

# Examining the Role of Social Capital and Socioeconomic Status on Anti-Foreigner Sentiment in South Korea\*

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South Korean society is becoming incredibly and rapidly diverse through increasing inbound immigration. This has recently been highlighted due to low birth rate trends among South Koreans. While the number of foreigners is increasing in South Korea, there have been limited studies on the social integration of these foreigners as well as public attitudes towards them. In this study, we apply the group threat model and focus on how social capital and socioeconomic status are associated with anti-foreigner sentiments. Analyses of data from the 2022 citizen survey conducted in South Korea suggest that both factors are partially related to anti-foreigner sentiment at the structural and individual levels. Through this study, we contribute to the understanding of public attitudes towards foreigners and suggest careful approaches in social integration policy design.

**Key Words:** Foreigner Inclusion, Social Capital, Socioeconomic Status, Public Perception Survey, South Korea

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## I. Introduction

South Korea is slowly transitioning into a gray population. A recent government report projected that the population would peak in 2028 before contracting (The Korean Herald 2021; 2022). By 2050, Korea's elderly population will account for almost half the population (43.9 percent), and by 2067, the working-age population is projected

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\* This study was supported by the Research Program funded by the SeoulTech (Seoul National University of Science and Technology).

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to decrease from approximately three-quarters (73.2 percent) to less than half (45.4 percent) of the population (Im 2020). This is partly because Korea is struggling with severe issues related to population decline. Since 2013, Korea has steadily ranked the lowest in terms of fertility rate among the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, and by 2100, Korea's population may cut to half of the current population at around 50 million (Korea Joongang Daily 2023).

In some countries such as Germany, Italy, and Sweden, net immigration has been a driver of population growth since the 1970-90s (Gang, Rivera-Batiz, and Yun 2013). Similarly, one response to this demographic challenge in Korea has been to transform an ethnically homogenous country into a multicultural one by increasing immigration. While Korea has long been a culturally homogenous society, the government has begun to push and embrace immigration policies that are relatively more liberal, and since the early 2000s, the government has also promoted multiculturalism more actively (Zmire 2021). The government has invested efforts in accommodating immigrants and multicultural people through different plans and various changes in its immigration policy, such as the *Basic Plan for Policy Toward Foreigners* in December 2008, *The First Basic Plan for Immigration Policy, 2008-2012*, in June 2009 (Park 2017), and *The Second Basic Plan for Immigration Policy (2013-2017)* (Ministry of Justice 2012) among others.

Inbound immigration has dramatically increased since then, and the percentage of foreign residents has gone up from 0.33 as of 2000 to 3.44 in 2019 (Statistics Korea 2020). Inbound immigrants increased significantly, from 137,202 in 2000 to 251,466 in 2018 (Im 2020; Statistics Korea n.d.). While this influx of immigrants has bolstered the country's workforce and increased the number of multicultural families, it has also led to increasing societal challenges due to hostility towards foreigners. As is often the case, the increasing number of immigrants has led to increasing backlash, particularly among those with ethnic nationalist tendencies. Many of these citizens have marginalized foreigners, have explicitly shown xenophobia, and have displayed general hostility towards the idea of including foreigners in their communities and accepting them as national residents (Im 2020). Because of this disconnect between transforming Korea into a multicultural society and increasing xenophobia among citizens, we believe that an investigation of attitudes towards foreign inclusion is urgently required.

Existing studies have attempted to answer the question of what affects attitudes towards foreigners in Korea, yet these studies leave gaps to fulfill. First, they dominantly often examine predictors in different cultural contexts with comparative perspectives (Kim 2014; Song 2008). Second, previous studies mostly focus on specific foreigner groups in Korea, such as Korean-Chinese individuals, foreign workers, or foreign brides

(Zmire 2021; Seol and Skrentny 2009; Hough 2022), while the general orientation towards foreigners as outgroup members has not been discussed in depth. In this study, we delve into this mechanism, particularly focusing on individual orientations, in more depth by examining different predictors that influence these orientations within Korea. Specifically, we focus on two key factors that affect people's anti-foreigner sentiments: social capital and socioeconomic status (SES). By applying group threat theory as a framework, we contribute to the existing work by examining the association of social capital, measured through trust, networks, participation, and norms, and SES, measured through income and education, with Koreans' attitudes towards foreigners at both the structural (public) and individual (private) levels. Using measures that capture public attitudes towards general foreigners are appropriate to explain individual attitudes towards outgroup members. Existing scholarship does not analyze the effects of social capital and socioeconomic status on anti-foreigner sentiment in this way. As such, our study provides a unique contribution to the existing literature.

We use data from the 2022 Korea Social Integration Survey, as conducted by the Korean Institute of Public Administration (KIPA). To measure social capital, we use the same dataset as used by Hwang and Lee (2019) and adopt their survey items which capture the four dimensions - trust, participation, social network, and norms - as described by Putnam (2000). Also, SES is measured through level of income and education, both of which are commonly used measures (Lee and Van Ryzin 2020). The findings demonstrate that both social capital and SES significantly influence Korean citizens' attitudes towards foreigners. Certain dimensions of each form of capital yield mixed results. In general, however, we found high levels of social capital and SES are associated with the acceptance of foreigners, and these predictors may help the country progress towards becoming a multicultural society that accepts cultural and ethnical differences, one in which foreigners' cultural rights are protected as a minorities' human right (Emerson 2011), which could have significant implications for both Korea and beyond.

In the following sections, we first discuss the literature on predictors of anti-foreigner sentiment in both the Western context and in Korea. After, we present the development of our hypothesis by focusing on the effects of social capital and SES based on group threat theory on public perceptions towards foreigners in Korea. Then, we suggest a research design that includes the description of data and measurement, and analytic methods. Based on the data analyses, we present the findings of this research which shows that both factors are partially related to sentiment at the structural and individual levels. Lastly, we conclude it with a discussion and implications of our study.

## II. Literature Review

### *A. Anti-foreigner Sentiment: Group Threat Theory & General Predictors*

Anti-foreigner sentiment can broadly be defined as hostile feelings or xenophobia towards other populations. In this study, we follow Pettigrew (1998), who defines these types of discriminatory attitudes as a collection of negative views from one major group towards other minority groups. Numerous theoretical propositions explain the predictors of these anti-foreign sentiments, including prejudice from the dominant group towards minority groups, concerns among the dominant group related to resources and privileges (Semyonov and Raijman 2006), and power conflicts between different groups (Glazer and Moynihan 1970). Yet discrimination almost always stems from hostility from the ingroup towards the outgroup based on feelings of threat.

According to the group threat theory (Blalock 1967; Quillian 1996), basic group dynamics are related to ingroup favoritism and outgroup opposition, indicating that an increasingly large number of foreigners leads to increased hostility towards them (Fetzer 2000; Lahav 2004; Rustenbach 2010). Conversely, contact theory contends that an increasing number of immigrants within a community will lead to more positive perceptions towards foreigners due to increased experiences with them (Allport et al. 1954)<sup>1</sup>. In this study, our focus is more on the feelings that stem from group threat theory rather than contact itself. In order to examine this, we focus on individual levels of social capital and SES as variables. Thus, we argue that hostility towards foreigners increases when they are viewed as a threat, particularly when they have less social capital and experience low SES.

Among existing work on group threat theory, one major study categorized major predictors of anti-foreigner sentiment from this ingroup-outgroup perspective into six groups (Zamora-Kapoor, Kovincic, and Causey 2013), which includes economic competition, socioeconomic status, cultural affinity, and social capital, as well as political values, and institutional environment.<sup>2</sup> Four of these groups remain relatively consistent in their results. For example, economic competition can be viewed through the ingroup-outgroup perspective, where anti-foreigner sentiment appears when ingroup members,

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1 Seo and Kang (2021) found that an increasing foreigner population can lead to positive attitudes towards them among residents in a Seoul Survey.

2 We focus on this study because the authors take into account the majority of the existing literature on anti-foreign sentiment and provide a clear discussion of the main broad predictors, which can be categorized into 6 broad predictors.

particularly low-skilled and unemployed individuals living in a country with relatively more economic instability, view job opportunities as a zero-sum game (Mayda 2006; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). Cultural affinity can also influence citizens' perceptions based on how relatable and similar the ingroup and outgroup members are and to what extent they identify themselves with foreign-born populations, for example, among religious minorities (Hayes and Dowds 2006) and second-generation immigrants (Fetzer 2000). Individual political affiliation, i.e., political values, political preferences, and political ideologies, can also explain anti-foreigner sentiment (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996), where, even among ingroup members, conservative individuals are more likely to hold anti-foreign sentiment towards outgroup members relative to more liberal individuals (Semyonov et al. 2008). And finally, government policies can also influence sentiment by developing an environment where ingroup and outgroup members can coexist (Zamora-Kapoor, Kovincic, and Causey 2013).

While four of the six predictors remain relatively consistent in their findings, a recent review of the literature shows the lack of consistency in examining the explanatory role of social capital and socioeconomic status. Indeed, the anti-foreigner sentiment literature includes gaps that have yielded contradictory results related to social capital, measured through trust, membership, and norms (Wagner et al. 2007), and socioeconomic status, based on education level and income (Hjerm 2001; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007). While existing scholarship has contributed to attitudes towards foreigners and immigration, we propose to address these problems by discussing the mixed results on social capital and socioeconomic status, and we find particular importance in examining this in depth in the context of Korea.

### **(1) Social Capital**

This study focuses on social capital and SES for several reasons. First, as previously mentioned, existing studies remain relatively consistent in their findings related to many of the prominent predictors of anti-foreign sentiment, yet studies continue to yield contradictory results on the explanatory variables of social capital and SES. For example, some studies suggest that social capital, particularly bridging social capital, which can be defined as a social network towards outgroup members who do not share the same traits (Putnam and Goss 2002), reduces anti-foreign sentiment due to social trust that is extended to the outgroup and built upon frequent contact when there are a significant number of foreigners (Herrerros and Criado 2009; Chu and Yang 2019).<sup>3</sup> Others suggest

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3 Herreros and Criado (2009) have found that bridging social capital that involves contact-based components

that social capital can increase hostility, particularly when it is measured through bonding social capital. Bonding social capital can be explained as social networks within the homogenous ingroup members (Putnam and Goss 2002; Durlauf 1999), so strengthening ingroup relations among members can increase hostility towards outgroup individuals. Moreover, different types of social capital can lead to varying sentiments towards foreigners. Côté and Erickson (2009) show how social capital is defined through an amalgamation of diverse social networks, participation in voluntary associations, and individual attributes. The authors examine how various measures of social capital can influence tolerance towards foreigners in various ways. For example, social capital measured through network diversity can lead to greater tolerance.<sup>4</sup> Herreros and Criado (2009) further analyze how social capital can be examined through social trust and find that those with more social trust can also increase positive attitudes. Additionally, Kesler and Bloemraad (2010) find that social capital, defined through "public collective-mindedness" has no real effect on attitudes.

## **(2) Socioeconomic Status**

In terms of SES, numerous studies suggest that education and income improve citizens' perceptions of foreigners and make them aware of the benefits of cultural diversity (Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Mewes and Mau 2013; Hjerm 2001), particularly in strong democracies (Thomsen and Olsen 2017). In addition, economic insecurity among individuals—those who are more economically vulnerable and have low levels of education—is more likely to harbor negative attitudes (Oepen 1984). However, Weber (2020) contends that highly educated individuals do not always report greater tolerance towards foreigners and that the relationship between the two is relatively unclear. Moreover, other studies suggest that people with lower SES may have less prejudice towards immigrants due to higher levels of empathy (Manstead 2018) and that higher SES can lead to more anti-foreign sentiments if those in the outgroup are highly educated and competing for the same jobs (Mayda 2006). As such, in the current discussion, we confine ourselves to examining how social capital and SES influence anti-foreign sentiments at both the individual (private) and structural (public) levels.

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positively affect perceptions towards immigrants.

4 However, studies assert that this form of the generalized contact hypothesis may be too simple, and the results can be mixed.

## ***B. Anti-foreigner Sentiment Studies in Korea***

The immigration history of Korea can be explained through different migration transitions among different groups starting from the 1980s (Lee 2011). The main immigrant group in Korea during that time frame consisted mostly of foreign workers, which eventually expanded to foreigner brides in the 2000s and even more recently expanded to foreign students and North Korean defectors. Despite the increasing number of foreign groups, discussions related to immigration in Korea has remained limited. Freeman's (1995) three modes of immigration policy describe the different phases of the immigration, including 1) entry and exit policy, 2) utilization of foreign workforce, and 3) social integration policy. Many Western countries, including the United States, Canada, and Germany, have already advanced to the third phase, i.e., social integration policy. Yet Korea's immigration phenomenon is different from Western countries. Korea is also heading towards third phase, where the essence of the target is the general citizen, but it has not yet achieved this goal (Lee 2011). Based on this, we found the need to adopt the Western countries' framework of public attitudes towards foreigners and apply it to the Korean context to explore and analyze the case of Korea.

In the Korean literature regarding immigration, the dominant approach has included a macro-level approach that explains the phenomenon in terms of institutional, historical, or cultural contexts (Won 2008; Jang 2010; Kim 2009; Go 2012; Lee 2011; Seol 2017). While these studies have helped in understanding the institutional system and provided a broad picture of the history of immigration, it is also necessary to observe public perceptions towards immigration to fully comprehend the interaction between the general immigration phenomenon and the country's distinctive context (Hainmuller and Hopkins 2014).

When it comes to studies regarding public attitudes in Korea, moreover, existing studies have focused on the importance of factors regarding demographics, such as education level, age, and partisanship (Hwang and Kim 2020; Choi and Cho 2020; Yoon and Jung 2014), individual identical factors, including personal and national identity, and ethnic and cultural nationalism (Min 2013; Jang 2010; Shin 2006; Seo and Seo 2014; Kim 1989; Jung 2010; Oh and Arrington 2007; Cho 2015; Cheong 1992; Kim 1993), contact frequency (Song 2013), and level of economic inequality (Seo and Jang 2021). Despite their importance, compared to the studies regarding predictors of anti-foreigner sentiment in Western countries (Fetzer 2000; Harell, Soroka, and Iyengar 2016), a lacuna in research still exists related to foreigner sentiment in South Korea.

### **(1) Defining a "Foreigner" in Korea**

In order to discuss this, it is imperative to define who is considered a foreigner in the Korean context. Applying Watson's (2012) view to Korea, foreigners can include people from different ethnic backgrounds, such as foreign brides, but foreigners can also simultaneously include people with the same ethnic and/or racial origins of South Koreans, but come from different backgrounds. This can include North Korean defectors, family members that have one ethnically Korean parent, Korean-Americans, and ethnic Korean-Chinese individuals. As such, it is important to distinguish between Koreans and "foreigners" and define who should be considered a foreigner.

A foreigner, according to the Korean Legislation Research Institute and the Foreign Investment Promotion Act, can be defined as "an individual with a foreign nationality." The Korean E Government (2010) further describes foreigners as both short-term and long-term "tourists, working professionals, migrant labor workers, or residents." While we acknowledge different ways of defining foreigners, we do not distinguish them, as our main focus is targeted to examine "perceived foreigners" by the public. It can be people with the same ethnic and/or racial origins of South Koreans, but come from different backgrounds since North Korean defectors, family members that have one ethnically Korean parent, Korean-Americans, and ethnic Korean-Chinese individuals are often viewed as perpetual foreigners in Korea (Lee 2018; Song and Tsunoda 2016; Song 2019; Hong, Song, and Park 2013).

### **(2) Sentiment Towards Different Foreigner Groups in Korea**

Various scholars have specifically focused on the integration, or lack thereof, of certain foreign groups in Korea. For example, Zmire (2021) examines the discrimination towards foreign wives in Korea while Seol and Skrentny (2009) observe discrimination towards Korean-Chinese foreign workers face despite being of the same ethnicity, due to their foreignness. Other scholars have focused on negative sentiment towards North Koreans living in Korea due to their linguistic anxieties and speech modifications (Hough 2022), despite North Koreans trying to gain social status and inclusion of social membership by denouncing the North Korean regime (Hough and Bell 2020), while sentiment may be based on educational level and social desirability bias (Denney et al. 2022). At the same time, only several studies have examined the attitudes and sentiments towards foreigners in general. Studies on individual attitudes towards immigration in Korea have focused on specific groups of immigrants, as we discussed above, and the studies focusing on general foreigners are limited to a comparative approach (Kim 2014; Song 2008).

Additionally, as of now, there are limited in-depth studies on how sentiment towards foreigners translate into group-based threats and how individual psychological predispositions may influence foreign sentiment in Korea. Focusing on the general foreigner, nevertheless, can reveal how people perceive themselves from outgroup members. As such, we suggest the importance of individual orientations when it comes to sentiment towards foreigners living in Korea, which has been undervalued in existing research, and show how perceived economic and cultural factors can work as strong predictors in the analysis of anti-foreign sentiment. We argue that two sets of individual-level predictors of anti-foreign sentiment—social capital and SES of individuals—are influential in predicting anti-foreigner sentiment in Korea.

### ***C. Hypotheses***

Social capital can be measured in various ways. In general, social capital measures the social relations among individuals within a community (Coleman 1994; Putnam et al. 1993). Putnam's (1993) conceptualization of social capital consists of three dimensions, which include social values (trust), social networks (voluntary associations), and norms. Similarly, we incorporate these measures and further include the dimension of participation since recent studies on social capital have adopted this approach and incorporate all of these measurements. That is, the components of social capital in existing work include the quality of generalized trust within the community, active social participation social networks, and social norms (Putnam 2000; Jackman & Miller 1998; Foley & Edwards 1999). Certain measures of social capital, such as participation, can be measured formally, e.g. parent-teacher conferences and church membership, and informally, e.g. evening gatherings and community meetings. Moreover, the effects of these measures may vary. The impact of associational memberships (measured through participation), for example, may differ depending on whether individuals participate in evening gatherings or actively participate in religious institutions. Similarly, trust, norms, networks, and participation may all have different effects. For instance, trust and networks have some differences based on the strength of inter-relations between individuals. Yet, to a certain extent, these different measures are interlaced, dense, and interconnected (Putnam 2001). As such, we examine all four core dimensions as is used in the literature on social capital.

Moreover, in Korea, the importance of social capital has received increasing attention due to its significant increase over several decades as a Third Wave democracy that has progressed through the development of political and civil liberties, as well as a vibrant civil society (Park and Shin 2005; Kim 2005). Some researchers argue that

social capital, measured through social ties among citizens, can reduce hostility towards foreigners by increasing contact with those in the outgroup and increasing trust. Ultimately, friendships that develop through social ties can reduce anti-foreigner sentiments (McLaren 2003; Wagner et al. 2007).

However, in this study, following the group-threat approach, we focus on bonding social capital, one type of social capital (hereafter, we use social capital to refer to bonding social capital). Indeed, Putnam et al. (1993) distinguished bonding social capital, which refers to social relationships among a homogenous social group, from bridging social capital, which refers to relationships among different, heterogeneous groups. Unlike bridging social capital, high bonding social capital can strengthen in-group ties and lead to strong out-group negative sentiment (Putnam 2000). In this way, social capital may not bridge or connect racial or ethnic groups, but rather lead to negative sentiments towards other groups (Hero 2003), working hand-in-hand with the group threat thesis. Park et al. (2014), in their empirical examination, found that higher levels of social capital decreases positive attitudes towards foreigners. Following this approach, we expect that increasing levels of social capital, measured by trust, participation, networks, and norms among in-group members, may be strongly and negatively associated with sentiments towards foreigners in South Korea. Thus, we hypothesize that:

- H1. Those with higher levels of social capital are *more likely to* exhibit anti-foreigner sentiments.
- H1-a. The stronger the generalized trust in community, the more anti-foreigner sentiment there is.
- H1-b. The more active social participation there is, the stronger the anti-foreigner sentiment.
- H1-c. The more social networks there are, the stronger the anti-foreigner sentiment.
- H1-d. The stronger the norms for social capital, the more anti-foreigner sentiment there is.

In contrast to high levels of social capital, we hypothesize a positive relationship between the SES of individuals within the ingroup and sentiments towards foreigners in Korea. According to the group threat model, higher (perceived) levels of SES have been proven to enhance inclusiveness towards outgroup members due to fewer negative experiences and less competition with those in the outgroup, as compared to those with lower levels of SES (Mewes and Mau 2013; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2009). In Korea, foreign workers, who are often categorized under the unskilled worker category and mostly provide low-income work, have been the dominant labor force

since the initiation of inbound immigration in the 1980s (Lee 2011). The proportion of unskilled workers and skilled workers are approximately 10 to 1 (Ministry of Justice 2023). From this, we can infer that people generally maintain an image of the foreigner as one that does low-income work. Thus, as described by group threat theory, those who feel the most socially and economically vulnerable—that is, those with low income or education—in the ingroup may show increasing negative attitudes towards the outgroup (see Gorodzeisky 2011; Kunovich 2004; Semyonov et al. 2006; 2008) due to competition and fear that foreigners are taking away their jobs and increasing competition for resources (Kuntz, Davidov, and Semyonov 2017). Conversely, high SES can further reduce anti-foreigner sentiment by increasing norms and values related to diversity (Hjerm 2001; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007), openness, and enriching encounters with those in the outgroup (Mau 2010) due to less feelings of group threat from the outgroup. Additionally, higher levels of education can promote social inclusivity and tolerance, which can increase positive views towards foreigners in Korea (Park and Tuxhorn 2023).

Following this approach, it can be expected that, among Korean citizens, those with higher SES are more likely to accept and include foreigners within their communities due to lower feelings of group threat, whereas those with lower SES are likely to view foreigners with more hostility in part due to higher feelings of group threat. This can be further exacerbated because those with lower SES feel less control, which is often correlated with anti-foreigner sentiments (Harell, Soroka, and Iyengar 2016). Because those with high SES are more likely to feel as if they are in control, less likely to feel threatened by those within the outgroup and insecure or unstable due to an influx of foreigners, they may be more likely to be aware of the advantages of a multicultural society; thus high SES can have a positive effect on foreigner inclusion.<sup>5</sup> As such, it can be understood that feelings based on group threat can enhance or decrease how members of the ingroup feel and how much control they have based on their socioeconomic status, based on income and education, which can influence how they view foreigners. We hypothesize that:

- H2. Those with high SES are *less likely to* exhibit anti-foreigner sentiments.
- H2-a. The higher the income level, the weaker the anti-foreign sentiment.
- H2-b. The higher the education level, the weaker the anti-foreign sentiment.

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5 Some studies examine the correlation between the variables of social capital and SES (Putnam 2001) while others analyze the mediating role of social capital and SES (Han et al. 2018). Other studies focus on social capital as the main explanatory variable and incorporate SES as control variables when examining their effects. Bourdieu's (2018) description of social capital incorporates education as a form of class, but we focus on Putnam's measurement of social capital, which keeps the two concepts independent. As such, we work under the assumption that SES has an independent influence from social capital.

### III Methods

#### *A. Data*

In this research, we use the data derived from responses of "2022 Korea Social Integration Survey" conducted by the Korea Institute of Public Administration (KIPA). Data were collected between September 2022 and October 2022 to examine public attitudes towards social integration, which could ultimately be used to develop public policy. The survey method is relevant to investigating the dynamics of public attitudes or perception at the individual level (Remler and Van Ryzin, 2014). More than 8,000 citizens over 19 years of age across the nation responded to the survey through interview surveys by survey teams in parallel with Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews. These are nationally represented samples collected with a multistage stratified probability proportional to size sampling from the sampling frame of the total population of the 2020 Korea Census (more explanation about the sampling and exclusion criteria can be found in [kipa.re.kr](http://kipa.re.kr)). The final sample consisted of 8,294 observations from 17 upper-level local governments in South Korea.

#### *B. Variables*

##### **(1) Dependent Variables**

The dependent variable in this study was anti-foreigner attitudes, which were measured using two variables. The first was the anti-foreigner attitudes at structural (national) levels, for which we employed the following question from the survey: "How much do you agree with accepting foreigners as citizens of our country?" The response was measured on a 10-point scale ranging from 0 (completely disagree) to 10 (totally agree). However, as this question asks people's attitudes towards giving citizenship to foreigners, we recoded 0-4 as "more likely" (1) and 6-10 as "less likely" (0; reference group). We ran a Skewness Kurtosis test to observe the normal distribution of the anti-foreigner attitude variable and found that it was violated. In order to solve this issue, we recoded the variable into a dichotomous variable asking whether an individual citizen is hostile to foreigners in the context of giving citizenship (1) or not (0). This method of changing the general attitude question into an anti-foreigner attitude variable is also justified in the work of Gang et al. (2013). We excluded '5,' which indicates "somewhat in the middle" because it did not fit the purpose of our study and instead only examined

the difference between people with favorable and unfavorable attitudes towards foreigners. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables.

The second is at individual (private) level, measured with the following question from the survey: "From the following categories about the individual relationships, what categories are you willing to accept to have a relationship with foreigner immigrants/employees?" The original categories included 1 (cannot accept), 2 (My neighbors), 3 (My colleagues), 4 (My close friends), and 5 (My spouse). However, to contrast the distinction of people's attitudes towards foreigners for our research purpose, we recoded the variables into the dummy variable that has 1 as "more likely" (ones who cannot accept at all), and 0 "less likely" (reference group).

*Table 1. Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage	
Anti-foreigner attitudes (Structural)	Less likely	2,211	37.73	
	More likely	3,649	62.27	
Anti-foreigner attitudes (Individual)	Less likely	7,380	88.98	
	More likely	914	11.02	
Education	Highschool or below	4,190	49.59	
	College (2-year) or above	4,181	50.41	
Gender	Male	4,113	49.59	
	Female	4,181	50.41	
Religion	No	5,815	70.11	
	Yes	2,479	29.89	
Region	Urban			
	Rural			
Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Social capital: Trust	3.09	0.42	1	4
Social capital: Participation	1.32	0.67	1	5
Social capital: Network	2.74	0.49	1	4
Social capital: Norms	4.08	0.65	1	5
Income	5.88	2.25	1	12
Age	3.38	1.44	1	5
Political view	2.92	0.86	1	5

## (2) Explanatory Variables

The explanatory variables in this study included social capital and SES. Social capital is a multidimensional concept that includes the sub-dimensions of trust in social groups,

participation in social groups, social networks, and norms (Putnam 2000; Jackman & Miller 1998; Foley & Edwards 1999). To operationalize each dimension, we followed the work of Hwang and Lee (2019), who used the same dataset to measure social capital and adjusted measures to capture the concept of social capital based on the works of Forrest and Kerns (2001), Narayan and Cassidy (2001), and Grootaert et al. (2004).

First, trust in group members was measured with questions that asked about people's trust in 1) family members/relatives, 2) neighbors, and 3) personal relationships (friends and colleagues). While the original questions included two more questions about trust in individuals that meet for the first time and in foreigners who resides in Korea, we excluded these in our measure, as our main focus is bonding social capital, which emphasizes the homogeneity of the group. While the questions were measured on a 4-point scale (1= very untrustworthy to 4= very trustworthy), we aggregated three items (Cronbach's alpha=0.54) to generate trust in social groups. Second, for the construct of participation in social groups, we relied on five items that included people's participation in: 1) labor unions, business associations, and trade unions; 2) civil society organizations/non-government organizations; 3) community organizations; 4) volunteer/donation organizations; and 5) social economy enterprises (social enterprises, cooperative societies, community enterprises). We aggregated these five items on a five-point scale to answer questions on how actively the respondents were involved in those groups (Cronbach's alpha=0.82).

Third, social networks were measured with five items that included respondents' thoughts about communication with the following groups in society: 1) family members, 2) colleagues, 3) neighbors, and 4) generations. The items were measured using a 4-point scale that we aggregated into a variable (Cronbach's alpha=0.67). Finally, norms, the last construct of social capital, was measured from respondents' responses to their thoughts about the importance of the following categories to make society fairer: 1) open public information, 2) public participation, 3) transparency in public processes, 4) public employee integrity, and 5) the yield of power from people who have power. We aggregated the 5-point scale into a variable (Cronbach's alpha=0.84).

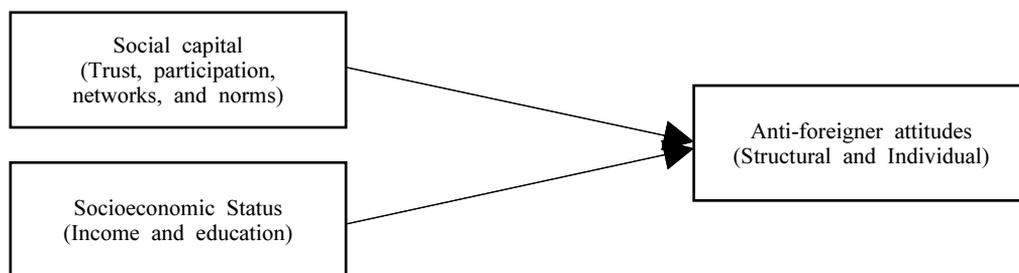
Regarding SES, we used income and education as the second explanatory variables in this study. Income was the average monthly household income in the previous year, scored on a 12-point scale ranging from 1 (no income) to 12 (more than 10,000,000 won). Education was originally measured on an 8-point scale ranging from 0 (no education) to 7 (doctoral program) for the question on the last formal education the respondents undertook. However, to examine the distinction between higher education, we recoded the variable as a dummy variable (0=high school or below, 1=college [2-year] or higher).

**(3) Control Variables**

We included basic demographics (gender and age) in addition to political ideology, religion, and region as control variables. There were almost equal number of women (50.41%) and men (49.59). Next, regarding age, the variable has five categories (1=19-20, 2=31-39, 3=40-49, 4=50-59, 5=60). Political views were measured on a scale from 1(very conservative) to 5(very liberal). We included religion as a dummy variable with categories of no religion (70.11%) and religion (29.89%), which originally had five categories: Protestantism, Catholics, Buddhism, others, and no religion. For the region variable, it divides respondents who live in rural area (19.12%) and urban area (80.88%).

**C. Analytic Framework and Statistical Methods**

As presented in Figure 1, we had two dependent variables: anti-foreigner attitudes at the national level and anti-foreigner attitudes at the individual level. Our model included two explanatory variables: social capital (trust, participation, network, and norms) and SES (education and income). To test our hypotheses, we relied on binary logistic regression as the main statistical method for our dependent variables, which is dichotomous. Further, it was relevant for our purpose of examining the relationship between the two independent variables and the dependent variable with control variables. For ease of interpretation, we presented the results with odds ratios (OR).



*Figure 1. Research Model*

**IV. Findings**

Table 2 shows the results of our analyses, where Model 1 represents the effect of social capital and SES on anti-foreigner attitudes at the structural level, and Model 2 presents their effect on anti-foreigner attitudes at the individual level. A summary

of these results is presented in Table 3.

**Table 2.** Regression Analyses of Foreigner Inclusion

Variables	Model 1: Anti-foreigner attitudes (Structural) Odds ratio (SE)	Model 2: Anti-foreigner attitudes (Individual) Odds ratio (SE)
Social capital		
Trust	1.18** (0.08)	0.75*** (0.07)
Participation	0.64*** (0.03)	0.88** (0.05)
Network	0.90 (0.06)	1.54*** (0.12)
Norm	1.35*** (0.06)	0.73*** (0.04)
Socioeconomic Status (SES)		
Income	0.95*** (0.01)	0.95*** (0.02)
Education	0.85** (0.06)	1.20* (0.11)
Control variables		
Gender	1.07 (0.06)	1.10 (0.07)
Age	0.98 (0.03)	1.04 (0.03)
Political view	0.92* (0.03)	0.91** (0.04)
Religion	1.01 (0.06)	0.74***(0.06)
Region	0.93	0.74***
Psuedo R2	0.03	Psuedo R2=0.02
N	5,860	8,294

p\* < 0.1 p\*\* < 0.05 p\*\*\* < 0.001, note: SE = Standard error

**Table 3.** Summary of Results

Hypotheses	Results 1: Anti-foreigner attitudes (Structural)	Direction	Results 2: Anti-foreigner attitudes (Individual)	Direction
H1: Social capital hypotheses				
H1-a. Trust	Supported	(+)	Not supported	(-)
H1-b. Participation	Not Supported	(-)	Not supported	(-)
H1-c. Social networks	Not Supported	(-)	Supported	(+)
H1-d. Norms	Supported	(+)	Not supported	(-)
H2: SES hypotheses				
H2-a. Income	Supported	(-)	Supported	(-)
H2-b. Education	Supported	(-)	Not supported	(+)

Note: (+): positively related, (-): negatively related

Starting with the effect of social capital on anti-foreigner attitudes at the structural level (Model 1), we found that among the subdimensions of social capital, trust in social groups and norms were positively associated with the outcome variables, while

participation in social groups and networks was negatively associated. When we checked the statistical significance, all sub-dimensions, except social network, were found to be significant at 0.1 level. Specifically, an increase in trust in community led to an 18% increase in the odds of anti-foreigner attitudes (H1-a); an increase in norms led to a 34% increase in the odds of anti-foreigner attitudes (H1-d). However, contrary to our expectations, an increase in participation in social groups led to a 35% decrease in the odds of anti-foreigner attitudes (H1-b). An increase in networks led to a 10% decrease in the odds of anti-foreigner attitudes (H1-c), but it was insignificant ( $p=0.1$ ). As a result, H1 is partially supported in terms of trust and norms. From the results, we found that people who trust more in their community and who view norms positively are more likely to hostile to foreigners, while people who actively participate in social groups are more open to foreigners when they demand citizenship.

Regarding the effect of SES on anti-foreigner attitudes at the national level, we found that both income and education were negatively associated with the outcome. In other words, people with a higher level of income had 5% lower odds of the outcome variable ( $p<0.1$ ). In terms of education, the results show that people who had college or higher education were less hostile towards foreigners by 15% than those who were not educated ( $p<0.1$ ). As a result, we can conclude higher levels of SES are associated with decreased anti-foreigner attitudes by accepting H2-a and H2-b.

Model 2 estimates the effects of social capital on anti-foreigner attitudes at the individual level. The findings suggest that trust in social groups, participation in social groups, and norms were negatively associated with the outcome variable at a statistically significant level of 0.1. An increase in the trust led to a 25% decrease in the odds of anti-foreigner attitudes (H1-a). Participation was also negatively associated with anti-foreigner attitudes. An increase in participation led to a 12% decrease in the odds of the outcome variable (H1-b). The network variable was positively associated with the outcome, and its increase led to a 53% increase in the odds of the outcome variable, supporting H1-c. Norms were negatively related to anti-foreigner attitudes in a statistically significant way. Specifically, people who valued norms were 27% less likely to have anti-foreigner attitudes (H1-d). As a result, H1 in relation to the individual-level anti-foreigner attitude cannot be fully supported.

With respect to the SES hypotheses, the findings show that while income was negatively related to the outcome variable, education was positively related to it in a statistically significant manner. A higher level of income led to 5% fewer odds of the outcome and a higher level of education led to 20% increased odds of the outcome. Thus, H-2a was supported, whereas H-2b was not.

## V. Discussion and Conclusion

### A. Discussion

Among the SES results, our results show that higher levels of education lead to more aggression towards foreigners at the individual level, which is contrary to previous studies that have shown that more education reduces hostility towards foreigners by the transmission of values related to diversity (Coenders and Scheepers 2003). Our study shows that higher education improves attitudes at the structural level by accepting foreigners through means such as offering citizenship while simultaneously avoiding foreigners' involvement in their personal lives. This expands the current discussion on whether citizens' hostility towards foreigners is grounded in economic constraints. As predicted, people with fewer resources tend to have anti-foreigner sentiments, which can be explained through job and economic threats (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007); however, when it comes to personal interaction in their lives, people with more education may harbor personal distaste or hostility towards foreigners in their daily lives. We expect that future researchers will investigate this mechanism using qualitative approaches.

The mixed results on social capital suggest the complexity of the relationship between social capital and attitudes towards foreigners. When it comes to participation, people who actively participate in social groups have less aggression towards foreigners, meaning that they have less "biased bonding"—a side effect of social capital (Hero 2003)—but show more openness towards having a multicultural society. However, trust and norms can lead to mixed reactions towards accepting foreigners as citizens or having personal relationships with them. Interestingly, our findings contrast with those of Park and Shin (2005) on the ineffectiveness of social involvement in attitudinal democratic citizenship and the effectiveness of social trust, meaning that people's mechanisms towards processing ingroups and outgroups are different. We expect that future researchers will explore these underlying mechanisms.

### B. Conclusion

The findings of our research suggest that: 1) people who trust social groups and value norms in a society are less likely to agree on offering foreigners citizenship, but are willing to have personal interactions with them; 2) people who participate in more social groups and have a high level of income are more likely to welcome foreigners as their country's citizens and also more likely to have close relationships

with them; and 3) people who value social norms more and have high levels of education welcome foreigners as their country's citizens, but are less likely to be personally close to them.

### ***C. Limitation***

Despite these important findings, our study has some limitations that should be considered. First, we used cross-sectional data which captured the phenomenon in 2022. This dataset has the limitation of capturing big external events that could affect public attitudes in a longitudinal way. Despite the limitation, we find using it relevant for our research purpose of disclosing factors that are associated with public attitudes towards foreigners at the individual level. Nevertheless, we expect future researchers to conduct similar studies in a longitudinal setting grounded in our findings. This would further increase the validity of our findings and provide an in-depth understanding of foreigner sentiment among Koreans.

Second, because we used observational data collected by a third party, there might be measurement issues. One issue is whether the question regarding "foreigner" in the measurement really reveals the group of immigrants in Korea. For example, foreign workers, foreign brides from South Asia, Korean-Chinese individuals, and North Korean defectors are four major immigrant groups in Korea. Due to data limitations, it is difficult to determine which group the general term "foreigner" in the measurement refers to. We expect future researchers conducting similar research on these different groups in Korea to examine how different public attitudes are towards each group. Finally, we find only a pattern of anti-foreigner sentiment in South Korea. A comparison of our research with that of other East Asian countries could reveal whether this is a unique pattern in South Korea. In addition, a comparison with Western countries would also enrich the discussion.

### ***D. Contribution***

Despite the limitations stated above, we believe our study has implications theoretically and practically. Regarding the theoretic contribution, we provided an empirical examination of the effect of social capital and SES on attitudes towards foreigners. In line with previous research, we also find that the results are mixed based on the subdimensions or criteria of the variables (Hjerm 2001; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007). For example, while trust and norms under the social capital dimension were positively related to

the public attitudes towards anti-foreigner sentiment at structural levels, participation was negatively related to it. Also, while income was negatively related to sentiment, education was positively related to people's anti-foreigner sentiment. This indicates the need for a careful approach in understanding public attitudes towards foreigners.

As a practical implication, we suggest developing an enhanced understanding of Koreans' attitudes towards foreigners. Korea is slowly but surely transitioning into a society filled with diversity, and this is reflected through the trend of fast-growing inbound immigration. The immigration influx of foreign workers in the 1980s and foreign spouses in the early 2000s helped overcome issues related to the economy and social life. More recently, universities have begun to recruit foreign students as a way to survive their financial deficits and combat challenges related to the declining number of students in Korea. This is happening all around the world, but Korea is quickly keeping up with these trends. By using a comprehensive measure to examine how the public perceives foreigners in general, we enhance the understanding of public attitudes as a foundational step towards social integrity.

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Received 21 August 2023

Received in revised form 2 November 2023

Accepted 8 November 2023