subconsciously underscores the desire for improving the area in order for Koreans to re-claim a space that has been previously dominated by foreigners. The situation with the African population declining in the Itaewon area is not major news in the media because it is not a forced action dictated by legalities or policy, but it does signify a continuity of the status quo. Africans who have carved out a cultural enclave are being driven out with the use of "soft power" and micro-aggression. Discrimination is nothing new to Africans in Seoul, but the pressure to increase their earning potential in order to keep up with rising housing and rental costs in response to gentrification is pushing them out of their established multicultural zone. In this case the media offers up two ideas about the situation: 1. Improving the Itaewon area is good for Korean people. 2. If Africans wish to stay in the Itaewon area amidst rising costs, then they must take the responsibility of making the proper financial adjustments themselves, just like everybody else.

“Chatting with Beauties” gives an example of how the evolution of a popular television program through prolonged media exposure can reflect and influence a similar evolution of societal views in the Korean social imaginary. Through positive imagery, the show relays the underlying message that inter-racial relationships are acceptable. The show provided Koreans with an opportunity to become familiar with foreigners in a casual setting: sitting at home watching TV and in Korean language. The show also offered Korean viewers an alternative to previous notions of beauty by including the glamorization of non-western ethnic women as educated, witty, and physically attractive. Moreover, the introduction of a panel of foreign men in the program showed Korean viewers that it is acceptable for Korean women to be in an inter-racial relationship with non-Korean men as long as it meets with the right circumstances (*i.e. fluent in Korean, Tall, educated.*)

## ***Conclusion***

In the conclusion of Gi-Wook Shin’s book *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (2006), Shin poses a suggestion to Korea’s emerging multicultural future by saying, “Koreans need an institutional framework to promote a democratic national identity that would allow for more diversity and flexibility among the populace, rather than simply appeal to an ethnic consciousness that tends to encourage a false uniformity and enforce conformity to it (Shin P235.)” In the aspect of multiculturalism, the Presidential Council on Nation Branding has become the embodiment of Shin’s notion by providing oversight to an overarching institutional

network. Ironically, the end goal for the Council is an overall higher rating on Simon Anholt's Nation Branding Index in the years to come, instead of promoting a democratic national identity as Shin proposes. Never the less, historical notions of a mono-ethnic national identity are being challenged and re-constructed to fit a growing multicultural reality in modern Korea. The case studies reviewed show an emerging trend of multicultural awareness when it comes to subjects that are exposed to a high level of media saturation. Depending on the desired result, media exposure can bring issues involving multiculturalism to national attention, resulting in both top-down and ground-up changes that dually serve as an example of proper conduct to the Korean masses and serve as an example of the power of media in amplifying the voice of multicultural minorities.

The example of the "Little Manila Sunday Market" shows how the Filipino's investment of social capital in their multicultural area was collectively enough to keep their traditions alive in their established space. Bonojit Hussain's conviction in challenging the status quo of everyday racism was captured by the media and showed Korean society that "racial insult" is an injustice that has a clear definition and punishment. The "Little Manila" and "Bus Incident" cases show the dynamics of how the multicultural voice can enact change from the ground-up. The issue of Itaewon and the growing pressure for Africans to leave gives is special case showing the limits of supporting multicultural communities within the scope of advancing gentrification and rising rents. Africans' in Itaewon face inequality when vying for social mobility in Korean society, but are expected to face economic challenges on equal terms as any other Korean citizen. The "Chatting with Beauties" television show exemplifies how images of foreign women are idealized by the media, and evolve following the multicultural trends on the ground and in the national brand campaign agenda- showcasing alternative notions of beauty and

acceptability to Korean audiences. Both, “Chatting with Beauties” and the Presidential Council on Nation Branding give examples of top-down initiatives working toward multicultural awareness because they originate at the national media level and the national government level respectively. *Koreaness* is becoming an inorganic trait that can be learned through language, cultural familiarity, and self-determination. Diasporic communities face the challenge of finding an acceptable threshold between assimilation and cultural retention which is dictated by the level of investment an individual has in Korea such as permanent residence (foreign bride) or temporary residence (migrant worker.) Taking all of the factors mentioned in this paper in to consideration, multiculturalism in modern Korea is proven to be a dynamic issue with many components. The term “multiculturalism” does not represent a static issue, but more so becomes defined by the many aspects that continue to shape the demographics of Korea. The Presidential Council on Nation Branding has taken up the initiative of overseeing multicultural issues and the national media has mirrored this sentiment by bringing multiculturalism under the national lens. These two factors complemented with the analysis of the case studies and theories presented in this paper show an emerging social trend of multicultural awareness within Korean society.

Korea’s collective consciousness, as exemplified by the common term “우리”(woori meaning *us, we, our*), accepts cues from the media when issues pertain to the welfare of the country. When KBS news says that it is bad for the nation when people racially insult foreigners on the street, most people will listen. As the years pass, the buzz of the term “multiculturalism” will begin to die down, people of mixed-blood and permanent residents will be more visible not only in multicultural enclaves, but within the greater structure of Korean society. A report from the Center for Multicultural Korea estimates that “by 2050, one out of every 10 people in Korea will be a foreign resident (Eun 2010.)” Korea’s multi-ethnic future is inevitable. The current

trends in multicultural awareness and support reflect a growing flexibility on the part of the government and society. Korea is by no means a multicultural utopia, but with each step forward-the vision of a multicultural future gets ever brighter.

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