

The Paradoxes of Religiocentrism in South Korea

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Religious diversity, encompassing three religious groups, i.e., Buddhists, Protestants, and Roman Catholics, in addition to a large number of non-religious people, has been overlooked in examining attitudes and behavior of South Koreans, even though religion can function as a major divisive line in a society largely lacking ethnic diversity until recently. Using a nationally representative survey, the present study shows the negative consequences of religiocentrism, measured by emotional distances from religious in-group to out-groups. Individuals who have high levels of religiocentrism are more likely to be prejudiced against members of other religious groups and immigrants, less likely to have permissive views on homosexuality and abortion, more likely to hold authoritarian positions regarding social issues, and less likely to trust others and vote. At the same time, people exhibiting religiocentrism tend to report higher levels of happiness. This study calls for institutional efforts to foster mutual understanding across different religious groups in order to accumulate social capital, even as doing so may negatively affect subjective well-being by undermining religious in-group solidarity.

Keywords: religion, ethnocentrism, religiocentrism, in-group favoritism, South Korea

1. INTRODUCTION

Although it is quite well-known that South Korea is one of the most racially and ethnically homogeneous countries, its longstanding religious heterogeneity has received less attention. According to the 2005 Census (Kim, Lee, Son, & Smith, 2009), the Korean population consists of Buddhists (23%), Protestants (18%), Roman Catholics (11%), and those who are not affiliated with any religion (47%).¹ Tension between religious groups obviously exists, but somewhat surprisingly, religion rarely serves as the main political division in South Korea. Presumably because the proportion of non-religious people is large, political elites do not have incentives to use religious appeals to mobilize voters, and therefore, religion-based tension seems to be confined to interpersonal relations and family life of ordinary citizens.

However, occasionally, religious tension is activated in the political arena. For example, the former president of South Korea, Lee Myung-bak, unequivocally expressed his own religious beliefs (Protestantism) in public. As a mayor of the city of Seoul, before he was elected as the president, Lee Myung-bak said, “I declare that the City of Seoul is a holy place governed by Christian God; the citizens in Seoul are Christian God’s people; the churches and Christians in Seoul are spiritual guards that protect the city. [...] I now dedicate Seoul to the Lord (Lee, 2008).” Also, in 2011, while attending a national prayer breakfast in March, President Lee knelt to pray at the urging of Protestant leaders (Hopfner, 2011). His

¹ The 2015 Census reports that 56% Koreans are not affiliated with any religion, while 20% of them are Protestants, 16% Buddhists, and 8% Catholics. It is not clear whether this result is comparable with those from previous surveys, because the 2015 Census is the first Census that employed Internet-based survey methods for a significant number of the respondents.

behavior drew complaints and protests from non-Protestant citizens, and was, in principle, unconstitutional, as South Korea's Constitution clearly stipulates that there is no official religion and bars the country's leaders from elevating one faith above others. These episodes clearly suggest that without ethnic and racial heterogeneity, religion has a potential to function as a main dividing line in Korean society.

Though there have been prior studies that intend to explain the origins of South Korea's religious diversity and its consequences (e.g., Kim, 2002; Kim, 2003; Jeong, 2010), most studies have paid attention to three conventional aspects of religion (Olson & Warber, 2008), i.e., religious affiliation (belonging), religious attendance (behaving), and religiosity (believing). Attitudinal and behavioral differences across religions as a socio-demographic factor are relatively well-reported, but little is known about the roles of the underlying, psychological factor—perhaps except for that of the degree of religious belief, i.e., religiosity—such as emotional distances from religious in-group to out-groups in formulating opinions on social and political issues. By focusing religiocentrism, a concept that reflects an individual's innate religious tension in a more effective way than other religion-related concepts, the present study examines the ways many dimensions of public opinion have been influenced by religion. Following the ethnocentrism arguments by Kinder and Kam (2009), this study shows that, in an environment lacking ethnic and racial division, subjectively perceived differences based on religion is associated with a variety of opinions, including, but not limited to, attitudes toward social issues such as immigration, homosexuality and abortion, conformity to the authority, and even social capital, particularly generalized trust and voting.

2. RELIGIOCENTRISM AS A DETERMINANT OF PUBLIC OPINION

Religiocentrism is defined as the combination of positive attitudes toward religious in-group and negative attitudes toward religious out-groups (Sterkens & Anthony, 2008). Such a definition is rooted in a more well-studied concept, ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is a term for individuals' innate predisposition in which one's own group is the center of everything and all others are evaluated with reference to it. One's own group is considered superior, at the same time groups with which one does not feel affiliated being regarded inferior. Simply put, ethnocentrism is individuals' tendency—which prevails in all the societies around the world—to categorize the human being into in-groups and out-groups. Kinder and Kam (2009) examine ethnocentrism from four distinct theoretical perspectives: ethnocentrism as an expression of social identity, as a consequence of realistic group conflict, as an outgrowth of the authoritarian personality, and as an outcome of natural selection.

Social identity theory begins with an assumption that individuals are motivated to maintain or enhance their self-esteem. Individuals tend to derive their sense of self from their membership in reference groups. The sense of belonging to a specific social group becomes one's identity, reflecting where and how individuals locate themselves in the society as a whole. Identity derives from the process of social categorization, which parses the social world into a manageable set of basic categories (Tajfel, 1981). Individuals overestimate similarities between themselves and their in-group, and accentuate differences between themselves and their various out-groups (Huddy, 2001). In this regard, ethnocentrism is a by-product of the process of identity formation, and therefore it will not disappear unless one is completely disconnected from his or her reference group. Related, yet somewhat

being different from social identity theory, realistic group conflict theory further argues that ethnocentrism includes both in-group solidarity and out-group hostility, which come from intergroup competition over scarce resources or political power (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Simply put, realistic group conflict theory suggests that ethnocentrism involves antagonism between groups rooted in actual conflict, which is not a necessary condition in social identity theory.

Authoritarianism is a psychological mechanism that consolidates group identity. Originally designed to study the causes of anti-Semitism, students of authoritarianism are interested in the evolution of a particular animosity into a general predisposition. People high on authoritarianism measures choose social cohesion over individual autonomy (Stenner, 2005). As authoritarians glorify, encourage, and reward uniformity, authoritarianism is known to be a consistent and powerful predictor of political intolerance, discriminating against any groups who they believe do not conform to the status quo. As a defense mechanism with which to maintain one's identity and justify the society, authoritarianism is inextricably linked with evolutionary processes, which reflect the profoundly social nature of human beings as a species. According to this argument, ethnocentrism is part of fundamental survival strategy that encourages obligatory interdependence and altruism among in-group members (Kurzban, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2001).

In sum, ethnocentrism can be understood as a predisposition produced during the process of social categorization between in-group and out-groups, where actual competition over resources and political power may be involved (realistic group conflict theory) or not (social identity theory). The origins of ethnocentrism can be found in evolutionary processes, and it tends to be reinforced by projecting authoritarian attitudes to the social world. Consequently, as Kinder and Kam (2009) report, one can observe the impact of ethnocentrism on individuals' attitudes toward a myriad of issues such as the war on terrorism, humanitarian assistance, immigration, same-sex marriage, and the welfare state, and therefore it is safe to say that ethnocentrism is a main driving force of public opinion in the United States.

In theory, religiocentrism is a type of ethnocentrism, since some people utilize religious group as a reference group that divides "us" from "them". However, religiocentrism is significantly different from ethnocentrism, mainly because the former is based on a reference group that one can relatively easily change, i.e., religion, while the latter is deeply rooted in another reference group, which is not readily malleable, e.g., ethnicity, race, or nationality. The possibility that one can convert one religion from another during the life cycle undoubtedly makes it less interesting to employ religion as a core element of ethnocentrism. Moreover, religious divisions are usually overlapped with other divisions based on ethnicity, race, and nationality (e.g., Bosnians vs. Serbians in former Yugoslavia, Igbo vs. Yoruba in Nigeria, Uyghurs vs. Chinese in China, to name a few). Given that ethnic, racial, and national groups are more salient in politics than religious ones (Mitchell, 2006), it is understandable that little has been studied on the impact of religiocentrism on individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Thanks to its ethnic and racial homogeneity, however, South Korea offers a unique opportunity to examine the effects of religiocentrism, disentangled from other related types of in-group favoritism, on public opinion and behavior.

There are a myriad of previous studies reporting that religious factors tend to determine attitudes toward broader social issues. For example, religiosity is known to be influential in determining racial prejudice. Brandt and Reyna (2014) show that religious fundamentalists show higher levels of symbolic racism against African-Americans, though not necessarily being emotionally "cold" toward them. Also, religious particularism—belief that there is only

one true religion—is correlated with religious and racial prejudice, while doctrinal belief that there is a “personal” God or individual spirituality—how strongly one is interested in the sacred or the supernatural—is not (Ekici & Yucel, 2015). In a similar vein, there is a report that religiosity is positively associated with authoritarianism (Canetti-Nisim, 2004). The effect of religiosity is far-reaching to cover trust and civic engagement (McAndrew & Voas, 2014), life satisfaction (Lim & Putnam, 2010), and opinions on climate change. America evangelicals tend to oppose climate policy due to their distrust of international cooperation and institutions (Chaudoin, Smith, & Urpelainen, 2014). Religious affiliation seems to matter as well: according to a cross-cultural study, Buddhists and Taoists exhibit high interreligious tolerance and weaker or no anti-gay prejudice (Clobert, Saroglou, Hwang, & Soong, 2014). Religious participation is also reported to be associated with prejudice with regard to any given target group (Burch-Brown & Baker, 2016).

In South Korea, many attempts have been made to clarify the relationship between religion and public attitudes. Buddhists have generally lower levels of educational attainment, occupy lower economic class, and hold more conservative political views than Protestants or Catholics (Kim, 2002). Christianity is known to increase individuals’ civic engagement, while Buddhism does not have an impact on it (Jeong, 2010). However, another study tells us a somewhat different story that among people whose age is over 65, both Buddhists and Catholics are more active in volunteering than Protestants or those who are not affiliated with religion (Kim, Kang, Lee, & Lee, 2007). Though informative, these studies all focus on three conventional aspects of religion (Olson & Warber, 2008), i.e., religious affiliation (belonging), religious attendance (behaving), and religiosity (believing). None of these studies looked at the roles of religiocentrism seriously, and therefore failed to see how individuals incorporate their innate religious tension vis-à-vis religious out-groups in their opinion formation.

This study aims at offering empirical evidence in support of the *fungibility* of in-group favoritism (or, to be specific, religiocentrism), i.e., the possibility that a very strong in-group favoritism on one dimension applies to another dimension. According to the fungibility argument, not only are people high on religiocentrism more like to harbor negative attitudes toward other religious groups, but also do they demonstrate opposition to other, non-religious, out-groups, particularly social minorities. To be specific, people high on religiocentrism are expected to hold negative attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities (e.g., immigrants) and sexual minorities (e.g., homosexuals). It cannot be overstated that the fungibility argument does not assume any causal direction. The argument says that one’s belief in the superiority of one’s religion over others is associated with hostility against other non-religious out-groups. That said, in theory, it is impossible to know whether religiocentrism leads to in-group favoritism in terms of race, ethnicity, nation, and sexual orientation or whether strong attachment to one’s ethnicity or sexual identity yields religiocentrism. However, in practice, lack of ethnic and racial diversity makes it less likely that religiocentrism is a by-product of another type of in-group favoritism.

Religiocentrism also means strong commitment to religious doctrines of one’s own religion. And therefore, it may be linked with higher levels of conformity to the authority. As in-group favoritism indicates closed-mindedness (Kruglanski, 2004), the embeddedness in a reference group will hinder broader exposure to the society, and therefore will undermine civic engagement and the accumulation of social capital. However, paradoxically, a strong sense of belonging to one’s own religion is likely to be associated with higher levels of subjective well-being, as prior studies on group attachment and happiness suggests (Morrison, Tay, & Diener, 2011). The present study offers evidence in support of the image of

religiocentric individuals, who “hunker down”, avoiding exposure to the larger community, while personally being satisfied with their life conditions.

3. DATA AND MEASURES

Statistical analysis is based on the 2008 Korean General Social Survey (KGSS), a nationally representative survey applying the sampling procedure and interviewing methods of the General Social Survey (GSS) of the United States (Kim et al. 2019). The KGSS is composed of a number of core questions, which are generally compatible with those of the GSS, a survey year specific module shared with the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), and its own unique, additional questions. The key independent variables used in this study are part of the 2008 ISSP module. The total number of respondents in the 2008 KGSS is 1,507. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, a small number of respondents ($n = 26$) affiliated with minor religious groups such as Confucianism, Won Buddhism, and Taoism have been excluded. The sample is limited to four major groups: Buddhists ($n = 357$; 24.1%), Protestants ($n = 391$; 26.4%), Catholics ($n = 135$; 9.1%), and Atheists or No Religion ($n = 598$; 40.4%).

3.1. Dependent Variables

Five sets of the dependent variables are employed in statistical analysis. The first set is about individual's attitudes toward members of other religious groups, measured by asking whether respondents are willing to accept a member of other religious group as the spouse of their relatives (1 = Support; 4 = Oppose; $M = 1.95$, $SD = 0.93$) and whether respondents are willing to accept a member of other religious group as a candidate for their preferred political party (1 = Support; 4 = Oppose; $M = 1.81$, $SD = 0.82$). The second set asks about the respondent's attitudes toward homosexuality (1 = Support; 4 = Oppose, $M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.91$) and abortion due to financial hardship (1 = Support; 4 = Oppose, $M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.12$). The third set of the dependent variables is about the respondents' attitudes toward immigrants, i.e., foreign workers (1 = Accept More; 5 = Do Not Accept, $M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.99$) and foreign brides (1 = Accept More; 5 = Do Not Accept, $M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.98$). The fourth set taps the levels of conformity to the authority, asking whether one should respect the father's authority (1 = Never; 7 = Always, $M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.37$) and whether one should obey orders from the supervisor even if they are in conflict with one's ideas (1 = Never, 7 = Always, $M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.55$). The last set of questions is about generalized trust (1 = Never Trust, 4 = Always Trust, $M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.71$) and self-reported voting in the 2007 presidential election (78% of the respondents reported to have voted).

As one can easily imagine, the first set of the dependent variables directly reflects the nature of religiocentrism, whereas the rest of them do not seem to be determined by relative strength of religious in-group favoritism. The second set of the variables offer an opportunity to see the effects of religiocentrism on opinions on religion-related issues such as homosexuality and abortion, the third set allows us to test the fungibility hypothesis suggesting in-group favoritism in terms of religion can yield another in-group favoritism in other dimensions (e.g., immigration), the fourth set explores the relationship between religiocentrism and conformity to the non-religious authority, and the fifth set examines whether religiocentrism and attitudes and behaviors regarding social capital are mutually

associated.

3.2. Independent Variables

In order to measure the main independent variable, religiocentrism, Kinder and Kam's (2009) strategy regarding ethnocentrism has been employed. The KGSS does not contain feeling thermometer questions on religious groups. Instead, a set of questions asking respondents' subjective evaluations of each religious group are available. They are five-point scale questions, higher values indicating positive attitudes toward a given religious group. Using these questions, religiocentrism is calculated as follows:

Religiocentrism

= \sum (subjective evaluation of R's own religion) – (subjective evaluation of other religious groups).

For example, the religiocentrism score of a Roman Catholic respondent is a simple sum of perceived distances between Catholicism and three other religious groups (i.e., Catholicism vs. Buddhism, Catholicism vs. Protestantism, and Catholicism vs. Atheists or No Religion). Religiocentrism ranges from -4 to +4, positive values indicating in-group favoritism, zero denoting no attitudinal differences between in-group and out-groups, and negative values indicating out-group favoritism.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of religiocentrism. As expected, all four religious groups demonstrate in-group favoritism, but its degree is noticeably smaller in the case of Atheists or No Religion ($M = 0.13$, $SD = 0.78$) than three religious groups (Buddhists: $M = 0.83$, $SD = 0.69$; Protestants: $M = 0.96$, $SD = 0.88$; and Catholics: $M = 0.94$, $SD = 0.64$). Religiocentrism by religious groups offers some interesting information. Members of three religious groups demonstrate in-group favoritism vis-à-vis other religions, but those not affiliated with any religious groups hold relatively negative attitudes toward Protestants ($M = 0.61$, $SD = 1.30$), while holding relatively positive attitudes toward Catholics ($M = -0.03$, $SD = 1.13$) and Buddhists ($M = -0.05$, $SD = 1.06$). However, none of these group differences turn out to be statistically significant, and therefore one cannot conclude that Protestants are

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Religiocentrism (by Religious Affiliation)

	Religiocentrism (General)		Group-specific Religiocentrism: Protestants		Group-specific Religiocentrism: Catholics		Group-specific Religiocentrism: Buddhists		Group-specific Religiocentrism: No Religion	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Buddhist</i>	0.83	0.69	1.48	1.22	0.80	1.04	0	0	1.04	1.06
<i>Protestant</i>	0.96	0.88	0	0	0.80	1.22	1.47	1.43	1.56	1.38
<i>Catholic</i>	0.94	0.64	1.53	1.22	0	0	0.80	0.90	1.44	1.11
<i>No Religion</i>	0.13	0.78	0.61	1.30	-0.03	1.13	-0.05	1.06	0	0

Note: The religiocentrism variable ranges from -4 to +4. Positive values indicate religious in-group favoritism, while negative values denote religious out-group favoritism. Zero indicate the non-existence of religiocentrism (n= 1,481).

the least favored religious group in South Korea. Nor is it true to say that religiocentrism is significantly stronger among Protestants than other religious groups despite the fact that evangelicalism is dominant in South Korean Protestantism (Lee, 2010; Ryu, 2008). Table 1 shows that group differences in terms of religiocentrism are much subtler than expected.

In order to see what determines religiocentrism, a regression analysis has been performed (not reported here). In the model, religiocentrism is regressed on three religion-related variables, i.e., religiosity, religious attendance, and religious affiliation (Buddhists, Protestants, and Catholics with No Religion as a reference category), after controlling for a variety of socio-demographic variables such as age, income, gender, education, employment status, marital status, and fifteen province-level dummies. None of the control variables turn out to be statistically significant, but, as expected, religion-related variables are good predictors of religiocentrism: religiosity ($b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = 0.02$), religious attendance ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < 0.01$), Buddhists ($b = 0.43$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < 0.01$), Protestants ($b = 0.37$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < 0.01$), and Catholics ($b = 0.45$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that, albeit conceptually and operationally different from each other, religiocentrism is a function of well-studied concepts related to religion.

3.3. Covariates

An array of control variables is included in the statistical models: age, gender, monthly household income, education, political ideology, financial satisfaction, employment status (currently working, student, homemaker, retired, and unemployed) and marital status (married, widowed, separate/divorced, and never married). In addition to these control variables, the models also include three variables related to religion, religious affiliation (with “Atheists or No Religion” as a reference category), self-reported religiosity, and religious attendance. If the effects of the main independent variable, religiocentrism, on the dependent variables are significant, even controlling for three well-known dimensions of religion (i.e., religiosity, religious attendance, and religious affiliation), then the results clearly demonstrate the added values of religiocentrism as a determinant of public opinion and suggest that many previous studies on religion and individuals’ attitudes and behaviors suffer from a serious omitted variable bias.

3.4. Analytic Strategies

Since all the dependent variables used in this study are ordinal variables with 4-, 5-, or 7-point scales, ordered probit has been employed as an estimation method. The province-level fixed effects are considered to eliminate the possibility that the results are the products of correlations between religiocentrism and some unobserved contextual factors (e.g., province-level cultural differences) that might affect the dependent variables. The results also report robust standard errors clustered at the province level to allow for the interdependence of survey respondents in a given province. Since the unstandardized coefficients from ordered probit are not intuitively interpretable, the predicted probabilities are calculated, following Long (1997).

4. RESULTS

Table 2 demonstrates the results regarding the effects of religiocentrism on attitudes toward members of other religious groups. Consistent with our expectation, religiocentrism turns out to be associated with negative attitudes toward other religious groups. People high on religiocentrism are less willing to accept members of other religious groups as spouses of their relatives ($b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.01$) and also do not like the idea of having members of other religious groups as candidate for their preferred political party ($b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.05$). These findings hold even after controlling for a few religion-related factors such as religiosity, religious attendance, and religious affiliation, some of which yield statistically significant finding. For example, other things being equal, Catholics are likely to harbor lower levels of prejudice against other religions ($b = -0.56$, $SE = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$ for Model 1 and $b = -0.49$, $SE = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$ for Model 2).

Table 2. Religiocentrism and Attitudes toward Members of Other Religions

	Marry with R's Relatives (1=Support; 4=Oppose)		Become a Candidate for R's Preferred Political Party(1=Support; 4=Oppose)	
	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coef (SE)	Min-Max Change	Coef (SE)	Min-Max Change
<i>Religiocentrism</i>	0.19** (0.05)	-0.37	0.12* (0.05)	-0.23
<i>Religiosity</i>	0.02 (0.04)	-0.05	0.02 (0.03)	-0.04
<i>Religious Attendance</i>	0.07** (0.01)	-0.18	0.01 (0.01)	-0.02
<i>Buddhists</i>	-0.17 (0.11)	0.06	-0.26* (0.11)	0.10
<i>Protestants</i>	-0.05 (0.15)	0.02	-0.13 (0.11)	0.05
<i>Catholics</i>	-0.56** (0.15)	0.22	-0.49** (0.17)	0.19
N	1375		1363	
Pseudo-R ²	0.04		0.03	

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized coefficients and cluster-robust standard errors at the level of province from ordered probit; cut points are not reported; the reference category for religious affiliation is "No Religion"; age, gender, income, education, political ideology, financial satisfaction, employment status, marital status are included as controls, but are not reported here; fixed effects at the level of province are applied. The predicted probabilities (min-max changes) indicate the probability of choosing a value ("strongly support") of the dependent variables, when each independent variable moves from its minimum value to its maximum value.

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

The effect sizes of religion-related variables are calculated, following the procedures delineated by Long (1997). With other variables fixed at their mean values, an increase in religiocentrism from its minimum to its maximum values (min-max change) correlates with a 37%-point decrease in a respondent's likelihood of strongly supporting the marriage between member of other religious groups and his or her relatives. An equivalent increase in religiocentrism corresponds to a 23%-point decrease in the likelihood of strongly supporting members of other religions as a candidate for the respondent's preferred political party. These effect sizes are also substantially large: for example, the equivalent magnitude of the effect of religious attendance (from its minimum, "never", to its maximum, "more than once per week"), another statistically significant variable in Model 1, is a negative 18%-point. These results indicate that the effects of religiocentrism on prejudice against other religions are greater than other religion-related variables, despite the fact that, as potential determinants of religiocentrism, they overshadow the direct effects of religiocentrism on the dependent

Table 3. Religiocentrism and Opinions on Homosexuality and Abortion

	Homosexuality (1=Oppose; 4=Support)		Abortion due to Financial Hardship (1=Oppose; 4=Support)	
	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coef (SE)	Min-Max Change	Coef (SE)	Min-Max Change
<i>Religiocentrism</i>	-0.19** (0.04)	0.33	-0.06* (0.03)	0.11
<i>Religiosity</i>	-0.02 (0.02)	0.04	0.01 (0.04)	-0.01
<i>Religious Attendance</i>	-0.02 (0.02)	0.04	-0.07** (0.02)	0.17
<i>Buddhists</i>	0.07 (0.09)	-0.02	0.21* (0.08)	-0.06
<i>Protestants</i>	-0.22 (0.14)	0.07	0.09 (0.06)	-0.03
<i>Catholics</i>	0.06 (0.10)	-0.02	0.20* (0.08)	-0.06
N	1361		1372	
Pseudo-R ²	0.09		0.04	

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized coefficients and cluster-robust standard errors at the level of province from ordered probit; cut points are not reported; the reference category for religious affiliation is "No Religion"; age, gender, income, education, political ideology, financial satisfaction, employment status, marital status are included as controls, but are not reported here; fixed effects at the level of province are applied. The predicted probabilities (min-max changes) indicate the probability of choosing a value ("strongly oppose") of the dependent variables, when each independent variable moves from its minimum value to its maximum value.

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

variables.

Table 3 demonstrates the results regarding the effects of religiocentrism on attitudes toward two social issues, i.e., homosexuality and abortion due to financial hardship. Consistent with our expectation, religiocentrism turns out to be associated with negative attitudes toward homosexuality ($b = -0.19$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$) and abortion ($b = -0.06$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < 0.05$). None of other religion-related variables exert influence on attitudes toward homosexuality, while people who regularly attend church or temple are less likely to support abortion due to financial hardship. Also, compared with people unaffiliated with a religion, Buddhists and Catholics are more likely to support abortion. With other variables fixed at their mean values, an increase in religiocentrism from its minimum to its maximum values correlates with a 33%-point increase in a respondent's likelihood of strongly opposing homosexuality. An equivalent increase in religiocentrism corresponds to a 11%-point increase in the likelihood of strongly opposing abortion due to financial hardship, which is slightly smaller of the effect of religious attendance (17%-point). These findings suggest that, at least in the case of attitudes toward homosexuality, religiocentrism has been an important, omitted variable.

Table 4 demonstrates the results regarding the effects of religiocentrism on attitudes toward immigrants. Consistent with our expectation, religiocentrism turns out to be associated with negative attitudes toward immigrants. People high on religiocentrism believe that it is necessary to reduce the number of foreign workers ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < 0.05$) and brides from other countries ($b = 0.10$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < 0.05$). Similar to the previous set of results, these findings hold even after controlling for a few religion-related factors such as religiosity, religious attendance, and religious affiliation. With other variables fixed at their mean values, an increase in religiocentrism from its minimum to its maximum values correlates with a 9%-point increase in a respondent's likelihood of believing that the number of foreign workers need to be decrease a little. An equivalent increase in religiocentrism corresponds to a 12%-point increase in the likelihood of reporting that the number of foreign brides need to be decreased a little.

Religiocentrism also turns out to be positively associated with conformity to the non-religious authority (Table 5). People high on religiocentrism are more likely to believe that it is desirable to always respect fathers' authority ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < 0.05$) and to obey orders from the supervisor even if these orders are at odds of their own ideas ($b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.05$). With other variables fixed at their mean values, an increase in religiocentrism from its minimum to its maximum values correlates with a 14%-point increase in a respondent's strong belief that the authority of the father must be respected. An equivalent increase in religiocentrism corresponds to a 10%-point increase in strong belief that one must obey orders from the supervisor.

Table 6 demonstrates the relationship between religiocentrism and elements of social capital, i.e., generalized trust and voting. Religiocentrism is negatively associated with generalized trust ($b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.05$), and it is also negatively associated with self-reported voter turnout ($b = -0.10$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.05$). With other variables fixed at their mean values, an increase in religiocentrism from its minimum to its maximum values correlates with a 17%-point decrease in a respondent's likelihood of reporting a moderate level of trust ("I somewhat trust people"), while it corresponds to a 13%-point decrease in self-reported voting.

In order to see whether the relationship between religiocentrism and the dependent variables varies across religious groups, a set of additional analysis have been performed

Table 4. Religiocentrism and Attitudes toward Immigrants

	Foreign Workers (1=Accept More; 5=Reduce)		Foreign Brides (1=Accept More; 5=Reduce)	
	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coef (SE)	Min-Max Change	Coef (SE)	Min-Max Change
<i>Religiocentrism</i>	0.08* (0.04)	0.09	0.10* (0.04)	0.12
<i>Religiosity</i>	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.04	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02
<i>Religious Attendance</i>	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01
<i>Buddhists</i>	0.02 (0.04)	0.01	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.01
<i>Protestants</i>	-0.02 (0.10)	-0.01	0.04 (0.14)	0.01
<i>Catholics</i>	0.11 (0.13)	0.02	0.03 (0.13)	0.01
N	1352		1347	
Pseudo-R ²	0.03		0.01	

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized coefficients and cluster-robust standard errors at the level of province from ordered probit; cut points are not reported; the reference category for religious affiliation is “No Religion”; age, gender, income, education, political ideology, financial satisfaction, employment status, marital status are included as controls, but are not reported here; fixed effects at the level of province are applied. The predicted probabilities (min-max changes) indicate the probability of choosing a value (“need to reduce the number of immigrants a little”) of the dependent variables, when each independent variable moves from its minimum value to its maximum value.

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

by adding interaction terms between religiocentrism and three religious groups (Buddhist, Protestant, and Catholic, with No Religion as a reference category) in the models (not reported here). It turns out that religiocentrism affects attitudes toward other religious groups differently, depending on the respondent’s religious affiliation. As shown in Table 2, people high on religiocentrism are less likely to accept a member of other religious group as their relatives’ spouse, and such as relationship tends to be larger among Protestants ($p < 0.01$ for religiocentrism x Protestant). Likewise, the tendency of rejecting a member of another religious group as a candidate of one’s preferred political party increases for Protestants ($p < 0.01$ for religiocentrism x Protestant) and Catholics ($p < 0.01$ for religiocentrism x Catholic). However, none of these interaction terms turn out to be statistically significant, when other dependent variables are under scrutiny. It suggests that the effects of religiocentrism on attitudes toward social issues, other out-groups, non-religious authority, and social capital are

Table 5. Religiocentrism and Conformity to Authority

	Respect Father's Authority (1=No; 7=Yes)		Obey Orders from the Supervisor (1=No; 7=Yes)	
	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coef (SE)	Min-Max Change	Coef (SE)	Min-Max Change
<i>Religiocentrism</i>	0.08* (0.04)	0.14	0.14* (0.05)	0.10
<i>Religiosity</i>	0.05* (0.03)	0.10	0.01 (0.02)	0.01
<i>Religious Attendance</i>	0.01 (0.02)	0.02	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02
<i>Buddhists</i>	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.01	0.03 (0.09)	0.01
<i>Protestants</i>	-0.15 (0.11)	-0.05	0.15 (0.08)	0.02
<i>Catholics</i>	-0.01 (0.13)	-0.01	-0.10 (0.10)	-0.01
N	1382		1382	
Pseudo-R ²	0.05		0.02	

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized coefficients and cluster-robust standard errors at the level of province from ordered probit; the reference category for religious affiliation is “No Religion”; cut points are not reported; age, gender, income, education, political ideology, financial satisfaction, employment status, marital status are included as controls, but are not reported here; fixed effects at the level of province are applied. The predicted probabilities (min-max changes) indicate the probability of choosing a value (“strongly support” for Model 1 and “somewhat support” for Model 2) of the dependent variables, when each independent variable moves from its minimum value to its maximum value.

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

not moderated by religious affiliation.

To be specific, the lack of statistical significance of the interaction terms between Protestant and religiocentrism in the case of attitudes toward immigration allow us to exclude the possibility that South Korean Protestants react to immigrants based on their religious affiliation. If Protestants (or Christians, in general) considered current immigrants—mostly Korean-Chinese, as well as those from Southeast Asia—as a distinct religious group, the above-mentioned interaction terms should have been significant. Likewise, the fact that interaction terms between religiocentrism and religious affiliation failed to yield significant results in predicting attitudes toward homosexuality and abortion suggests that opinions on these issues are not group-specific.

Another analysis has been performed to see whether religiocentrism is associated with

Table 6. Religiocentrism and Generalized Trust and Voting

	Trust (1=No; 4=Yes)		Voting (1=Voted)	
	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coef (SE)	Min-Max Change	Coef (SE)	Min-Max Change
<i>Religiocentrism</i>	-0.11* (0.05)	-0.17	-0.10* (0.05)	-0.13
<i>Religiosity</i>	0.02 (0.03)	0.03	0.01 (0.03)	0.00
<i>Religious Attendance</i>	0.02 (0.03)	0.05	0.08** (0.03)	0.12
<i>Buddhists</i>	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.01	0.26* (0.12)	0.06
<i>Protestants</i>	-0.01 (0.10)	-0.01	0.07 (0.13)	0.02
<i>Catholics</i>	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.01	0.35 (0.19)	0.07
N	1377		1351	
Pseudo-R ²	0.02		0.12	

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized coefficients and cluster-robust standard errors at the level of province from ordered probit (Model 1) and probit (Model 2); cut points are not reported; the reference category for religious affiliation is “No Religion”; age, gender, income, education, political ideology, financial satisfaction, employment status, marital status are included as controls, but are not reported here; fixed effects at the level of province are applied. The predicted probabilities (min-max changes) indicate the probability of choosing a value (“trust somewhat” for Model 1 and “voted” for Model 2) of the dependent variables, when each independent variable moves from its minimum value to its maximum value.

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

self-reported level of life satisfaction (not reported here). The dependent variable is based on a 4-point scale survey question asking whether the respondents feel happy these days. As this dependent variable is quite different from others used in above-mentioned analysis in terms of its nature, the control variable included the model (ordered probit) are not identical. The model includes well-known predictors of happiness: age and its squared term to see a curvilinear relationship between age and happiness (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008), gender, education (Dolan, Peasgood, & White, 2008), income (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002), marital status (Myers, 1999), employment status (Lelkes, 2006), trust (Helliwell, 2003), financial satisfaction (Johnson & Krueger, 2006), political ideology (Napier & Jost, 2008), political participation (Stutzer & Frey, 2006), and religious attendance (Lim & Putnam, 2010). Analysis shows that people high on religiocentrism turn out to be happier ($b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < 0.05$), which suggest group solidarity fostered by religious in-group favoritism

offers life satisfaction.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

According to the findings of this study, individuals high on religiocentrism are prejudiced against other religious groups, have conservative opinions on social issues such as homosexuality and abortion, hold negative attitudes toward immigrants, are authoritarian, are less likely to trust others, and less likely to vote in South Korea. Given that South Korea is largely an ethnically and racially homogeneous country, the effects of religiocentrism on individuals' attitudes and behavior are free from confounding factors based on other group identities. Moreover, all these results are obtained after controlling for religion-related variables (religiosity, religious attendance, and religious affiliation), and therefore, one can realize how misleading the previous studies on religion and political behavior has been. It is relatively easy to understand that religiocentrism, i.e., religious in-group favoritism, is negatively associated with attitudes toward other religious group members. Also, it is by and large consistent with our intuition to see the negative association between religiocentrism and social issues (e.g., homosexuality and abortion) because they have not been compatible with religious beliefs.

However, the linkage between religiocentrism and attitudes toward non-religious out-groups needs more explanations. One possible way in which one can interpret such a finding is to pay attention to the fungibility of prejudice against out-groups. Religiocentrism leads to antagonism against religious out-groups, which, in turn, yields another set of prejudice against non-religious out-groups who are usually marginalized from the mainstream society (e.g., immigrants). Furthermore, the belief that one's own group is superior to other groups dovetails with higher levels of conformity to the authority. Ultimately, strong in-group favoritism hinders individuals from accumulating social capital, by undermining trust and discouraging voter turnout. These negative consequences notwithstanding, individuals high on religiocentrism report higher levels of happiness.

This study contributes to our understanding of religious in-group favoritism and its far-reaching consequences in individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Taking advantage of a unique situation of South Korea, i.e., a high level of racial and ethnic homogeneity with religious diversity, this study reveals that the effects of religiocentrism have been underestimated in explaining political behavior of ordinary citizens. In order to minimize the negative consequences of religiocentrism, it seems necessary to make institutional efforts for promoting mutual understanding across religious groups. By doing so, one can reduce prejudice against minority groups, make people less authoritarian, and facilitate civic engagement to enhance social capital, but it may harm one's subjective well-being. Further empirical research needs to be considered to resolve such a dilemma.

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