Multiculturalism and Interethnic Communication in Korea:
An Examination of the Context-Behavior Factors

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Abstract: Korean society, which once took pride in its ethnic homogeneity, is now struggling to embrace multiculturalism. As a society moving toward multiculturalism, South Korea needs a paradigm shift of political cultures and expanding cultural boundaries. Based on Kim's (1997, 2005) contextual theory of interethnic communication, the present study examines theoretical relationships between/among the factors of the Communicator [identity inclusivity (exclusivity), identity security (insecurity)] and the Behavior (associative/dissociative behavior) as well as ideological orientation in South Korea.

To collect the data, a structured questionnaire survey was used among 100 Korean adults in South Korea. The results show that the Korean respondents have strong and positive feelings toward their Korean identity. The overall ideological orientation among the respondents leans toward assimilationist viewpoints in the assimilation-pluralism continuum and integrationist viewpoints in the integrationism-separationism continuum. Those who consider their identity to be more flexible and inclusive are more likely to show more associative behavior toward people from a dissimilar ethnic background.

Keywords: Multiculturalism in Korea, interethnic communication, interethnic attitude, interethnic relationship, context-behavior interface, association and dissociation

1. Introduction

South Korea has been known as an ethnically and culturally homogeneous nation, which is exclusive to foreigners, with a policy of seclusion (Watson, 2010). For more than 50 years, the majority of foreign nationals who came to South Korea included missionaries, Peace Corps volunteers, business people, English teachers and migrant laborers. South Korean national ethos is nationalism with a strong sense of ethnicity and purity of race. In the years following the Korean War, South Korean ethnic nationalism grew an anti-communist sentiment, and national security has become first priority (Kim, 2011). Since then, the Korean economy has grown into the world's 15th largest economy (Naver, 2011). As a post-industrial society with a high degree of economic development, South Korea faces new challenges due to increasing cultural exposure and diversity.

Recently, Korean society is rapidly becoming multicultural due to increases in the numbers of migrant workers — prompted by a shortage of labor force as people tend to avoid the three "D" jobs ("difficult, dangerous, or dirty") — as well as immigrants due to international and transnational marriages (Chung & Kim, 2012) and children born to multicultural families (Korea

goes multicultural, 2012). According to sources, more than 45 million people left and entered South Korea in 2011 alone, and the number of foreigners staying in South Korea topped 1.4 million. Of those 1.4 million, 1.1 million are long-term immigrants, representing 2.2 percent of the Korean population. Nearly 49 percent of them are Korean-Chinese who moved back to their fatherland, followed by Americans at 9.5 percent, Vietnamese at 8.3 percent and Japanese at 4.2 percent (Korea goes multicultural, 2012). According to the Ministry of Justice, the proportion of foreign nationals is projected to be as large as five percent of the total population by 2020 (Kang, 2008). Indeed, South Korea, a traditionally homogeneous nation that has been proud of maintaining "pure blood" lineage, now has 1.1 million foreigners out of its population of 49 million (Lee, 2009).

As a multicultural society, South Korea needs a paradigm shift regarding political cultures and expanding cultural boundaries. This means redefining a national identity beyond ethno-cultural homogeneity while maintaining social stability (Chung & Kim, 2012). The crucial question is this: Is South Korea well prepared to address multiculturalism? It is sad to see that anyone who is both non-Korean and non-White generally faces hostility while non-Koreans who are White (generally American or European) are well treated, although still not seen as equal to Koreans (C.N., 2009). In addition, there is discrimination toward multicultural children. About 42 percent of students from multicultural families said they were taunted by classmates in a 2010 survey conducted by the National Human Rights Commission (Kim, 2012). South Korea is generally more open to ethnic diversity than other Asian nations with relatively small minority populations, like neighboring Japan. Nevertheless, it is still far from welcoming to these multicultural children, who are widely known here pejoratively as "Kosians," a compound of Korean and Asian (Fackler, 2009). Mixed marriages and relationships with non-White foreigners face even more prejudice and disdainful looks (Choe, 2009; Lee, 2009). The exclusivity of South Korea is clearly reflected in racism toward foreigners as clearly mentioned by Watson (2010): "The United Nations Committee for Elimination of Racial Discrimination identified South Korea as lacking appropriate measures and mechanisms for dealing with and respecting foreigners" (p. 338). In an attempt to explain this attitude toward foreigners, Seol Dong Hun, a sociologist at Chonbuk National University in South Korea said, "In South Korea, a country repeatedly invaded and subjugated by its bigger neighbors, people's racial outlooks have been colored by 'pure-blood' nationalism as well as traditional patriarchal mores" (Choe, 2009). This is related to South Korean traditional collectivism, rooted in Confucianism, and tends to highlight a monocultural membership. Considering family as the most important unit in one's social life, the collectivistic ideology tends to show strong favoritism towards ingroup members but is very exclusive towards outgroup members. Family is the primary in-group, fount of love, trust, loyalty, and protection. It also involves obedience. This strong sense of in-group membership based on blood ties is displayed by the way Koreans tend to live together in the same geographical region under an extended family system. This is very meaningful in maintaining one's social life (Khols, 2001; Shim, Kim & Martin, 2008).

To prepare for 21st century multiculturalism, it is necessary to investigate the opinions of Korean adults on interethnic relations in South Korea. In past studies, Kim's (1997, 2005) Contextual Theory of Interethnic Communication has been used to examine interethnic relations by focusing communication patterns among American adults and college students in

the United States (e.g., Kim, Kim, Duty & Yoshitake, 2002; Kim, McClure, Ogawa & Kim, 2003; Kim & Mckay-Semmler, 2014; Kim, Ogawa, Rainwater & Kim, 2003). The present analysis examines public opinions on interethnic relationships in South Korea, utilizing Kim's contextual theory of interethnic communication (1997, 2005). Particularly, the study examines the interrelationships among variables including relational openness and ethnic/interethnic identity theorized in Kim's theoretical model in a South Korea context.

2. Kim's Contextual Theory of Interethnic Communication

Based on an open-systems perspective, Kim's (1997, 2005) contextual theory of interethnic communication provides an account of how ethnicity plays out in interethnic encounters. Focusing on communication behaviors of individuals vis-à-vis ethnically different others, Kim's theory emphasizes that interethnic communication could be thoroughly understood and thereby take into account a set of societal, situational, and psychological forces. As such, the theory explains the dynamic interplay between the behaviors and contextual factors.

The basic structure and process of interethnic communication identified in Kim's theory is presented in the contextual model (see Figure 1). In this model, interethnic communication is not conceptualized as a specific analytic unit (or variable), but regarded as an entire system in which the behaviors and the contextual factors work together in a back-and-forth or circular interface of stimulus and response (Bateson, 1972). By placing behavior at the center of three layers of the three contextual factors, Kim proposes the dynamic interface of the (communication) *behavior* and three layers of external contextual factors: *the communicator, the situation, and the environment.* Under any given interethnic communication event, all contextual forces are perceived as influencing, and being influenced by, the nature of individual behaviors.
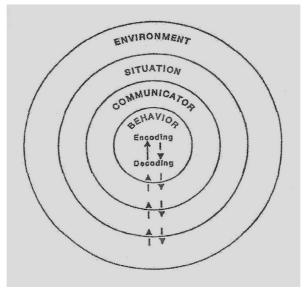

Figure 1. Kim's Contextual Model of Interethnic Communication (Source: Kim, 2005, p. 329)

2.1. The Behavior

Behavior is at the core of the matrix, which consists of a full spectrum of interethnic communication. This behavior spectrum includes not only overtly observable verbal or nonverbal encoding (message sent) activities, but also the intrapersonal cognitive and affective decoding (message received) process, which could be taking place within the individual and not disclosed to other communicators. These activities are viewed as the "stuff" of the communication process. Kim conceptually integrates these various encoding and decoding communication behaviors in terms of a bipolar continuum of association or dissociation according to their functions of enhancing the coming-together (association) or coming-apart (dissociation) of individuals in interethnic encounters. According to Kim, communicators in interethnic encounters act associatively when they are motivated to engage themselves in meaningful interactions, when they are attentive, when they perceive and respond to others as unique individuals rather than as representatives of an outgroup category, and when they display affirmative facial expressions, complementary or mirroring bodily movements, and personalized (rather than impersonal) speech patterns. These behaviors tend to facilitate the communication process by promoting mutual understanding, which leads to a cooperative, supportive, and coming-together relationship. In contrast, communication behaviors are regarded as dissociative when they are based on lack of interest, categorical, stereotypical, and depersonalized perceptions that accentuate group differences. Dissociative behaviors include many forms of divergent verbal and nonverbal behaviors that indicate psychological disengagement and negative emotions, contributing to misunderstanding, competition, conflict and a coming-apart relationship.

2.2. The Communicator

As the first layer of the context, the Communicator serves as the most immediate context link to associative/dissociative behaviors.

Two internal characteristics of the communicator include: (1) *identity inclusivity/exclusivity* and (2) *identity security/insecurity*. *Identity inclusivity/exclusivity* refers to the tendency of individuals to categorize themselves and others as ingroup or outgroup members. Inclusive identity orientation tends to serve as a cognitive and motivational basis of associative behavior, while exclusive identity orientation is closely related to a more rigid differentiation of oneself from others who are ethnically dissimilar or different. *Identity security* suggests an individual's overall sense of self-confidence or internal strength, a kind of personal resource that provides the sense of self-assuredness and accommodation toward others, while *identity insecurity* is related to feelings of inferiority or defensiveness, particularly when interacting with others who are ethnically dissimilar.

2.3. The Situation

The second layer which surrounds the communicator layer is the situation in which an interethnic encounter takes place, which is defined as "the conditions of the immediate social

milieu in which a person is engaged in interethnic communication" (Kim, 2005, p. 334).

The theory highlights three key situational factors to understand the nature of the communicator's interethnic behavior: (1) *ethnic proximity/distance*, (2) *shared /separate goal structure,* and (3) *personal network integration/segregation*. *Ethnic proximity/distance* refers to the level of homogeneity or heterogeneity between the communicative interactants in interethnic encounters. The elements of ethnic proximity/distance include *extrinsic ethnic markers* such as physical features and speech accents and *intrinsic ethnic markers* such as internalized beliefs and values of a specific ethnic group. The ethnic proximity/distance tends to promote associative and dissociative interethnic behavior based on higher degrees of similarities/comparability.

Shared/separate goal structure refers to the degree to which the communicators come together with common interests. The presence of shared goals tends to promote or be promoted by associative behaviors and cooperative relationships between people involved in interethnic encounters. In contrast, if communicators see the other interactant(s) have too few shared goals, they tend not to be prone to associative behaviors. *Personal network integration* refers to the portion of outgroup ties, the intimacy of the heterogeneous interpersonal network, and the importance of the relationship with outgroup members which promotes associative behaviors in interethnic relationships.

2.4. The Environment

Surrounding the situational contextual layer is the environment, a larger social milieu consisting of multiple sub-levels. Certain conditions of each environmental layer tend to influence, or be influenced by, the associative-dissociative interethnic behavior of the individual communicator. The three key factors of the environment include: *(1) institutional equity/inequity; (2) ingroup strength; and (3) environmental stress*. *Institutional equity/inequity* refers to fairness and justice. The theory claims that if individuals perceive a certain form of unfair rules or practices directed against their own ethnic group, they are less likely to act associatively. The second environmental factor, *ingroup strength,* refers to an ethnic group's relative size, economic resources, and institutional and organizational power in the surrounding community. The third environmental factor, *environmental stress*, refers to the tension in an organization, community, or society at large. This stress arises out of certain challenging circumstances such as limited resources and economic hard times, intensifying intergroup dissociation or conflict.

2.5. Research Variables and Hypotheses

Based on the above eight contextual factors of the communicator, the situation, and the environment, the theory presents eight testable theorems. Each theorem links a contextual factor to associative or dissociative behavior in terms of reciprocal relationships, signifying that the interethnic behavior tends to influence, or to be influenced by, the eight contextual factors.

The present study tests two of these eight theorems, theorem 1 and theorem 2, identifying the interrelationships between the two constructs: (1) *associative/dissociative behavior*; (2) two of the communicator factors, *identity inclusivity (exclusivity)* and *identity security (insecurity).*

Theorem 1. The more inclusive (exclusive) the communicator's identity orientation, the more associative (dissociative) his or her interethnic communication behavior.
Theorem 2. The more secure (insecure) the communicator's identity orientation, the more associative (dissociative) his or her interethnic communication behavior.

Based on these two theorems, the following two research hypotheses were developed.

H1: The more inclusive (or exclusive) Korean adults' identity orientation, the more associative (or dissociative) interethnic communication behavior they are likely to engage in.
H2: The more secure (insecure) Korean adults' identity orientation, the more associative (or dissociative) interethnic communication behavior they are likely to engage in.

3. Methods

To collect the data, a standardized and self-administered questionnaire survey was conducted to obtain quantitative data using standardized measurement items.

3.1. Participants

The sample of the present analysis consists of Korean adults who were working in companies or research institutes in South Korea. Out of 100 participants, 55 were male (55.6%) and 44 were female (44.4%). One participant did not identify his/her gender. The average age of the participants was 33.64 years, with a standard deviation of 9.03 years (range: 21-56 years). Along with eight participants (8%) who held a graduate degree, 37 participants (37%) were college graduates, 17 participants (17%) were junior college graduates, and 38 (38%) were high-school graduates. Twenty seven participants (27%) reported that they can speak at least one foreign language. Fifty-nine participants (59%) out of 100 reported foreign travel experience at least once at the time of the survey (for example, staying or living a certain period of time in a foreign country, business trip, or travel).

3.2. The Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire for the survey consisted of groups of questions designed to measure the two theoretical constructs examined in the present analysis (1) associative/dissociative behavior and (2) identity inclusivity (exclusivity) and identity security (insecurity) as well as ideological orientation. Also included were questions on demographic and other background information, including foreign travel experience and foreign language skill.

The survey questionnaire was originally written in English. The English questionnaire was translated into the Korean language by a Korean American bilingual interpreter. Then, according to Brislin's (1980) suggestion, the questionnaire was back-translated by the same interpreter to test the equivalency of the meaning of two different language versions of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was pretested by a pilot test to help improve the reliability levels of the composite measurement scales. For the pilot test, 41 Korean respondents in Korea were contacted, consisting of college students, company workers, and the author's friends. The questionnaire was emailed as an attachment to the respondents. The feedback and suggestions were used to modify and refine the wording and questions of the survey.

For the main study, a combination of the snowball method and convenience sampling was applied to gather participants for the study. Recruitment of the initial 35 participants in Korea began through personal contact. These participants were acquaintances and friends of the author. After completing the survey, they were asked to suggest other acquaintances or friends who might be interested in the topic. Then 65 participants were recruited who were taking online courses at a University in South Korea. Most of them were company workers who were attending an online degree program for the pursuit of an undergraduate or graduate degree. The author contacted the instructors of two courses in the program and asked them to help recruit the students.

To administer the questionnaire, the survey questionnaire was delivered electronically through email to all participants after having a written consent form from those who agreed to participate in this study. Out of 120 targeted samples (who were expected to participate in this study), 100 questionnaires were collected, resulting in a response rate of 83%. This high response rate is due to personal contact using snowball sampling and convenience sampling methods.

3.3. The Research Variables and Measurement

The questionnaire consisted of groups of questions designed to measure the research variables described below, along with questions on demographic and other background information including foreign travel experience and foreign language skills.

The construct, *associative/dissociative behavior,* was operationalized by a research variable, RELATIONAL OPENNESS, assessing the degree to which a communicator feels comfortable in relating to ethnically dissimilar individuals in various social contexts. A ten-item, seven-point Likert-type composite scale has been adapted from Kim's previous study of interethnic communication (Kim et al., 2002, 2003, November). The wording has been modified based on the comments from the pilot study. The 10 items measured the degree to which one feels comfortable when interacting with individuals whose ethnic backgrounds are "very different" from the respondent's own. Two sets of 10 items were asked to see if the respondents might have different perspectives based on others' national or ethnic background. The first set of 10 items asked about the interethnic attitude toward foreigners from a European background (for example, Europeans, Caucasian Americans). The second set of 10 items consisted of the same questions, but designated to measure the feelings toward foreigners who come from non-European nations. The underlying rationale for using these two sets of identical questions for different groups of foreigners in South Korea was to reflect the feedback and suggestions from the pilot study, because many respondents who participated in the pilot study commented that there was the possibility of different attitudes toward foreigners in South Korea based on their ethnic background or country of origin. Four of the 10 items asked about the participants' feelings about "working with coworkers," "working for a boss," "socializing

with coworkers," "inviting someone to a dinner party" who was ethnically different from the respondent. The remaining six items asked the degree to which the participants were likely to "develop close friendships with people who are ethnically very different," to support "Koreans in general dating someone who is ethnically very different," to support "their brother or sister dating someone who is ethnically very different," to "date someone who is ethnically very different themselves," to "support Koreans in general marrying someone who is ethnically very different" and to "support their brother or sister marrying someone who is ethnically very different." Respondents were asked to choose one of the seven reactions to these statements from "not at all" (1) to "very comfortable" (7). As mentioned above, these 10 questions were asked about their level of willingness and comfort when interacting with two different groups (i.e., Europeans vs. non-European). The higher score indicates a higher level of comfort and an open psychological attitude toward interethnic interaction. The first set of scales of the feelings towards Europeans yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficient as .90 and the feeling toward non-Europeans yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .89.

For the communicator factor, two identity orientations were examined: *identity inclusivity (exclusivity)* and *identity security (insecurity)*.

Identity inclusivity (exclusivity) was operationalized into INTERETHNIC IDENTITY that reflects the degree to which one is flexible when perceiving human identity regardless of ethnic differences. INTERETHNIC IDENTITY was measured by a four-item seven-point Likert-type scale. The three questions were adapted from Kim et al.'s study (2002, 2003) and one question was added. Questions included: "I believe that everyone should be treated as an individual, not as a member of a particular ethnic group"; "I believe that people of different ethnic backgrounds have similar needs and aspirations"; "I believe that there are good people and bad people in every ethnic group"; and "I believe that individual identity is more important than ethnic/cultural identity." Participants were asked to choose one of the seven reactions to these statements from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). The higher score indicates a higher degree of interethnic identity. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale was .61.

Identity security (insecurity) was operationalized into one's own ETHNIC IDENTITY (i.e., Korean identity) which indicates the degree to which one attaches significance to being a Korean. ETHNIC IDENTITY was measured by a four-item seven-point Likert-type scale. The four items were adapted from Kim et al.'s interethnic study (Kim et al., 2002, 2003) and modified. Participants were asked to indicate how much they identify themselves as Koreans and feel secure and comfortable being Koreans. Questions include: "How happy do you feel as a Korean?" (not at all (1) to very happy (7)); "How comfortable do you feel as a Korean?" (not at all (1) to very comfortable (7)); "How confident do you feel being a Korean?" (not at all (1) to very confident (7)); "How proud do you feel about being a Korean?" (not at all (1) to very proud (7)). The higher score indicates a high, strong and secure Korean identity. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this composite scale was .87.

3.4. Additional Variables of Interest and Measurements

In addition to the above-identified two research variables corresponding to the theoretical constructs of the behavior and the communicator, one variable of interest, IDEOLOGICAL

ORIENTATION was measured. Ideological orientation is defined as a set of political beliefs concerning interethnic relations in the United States. A continuum of the two opposing ideological positions, assimilationism-pluralism, is underpinning the ongoing polemics of ethnic identity and interethnic relations in American society at large. While ideological orientation is not one of the theoretical variables, the present study uses this as a research variable, because it is interesting to see where Korean participants' ideological orientation is situated along this continuum and how it relates to other research variables. An eight-item seven-point Likert-type composite scale was developed to assess the respondent's ideological orientation along the assimilationism-pluralism continuum (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Seven was the strongest position of assimilationism with 1 being the most pluralistic one. Six items, adapted from Kim et al.'s interethnic study (2002, 2003), were modified and two items were developed by the author. Five of the eight items were statements advocating assimilationist beliefs: 1) "All people who acquired Korean citizenship should see themselves as Koreans first"; 2) "I believe that any foreign immigrants in South Korea could be politicians"; 3) "Foreigners who acquired Korean citizenship should be accepted as Koreans regardless of different nationalities, race, and skin color"; 4) "Korean society would be better off if we emphasize only our similarities and not our differences"; 5) "No consideration should be given to job applicants' ethnic backgrounds." The other three statements advocated pluralistic beliefs: 6) "Foreigners in Korea should work hard to preserve their ethnic and cultural heritages"; 7) "Ethnic and racial identity of foreigners living in South Korea is more important than Korean citizenship"; 8) "When two equally qualified persons apply for a job, their ethnic backgrounds should be given a serious consideration." To improve reliability, item 6 and 7 were dropped. The remaining six items were then used to make a composite scale yielding the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .73.

A nine-item seven-point Likert-type composite scale was developed to assess the respondents' ideological orientation along the integrationism and separatism continuum (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Seven was the strongest position of integrationism with 1 being the strongest position of separatism. Nine items, adapted from Kim et al.'s interethnic study (2002, 2003), were adapted and modified. Five of the nine items were statements advocating integrationism beliefs: 1) "Ethnically mixed neighborhoods are preferable to homogeneous (similar) ones"; 2) "More television programs should have ethnically diverse actors and actresses"; 3) "Parents should help their children develop healthy respect for different ethnic groups"; 4) "Schools should help students develop healthy respect for different ethnic groups"; 5) "University residential halls should encourage students of different ethnic backgrounds to share rooms." The other four items were statements advocating separatism beliefs: 6) "Many problems in Korea today are caused by the daily mixing of different ethnic groups"; 7) "Korean society would be better off if different ethnic groups lived apart from one another"; 8) "People should only associate with people of their own kind"; 9) "An ideal society is an ethnically pure one." A composite scale of nine items yielded the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .73.

4. Results

The results of the present analysis are based on statistical analysis of the structured quantitative survey data collected from participants of the study. The three research variables corresponding

to Kim's theoretical constructs of the behavior (*associative/dissociative behavior*) and two contextual factors of the communicator (*identity inclusivity/exclusivity; identity security/ insecurity*) as well as one additional variable of interest (*ideological orientation*) were analyzed. First, the descriptive analysis examined the distribution patterns of data on the three theory-derived research variables (RELATIONAL OPENNESS that measured *associative/dissociative behavior*, ETHNIC IDENTITY measured *identity security/insecurity*, INTERETHNNIC IDENTITY measured *identity inclusivity/exclusivity*) and one additional variable of interest (IDEOLOGY ORIENTATION). Second, the bivariate correlational analysis was conducted to test the theoretical interrelationships predicted in hypotheses derived from Kim's theorems which (1) posit a positive relationship between inclusive (exclusive) identity orientation and associative (dissociative) behavior and (2) posit a positive relationship between secure (exclusive) identity orientation and associative (dissociative) behavior.

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The variable RELATIONAL OPENNESS measured the theoretical construct, *associative/ dissociative behavior,* on a ten-item, 7-point scale. Overall, when combining the 20 items of the RELATIONAL OPENENSS scale into one scale regardless of attitude toward two different groups (i.e., Europeans vs. non-Europeans), a moderate level of openness and willingness for interethnic interaction and engagement in personal relationships (M = 4.21, SD = 1.09) was revealed. In terms of the level of intimacy of relationships, only the items concerning intimate relational engagements of dating and marriage were assessed. There was also a moderate level of willingness for these levels of relationships (M = 4.14, SD = 1.33).

When comparing the two RELATIONAL OPENNESS scales toward different groups of foreigners (Europeans vs. non-Europeans), there was a relatively higher score toward Europeans, which was statistically significant (M [relational openness toward Europeans] = 4.48, SD = 1.15; M [relational openness toward non-Europeans] = 3.95, SD =1.16; t = 6.82, df = 99; p < .001). This indicates that respondents tend to show different levels of openness and willingness to engage and interact with foreigners based on their ethnic/national backgrounds. When comparing only the items concerning intimate relational engagements of dating and marriage, there also was a different mean score which was found to be statistically significant (M [relational openness toward Europeans] = 4.52, SD = 1.40; M [relational openness toward non-Europeans] = 3.75, SD = 1.48; t = 6.9, df = 99; p < .001). This suggests that in developing serious relationships like dating and marriage, respondents show more favoritism toward foreigners of European descent.

The variable ETHNIC IDENTITY measured *identity security/insecurity* in terms of Korean identity. The data suggested the highly positive feelings of respondents toward their ethnic identity (i.e. Korean identity) (M = 5.15; SD = 1.00; range: 2.25-7). Obviously, respondents tend to feel secure, comfortable, and happy about their identity as Koreans. In addition, INTERETHNIC IDENTITY, measuring *identity inclusivity/exclusivity,* shows a higher score, which means the participants showed a higher intellectual and emotional openness and flexibility when perceiving human identity regardless of ethnic and cultural differences. (M = 6.18; SD = .76; Range: 3.75-7).

An examination of the data on one additional variable of interest, IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION, clearly showed the higher ideological orientation toward assimilationism of the participants (M = 5.24; SD = .95; Range: 1.50-7) on the assimilationism-pluralism ideological orientation scale. On the integrationism-separationism scale, the participants showed relatively higher ideological orientation toward integrationism (M = 4.94; SD = .78; Range: 2.67-6.78). While there are still different levels of relational openness to groups of people who are ethnically dissimilar, participants are more prone to both assimilationism and integrationism.

4.2. Theory Testing

The correlation analysis was conducted to test the reciprocal functional interrelationships identified in the two research hypotheses identified from theorems in Kim's contextual theory of interethnic communication which link the communicator factor, *identity security/insecurity and identity inclusivity/exclusivity* to the behavior factor, *associative/dissociative* interethnic behavior (see Table 1).

Hypothesis 1 posits that the more inclusive (exclusive) the communicator's identity orientation, the more associative (dissociative) his or her interethnic communication behavior.

This hypothesis was supported. Statistically significant correlations were found between INTERETHNIC IDENTITY and RELATIONAL OPENNESS (toward non-Europeans) measuring *associative behavior* (r = .202, p < .05). However, there was no statistically significant relationship between INTERETHNIC IDENTITY and RELATIONAL OPENNESS (toward Europeans) (r = .10, p >.05). This suggests that those who have a belief of flexible and inclusive identity are more inclined to socialize with people who are from a non-European background. The level of interethnic identity, however, was not found to be a significant factor in influencing people's motivation to socialize with people who have European background.

Hypothesis 2 posits that the more secure (insecure) the communicator's identity orientation, the more associative (dissociative) his or her interethnic communication behavior. This hypothesis was not supported. There was no statistically significant relationship between ETHNIC IDENTITY (i.e., Korean identity) and RELATIONAL OPENNESS (toward Europeans) (r = .006, p >.05) and with RELATIONAL OPENNESS (toward non-Europeans) (r = .070, p >.05). These results show that having a secure and positive identity as Koreans tends not to have any effect on the level of associative behavior toward European or non-European groups.

4.3. Additional Findings

Additional findings were shown in the bivariate correlations among background variables (for example, age, gender, educational background, foreign language skills, and overseas travel experience), IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION, and other research variables. Age was found to be positively related to INTERETHNIC IDENTITY (r = .20; p < .05) while not significantly related to the other variables. This means the older people with more life experience were more likely to perceive the more inclusive and universal human identity, which could lend to more associative interethnic behavior. Neither gender nor educational background was found to be

significantly related to other variables. Speaking a foreign language was found to be positively related to RELATIONAL OPENNESS toward Europeans ($r = .27$, $p <.01$) and non-Europeans ($r = .24$, $p <.01$). This suggests that people who have higher foreign language competence tend to have a more positive and comfortable attitude in interacting with both groups of foreigners (i.e., Europeans and non-Europeans). In addition, foreign language skill was found to be positively related to ETHNIC IDENTITY (i.e., secure Korean identity) ($r = .21$, $p <.05$), which suggests that those who have higher foreign language skills are likely to strengthen their strong, secure Korean identity. Travel experience to foreign countries was found to be related to none of the variables.

As shown in Table 1, there was a positive association between assimilationism-pluralism ideology orientation and INTERETHNIC IDENTITY ($r = .342$, $p < .01$). This suggests that people with a higher level of INTERETHNIC IDENTITY are more prone to an assimilationist viewpoint. Assimilationism-pluralism ideology orientation was found to be positively related to RELATIONAL OPENNESS toward non-Europeans ($r = .285$, $p <.01$) while there was no significant relationship with RELATIONAL OPENNESS toward Europeans ($r =.169$, $p >.05$). This finding clearly suggests that those who have an assimilationist viewpoint tend to be more open toward and more inclined to socialize with non-Europeans. Assimilationism-pluralism ideology orientation was positively related to ETHNIC IDENTITY (i.e., Korean identity) ($r = .246$, $p <.05$). This finding suggests that those who have more secure and positive feeling toward their Korean identity tend to show more open-mindedness that is reflected in assimilationist ideological view points toward interethnic relations with foreigners. Integrationism-separationism ideology orientation was found to be positively related to RELATIONAL OPENNESS toward Europeans ($r = .336$, $p < .01$) and RELATIONAL OPENNESS toward non-Europeans ($r =.321$, $p < .01$). Obviously, those who have an integrationist perspective tend to be more open to engaging in relationships with both Europeans and non-Europeans. Integrationism-separationism ideology orientation was also positively related to both ETHNIC IDENTITY (i.e., Korean identity) ($r = .204$, $p < .05$) and INTERETHNIC IDENTITY ($r = .341$, $p < .01$). Obviously those who have more secure, comfortable feelings toward their Korean identity and the belief of a flexible, inclusive identity tend toward integration ideological perspectives toward foreigners.

Table 1. Simple Correlation Coefficient(r) between Research Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. RELATIONAL OPENNESS (toward Europeans)	1.00					
2. RELATIONAL OPENNESS (toward Non-Europeans)	.781**	1.00				
3. ETHNIC IDENTITY (Korean identity)	.006	.07	1.00			
4. INTETHNIC IDENTITY	.10	.202*	.04	1.00		
5. ASSIMILATIONISM-PLURALISM	.169	.285**	.246**	.342**	1.00	
6. INTEGRATIONISM SEPARATIONISM	.336**	.321**	.204*	.341**	.483**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)

5. Discussion

The purpose of the present study has been to explore and understand the perspectives of adult South Korean groups on interethnic relations. In addition to providing a broad picture of opinions on interethnic relationships in South Korea, this study aims at examining the hypothesized interrelationship between contextual and behavioral factors identified in theorems 1 and 2 of Kim's (2005) contextual theory of interethnic communication in a South Korean context: (1) the behavior dimension — RELATIONAL OPENNESS toward those who are different from their ethnic background [Considering ideological speculation about double standards toward foreigners based on their ethnic backgrounds, the scale was administered with two sets of questions toward either of those groups i.e., European vs. non-European] — (2) the communicator dimension, one of the contextual factors (INTERETHNIC IDENTITY, ETHNIC IDENTITY) and (3) assimilationism-pluralism ideological orientation, as an additional variable of interest.

Based on the results of descriptive analysis and the correlation analysis reported in the previous sections, the following observations are made with regard to the research variables and the interrelationships between/among them.

Overall, among Korean participants, there is a moderate level of openness and willingness for interaction and relationships with people from dissimilar ethnic backgrounds. Even on the level of intimate relational engagement such as dating and marriage, there is a moderate level of openness.

There are different levels of openness and willingness toward interethnic relations based on foreigners' ethnic background and nationalities. The study showed that respondents are likely to have more willingness for interaction and relationships with foreigners of European background. In particular, this tendency is more clearly shown in more intimate relationship

dimensions such as dating and marriage. Unlike Western societies where race has been a major problem based on a clear racial division, Korea's situation shows the possible trend of ethnic-based discrimination and stereotypes and hostility due to different cultural attributes and ethnic backgrounds (Kim, 2010, p. 97).

The predominant ideological orientation among Korean respondents leans toward the assimilationist viewpoints in the assimilationism-pluralism continuum and integrationist viewpoints in the integrationism-separationism continuum. Those who hold a more assimilationist viewpoint tend to show more openness and willingness to engage in relationships with people from dissimilar ethnic backgrounds who are not of white-Caucasian European descent.

Most of the Korean respondents for this study showed strong and positive feelings toward their Korean identity. This has been evidenced by recent research done by a Korean daily newspaper. The survey results showed that seven Korean adults out of 10 were reported to be very proud of being a Korean (Hong, 2015). The more positively one feels about one's ethnic background, the more one is likely to be prone to assimilationist viewpoints and integrationist viewpoints.

In addition, the higher score of interethnic identity shows that the respondents have a more open and flexible identity. The more respondents have an open and flexible identity, the more likely they are to show assimilationist/integrationist viewpoints. Those who have interethnic identity tend to show more willingness and positive attitudes toward interethnic relationships with non-Europeans. This suggests that inclusive identity orientation is related to personal qualities like intellectual, emotional openness and flexibility which leads to associative interethnic behavior.

One of the present findings explains that there are interrelationships between the one communicator context factor (INTERETHNIC IDENTITY) and behavior (RELATIONAL OPENNESS) (Kim, 1997, 2005). Individuals who have more open and flexible identities tend to be more actively engaged in interethnic communication relationships. Korean respondents who have a universal viewpoint about human identity are willing to interact with, and form friendships with individuals of dissimilar ethnic backgrounds as stipulated in hypothesis 1.

ETHNIC IDENTITY (which was positive feelings toward the Korean identity among Korean respondents) was not found to be related to the behavior (RELATIONAL OPENNESS), which did not support hypothesis 2. Probably, unlike Americans, mainstream Koreans tend to identify themselves as a part of one single ethnic group. The secure Korean identity has been deeply rooted in a culturally homogenous Korean society with strong collectivism and ethnic pride ("pure race"). Unlike a heterogeneous cultural society such as the United States, the strong sense of belongingness to Korean ethnicity has been taken for granted for a long time. Thus, the ethnic identity (whether it is secure or insecure) is not an important contextual factor which affects associative/dissociative interethnic behavior in Korean society.

The significance of this study is that it brings attention to crucial issues associated with multiculturalism and interethnic communication in Korean society. It was after 2006 that academia brought their attention to Korean multiculturalism, resulting in a flourishing of academic conferences (Han, 2007). Sociology, Political Science and Education are the main disciplines that explore and lead the discussion on Korean multiculturalism. Specifically, the

issues of multicultural citizenship as a form of political principle and multicultural education for multicultural families from international marriages have been discussed (Choe, 2007). Korean government has also constructed a narrative to advance multiculturalism as part and parcel of national development, despite a largely homogenous society (Kim, 2015). Legislators enacted policies to promote a society more tolerant of ethnic and "blood" differences. Measures such as anti-discrimination efforts and changes in civic education — where ethnic homogeneity is deemphasized, and a multicultural Korea and values of tolerance are taught — were implemented to embrace non-Korean immigrants into its society (Ng & Bloemraad, 2015). In this context, it would be meaningful to examine Korean adults' attitudes toward interethnic relations and ideological orientation in Korea.

Additionally, the present study seeks theoretical understanding of the contextual factors and their relationship with an inclusive and tolerant attitude and behavior toward ethnically dissimilar people. This theoretical account of interethnic relations within a Korean context adds unique insight into other studies on Korean multiculturalism and interethnic relations despite the different theoretical interests among scholars and other disciplinary areas.

There are several limitations, and further improvements are needed for future study. Regarding measurement reliability, the less than satisfactory reliability of the measurement of the scales still needs to be improved, including the INTERETHNIC IDENTITY (Cronbach's alpha, .61), ETHNIC IDENTITY (Cronbach's alpha, .87), and IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION (assimilationism-pluralism, Cronbach's alpha .73; integrationism-separationism, Cronbach's alpha, .73). The sample size was 100 Korean adults, who were selected using a convenience sampling method combined with snowball sampling. The findings from the present analysis need to be interpreted with caution. To make these findings generalizable, representative sampling with a larger sample size is required.

A future study would be richer if it combined the quantitative survey with in-depth personal interviews which would provide a deeper understanding of the context-behavior interface closer to the everyday reality of interethnic communication in Korean society. A future study would also incorporate additional theoretical variables such as situation and environment factors to gain a more comprehensive picture of interethnic communication in Korea. In addition, such a study would be more fruitful by studying both immigrants (foreigners in South Korea) and Korean people (natives) by comparing the interethnic experiences of both groups.

Empirical insights learned from the present analysis will be used better to understand the nature of interethnic relationships and the issues that Korean society needs to be aware of for the future of multiculturalism in South Korea. Practitioners and policy makers would be able to set realistic goals for educating people to accommodate strangers from dissimilar ethnic backgrounds in Korean society. Despite the fact that the Korean government has promised to change its policy regarding foreigners from "control and management" to "understanding and respect," the more important change comes from the mindset and attitude of the Korean people. They should realize that Korean society is rapidly changing from an ethnically homogenous society to an ethnically diverse society, and that they should develop more tolerant attitudes toward people of different cultures (Kim, 2010, p. 101). One practical step would be for the educational system to play a leading role in developing new curricula and multicultural education, starting with young children, both minorities and majorities.

Being aware of the necessity of multicultural education, the South Korean Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (KMRD) introduced the Education Act for Children in a Multicultural Family in 2006, which mainly served to help people who have a different cultural background to adjust to Korean society (Choi, 2010). However, well-balanced multicultural education not only encourages minority groups to learn the mainstream culture, but also pursues cultural pluralism, that is, equality of different cultures (Sleeter, 1993). Multicultural education should include both migrants (minorities) and Koreans (majorities) for social inclusion and should help to foster tolerance toward peoples of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Anti-prejudice education is needed for the majority, and education of mutual understanding based on cultural diversity needs to be introduced into the school curriculum (Banks, 2004; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2008). An inclusive type of multicultural education would vary teaching strategies from subject to subject (Campbell, 2002; Gundara, 2000). The traditional educational approach which provides factual knowledge is inadequate and counterproductive for children with different cultural needs. Inclusive education enables all children to be participatory, actively involved, critically conscientious, and, accordingly, to develop good relationships with each other (Kang, 2010). Global migration has brought challenges of cultural diversity to Korean society. The future of a multicultural Korean society will largely depend on how this new reality is accommodated.

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