

## Who Thinks and Behaves According to Human Rights?: Evidence from the Korean National Human Rights Survey\*

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The sociology of human rights has focused on the worldwide diffusion of human rights and analyzed the factors associated with this global social change and its impacts on nation-states. Yet, the way a world of human rights affects individuals has largely remained

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understudied. In an effort to fill in this gap, this article analyzes a comprehensive dataset compiled from a unique national human rights survey conducted in South Korea in 2011. We first differentiate the underlying structure of individual orientations toward human rights, thereby identifying three dimensions we call knowledge, endorsement, and engagement. We find high levels of knowledge in human rights and endorsement, yet relatively low levels of engagement in human rights among Korean respondents. Our regression analyses show that knowledge of human rights is strongly influenced by urban status, liberal political ideology, trust level, educational attainment, and identification with global citizenship. More urban and more educated individuals also report higher levels of behavioral engagement in favor of human rights. Many of these variables do not have the expected effects on the endorsement variable. Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that the influence of global emphases on the value of human rights is more strongly felt by the individuals more attuned to these emphases. Furthermore, these findings show the usefulness of analyzing opinion polls or surveys that suggest the complex processes underlying individuals' perceptions and action toward human rights.

**Key Words:** Human Rights, Human Rights Survey, Knowledge, Endorsement, Engagement, World Polity, Global Citizenship

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## I. Introduction

The extraordinary global expansion of a human rights regime in the past several decades has led to more systematic studies of human rights developments. Much of this scholarship has focused on nations and national human rights developments, thereby, examining both the sources and the outcomes of these societal developments (Tsutsui and Wotipka, 2004; Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui, 2005; Koo and Ramirez, 2009). Some studies privilege the economic, political, or cultural characteristics of societies and imagine these as the driving

force of human rights developments (Poe and Tate, 1994; Poe et al., 1999; Moravcsik, 2000; Landman, 2006; Zhou, 2013). These studies point to the influence of modern economies, urbanization, democratic systems, and religious traditions as significant sources. These studies are important in their own right but fail to take into account the transnational trends in the direction of greater emphases on human rights.

More recently, a world society perspective has provided an alternative explanation by highlighting the growing centrality of the human person in the wider world and in social science theories — e.g. considering education and human capital as the key to individual and national development (Boli and Thomas, 1997; Meyer and Jepperson, 2000; Meyer, 2010; Ramirez, 2012). This perspective also emphasizes the importance of national links to the wider world in fostering human rights developments (Cole and Ramirez, 2013; Yoo and Koo, 2014). The latter is more likely to flourish in the countries with greater consciousness of global citizenship (Moon and Koo, 2011; Kamens, 2012). The core assumption is that the national societies are embedded in a world that favors and legitimates human rights developments. However different these perspectives may be, the studies they inform have typically focused on national-states as units of analysis. This is true even though most perspectives imagine transformations at the individual level and variations in the individual receptions of human rights developments (Meyer et al., 2010; Bromley et al., 2011; Blau and Moncada, 2007). The literature simply does not inform us as to why some individuals are more likely to be attuned to human rights than others.

We seek to address this gap in the literature by analyzing a nationally representative survey of human rights conducted in 2011 on the citizens of South Korea. We differentiate several dimensions of human rights orientations and analyze the variables leading to individual differences in human rights knowledge, endorsement, and engagement. Knowing what individuals think about human rights and what factors shape their attitudes is important not only because it significantly adds to our knowledge of an important phenomena, but also because it helps to design better public policies regarding human

rights. The research on individual human rights orientations thus informs both scholars and policy makers.

In what follows, we first briefly review the literature on human rights and the emergence of questions regarding human rights in the public opinion polls. Next, we focus on the 2011 National Human Rights Survey in South Korea and show how we arrived at the relevant dependent variables of interest. We then set forth a number of hypotheses implied by different perspectives on human rights. Lastly, we analyze the data using OLS regression models and report our main findings. Their implications are discussed in our concluding section.

## **II. The Expansion of Human Rights and Public Opinion Polls**

Since the Second World War and the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights have become a core principle of world society, and the pace of its expansion has become much more pronounced during the last two decades (Stacy, 2009; Blau and Moncada, 2007). There are numerous human rights treaties promulgated, to which an increasingly large number of nation-states have become a party. Several hundreds of human rights declarations encompassing a wide range of rights-holders emerged to supplement the core human rights treaties (Elliot, 2011). In addition, the human rights organizational fields, comprising of IGOs and INGOs, were formed and they propelled the further spreading of human rights ideals (Landman, 2006).

Central to this remarkable expansion of human rights is the impact of contemporary political and cultural globalization, which challenges the legitimacy of nation-states, subsequently strengthens the standing of non-state actors, and empowers individuals and their authorities. The individual person, to a surprising degree, replaces the nation-state as the foundational ontological backdrop of the contemporary world polity (Meyer, 2010). The expansion of education propels

this ontological transformation with its emphasis on the rights, status, and powers of individual persons rather than on corporate identities, including nationhood (Bromley et al., 2011). Consequently, the ideas of human rights coupled with individualism gained salience, expanded throughout the world, and became a guiding principle of worldwide cosmopolitan citizens.

In tandem with these global changes, sociological studies of human rights emerged and increased in their scope and sophistication. Numerous scholars empirically addressed a broad range of human rights issues. The topics include countries' ratification of human rights treaties (Cole, 2005; Wotipka and Ramirez, 2008), memberships in rights organizations (Tsutsui and Wotipka, 2004), adoption of human rights organizations and their influence on human rights practices (Koo and Ramirez, 2009; Cole and Ramirez, 2013), human rights improvements (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui, 2005), measurements of human rights (Koo et al., 2012), social movements focused on human rights (Smith et al. 1998; Tsutsui 2006), media coverage (Cole, 2010), human rights education (Suarez et al., 2009; Meyer et al., 2010), and minority rights (Soysal, 2002).

These studies emphasize political and cultural globalization as the driving motor of the human rights expansion and attribute this expansion to the greater worldwide integration of nations-states — the extent to which countries are linked to the larger globalization process. Due to the centrality of the nation-state as the unit of analysis and their linkage to the world polity, however, little is known about the extent to which *individual persons* are exposed to the ideas of human rights and how their perceptions and attitudes of human rights are influenced by their exposure to global influences favoring human rights. In this study, we examine the public opinion polls, especially the ones focused on human rights, and primarily analyze the associations between individuals' human rights orientations and the measures of their integration to the wider society. We also examine the influence of demographic factors identified in other perspectives on human rights. Cross-national studies often show that both societal and transnational factors influence human rights developments. The

adoption of human rights commissions, for example, is influenced by the factors both at the country-level, such as level of democracy, and at the global-level, such as the extent of linkages to the wider world (Koo and Ramirez, 2009).

Though several scholars recently began to recognize the salience of examining public opinion polls and studying the construction of individuals by the world polity (Kamens, 2012; Givens and Jorgenson, 2013; Zhou, 2013), the analysis of opinion polls regarding human rights and how individual human rights concerns are shaped by different factors remain as an underdeveloped line of inquiry. It is true that many sociologists studied indigenous people, migrants, refugees, and racial/ethnic minorities; yet, these categories of people were treated as human *groups*, not as human *persons* (Brunsmas et al., 2012). Sociologists studying human rights education celebrate the human person as “the sovereign protagonist of rights claims” (Meyer et al., 2010: 113) and treat it as an ultimate authority in the post-citizenship era. However, individuals and citizens themselves have rarely been treated as the subjects of research and little is known about the origins, structures, and consequences of citizens’ human rights orientations.

This underdeveloped line of inquiry is in good part due to lack of data, which is a direct result of an inadequacy in the number of human rights public opinion polls or surveys. Both General Social Survey and World Values Survey most recently allocated minimal space for questions regarding what the citizens think about human rights. Likewise, International Social Survey Program, European Barometers, and East Asian Barometers all have rarely posed questions that measure the extent of citizens’ awareness and understanding of human rights. Simply put, reliable data are not readily available for researchers who seek to study public opinion to gauge human rights developments at the individual level.

It is notable, however, that the questions related to human rights are increasingly found in polls or surveys conducted in the U.S. and other parts of the world. And, it is primarily driven by an increasing pressure from the scholarly community who sees the importance of conducting human rights surveys as well as incorporating questions

regarding human rights into the currently available survey tools. Interestingly, the increasing relevancy of opinion polls to the study of human rights seems to be a byproduct of the developments in the world polity that problematizes the authority of political elites and makes individual voices more influential (Kamens, 2012).

From the late 1970s, several opinion polls conducted in the U.S. with an emphasis on foreign relations began to incorporate human rights as a part of their themes. Though they lacked a full-blown treatment of human rights emphases, early opinion polls, including the one conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) in partnership with the Gallup Organization, initiated the appearances of human rights related questions on a regular basis in the opinion polls for foreign policy (e.g., questions asking Americans, at 4-year intervals, to rate the importance of various goals of the American foreign policy, including promoting and defending human rights in other countries).

Yet, it was not until the 1990s and the 2000s that human rights related questions appeared in a wider spectrum of opinion polls or surveys that range from American, European, to Asian public polls. In 1989, the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs provided a similar effort to learn about the citizens' attitudes toward human rights, as a main frame for foreign policy. In 1999, Gallup International began to gauge how citizens in dozens of countries around the world formulated their perceptions towards their countries' human rights practices. Spurred by the attack on the Afghan Taliban regime in 2002 and the war in Iraq in 2003, several American public opinion polls posed questions regarding people's attitudes toward global terrorism and their support for human rights. Table 1 chronologically outlines the human rights related opinion polls in the U.S from 1978 to 2009.

Similar efforts were made by European Barometers and other opinion polls focused on central and Eastern European countries, including Russia, in which the respondents were asked to rate the level of human rights observance in their countries. In addition, Asian versions of opinion polls on human rights were conducted. Notably, in 2005, under the auspices of the National Human Rights Commission

Table 1. Public Opinion Surveys on Human Rights, the U.S.

Year	Survey Title	Survey Organization	Respondents (Sample Size)	Main Subject
1978- (every 4 year)	Foreign Policy Leadership Project	Chicago Council on Foreign Relations	General public, and opinion leaders	American public opinion on international human rights
1980	College Global Understanding Survey	Council on Learning, Educational Testing Service	College students (3,000)	Support for human rights, global values and institutes
1997	Public Knowledge and Opinions on Universal Human Rights	Peter D. Hart Research Associates	Adults (1,000), and the youth (200)	Discrimination experiences and human rights issues
2004	Americans on Detention, Torture, and the War on Terrorism	PIPA-Knowledge Networks	Adults (892)	Liberty of person
2006	American Opinion on the Rights of Terrorism Suspects	World Public Opinion	Adults (1,059)	Terrorism, and torture
2006	Human Rights and Ethical Consumption Survey	Researchers including prof. Hertel, Dept. Politics, Univ. of Connecticut	Adults (508)	Civic rights endorsement and related behaviors including "ethic consumption"
2007	Belden Poll: Human Rights in the United States	Belden, Russonello, and Stewart	Opinion leaders (600), and general public (1,500)	Domestic policy on human rights
2008	State of the First Amendment	Freedom Forum, American Journalism Review	Adults (1,005)	Freedom of press
2009	Americans on Torture	World Public Opinion	Adults (805)	Tortures, etc.
2009	U.S. Opinion on Human Rights (in "Public Opinion on Global Issues")	Council on Foreign Relations	Adults (proximately 1,000)	General opinion and assessment on human rights issues

of Korea, South Korean researchers administered their first-ever human rights survey. The unique feature of this survey was that it was composed of questions only pertaining to human rights issues.



Table 2 chronologically displays the opinion polls or surveys on human rights in Europe and Japan, and Table 3 shows the history of human rights surveys in South Korea.

*Table 2. Public Opinion Surveys on Human Rights, Europe and Japan*

Year	Survey Title	Survey Organization	Respondents (Sample Size)	Main subject
1958-2007	Japanese Public Opinion Survey on Human Rights	Cabinet Office, Government of Japan	Proximately 2,000 cases each survey	General issues focusing on rights on human body
1981-	World Values Survey	World Values Survey Association	Over 80 countries	Social, cultural, political changes in each country (partly human rights items)
1990-1997	Central and Eastern Eurobarometer Surveys (CEEB)	European Commission	Proximately 1,000 cases each country	Public opinion about the government's respect for human rights in 18 Central, East European countries during transition period to democracy / market economy
1995	Human rights Orientation of Czech University Students	Prof. Macek research team	University students (447)	Knowledge of UDHR on eight criteria
1999	Gallup International Millennium Survey	Gallup	Over 50,000 cases 55 countries worldwide	Assessment on human rights protection in each country
2000	Voice of the People Millennium Survey	Gallup International Association	Adults over 50 countries	Women's rights and human rights issues
2001	Russian Public Opinion on Human Rights and the War in Chechnya	All-Russian Center for Public Opinion and Market Research	Russian people (2,405)	General human rights issues and other specific issues such as army in Chechen
2001-2002	After September 11 Survey	Prof. Cohrs research team in Germany	Adults (479)	Assessment on the political contexts after September 11 (80% internet survey, 20% questionnaire survey, 479 matching cases)

Year	Survey Title	Survey Organization	Respondents (Sample Size)	Main subject
2002-2003	German Public Opinion on Human Rights	USUMA (survey organization in Berlin), German Institute for Human Rights	In 2002, Adults (2,051) In 2003, Adults (2,017)	Comparison of knowledge on human rights declarations and human rights orientation between West and East Germany
2008	World Public Opinion on Women's Rights	World Public Opinion	23 countries worldwide	Women's rights
2008	Socio-Economic Problems, Politics, Human Rights	World Public Opinion	25 countries (26,599)	International policy, discrimination
2009	World Opinion on Human Rights (in "Public Opinion on Global Issues")	Council on Foreign Relations	21 countries (20,202)	UN advocacy activities and general opinions on human rights

Table 3. Public Opinion Surveys on Human Rights, South Korea

Year	Survey Title	Survey Organization	Respondents (Sample Size)	Main Subject
2005	The National Human Rights Survey	National Human Rights Commission of Korea	General public (1,263), opinion leaders (90) and activists in NGOs/NPOs (101)	General survey on human rights orientation
2006	Human Rights Survey in Kwangju City and Chonnam Province	National Human Rights Commission of Korea, Kwangju Branch Office	General public, and activists in NGOs/NPOs (200)	Human rights, discrimination, and human rights education
2008	Social Safety in Korean Society	ISDPR, Seoul National Univ.	General public (1,000)	Human rights attitude, and promotion
2010	Human Rights and Knowledge on National Human Rights Commission of Korea	National Human Rights Commission of Korea	General public (1,100) and opinion leader (200)	The role and duty of National Human Rights Commission of Korea
2011	The National Human Rights Survey	National Human Rights Commission of Korea	General public (1,500), opinion leaders (225), and students (1,211)	General survey on human rights orientations

Year	Survey Title	Survey Organization	Respondents (Sample Size )	Main Subject
2011	Korean General Social Survey (KGSS)	SSK Human Rights Forum	General public (1,535)	General survey on human rights orientations
2012	Social Quality Surveys in Five Countries	ISDPR, Seoul National Univ.	General public (1,000)	General survey on human rights orientations

Alongside these public opinion polls, psychologists devised human rights surveys and analyzed them to decipher the dimensionality and to explain the correlates of people’s attitudes toward human rights. The two widely known psychological surveys are the Attitudes Toward Human Rights Index (Getz, 1985) and the Human Rights Questionnaire (Diaz-Veizades et al., 1995). The former is a collection of 40 statements measuring individuals’ attitudes toward human rights with a single composite index, and the latter is a set of 38 items derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which measures the four dimensions of human rights through factor analysis — i.e., social security, civilian constraint, privacy, and equality. While opinion polls mostly sought to measure people’s attitudes toward the importance of human rights in a foreign policy framework as well as their evaluation of the countries’ human rights practices, these surveys broadened the scope by uncovering the multi-dimensional structure of human rights attitudes and exploring the factors associated with individual differences in human rights attitudes (Crowson, 2004).

Yet, the currently available opinion polls and/or surveys are limited in several important respects. While opinion polls fall far short of conceptualizing human rights in a broader spectrum, psychological surveys suffer from sampling or selection bias by focusing on the certain age groups like college students (Barrows, 1981). In other words, opinion polls hardly reveal a complex array of human rights dimensions, whereas psychology-oriented surveys are far from being nationally representative samples. Furthermore, these opinion polls and surveys commonly lack a sufficient set of predictors and indepen-

dent variables that allow researchers to examine the factors that shape human rights orientations of respondents.

### **III. The 2011 National Human Rights Survey of South Korea**

The limitations of existing opinion polls and/or surveys on human rights motivated us to look for the possibility of designing questionnaires more centered on human rights. We then integrated these crafted questions into a large-scaled nationally representative survey, conducted through face-to-face interviews, in South Korea from September to October 2011. This survey was conducted through the sponsorship of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (hereafter NHRCK) and was named as “The 2011 National Human Rights Survey of South Korea” (hereafter NHRSK). NHRSK is composed of eight distinct sections, each asking respondents about their perceptions, attitudes, experiences, and action in regard to human rights. This survey of 18 pages with about 170 questions/items constitutes a comprehensive investigation of Korean public opinion on human rights.<sup>1</sup>

NHRSK has several major strengths as follows. First, NHRSK is a survey entirely devoted to deciphering Koreans’ human rights orientations, a breadth of coverage that is rarely found in the surveys in other countries. Second, the sample is large-scaled (N=1,500) and nationally representative, and the randomly chosen sample was interviewed by the agencies hired by a local survey company in Korea. Third, the items included were systematically chosen or derived from both the existing international and national polls in order to maintain

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1. Unfortunately, NHRSK does not include questions that measure psychological characteristics of respondents, such as social dominance orientation (SDO), right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), and universalism. However, Cohrs et al. (2007) show that there exists a great deal of overlap between political ideology and these psychological traits, suggesting that the effect of political ideology might capture some of the variations explained by these psychological variables.

continuity and comparability. Fourth, the questionnaire was carefully designed to incorporate a more comprehensive structure of individuals' human rights orientations, including human rights behavior. Finally, a wide range of explanatory items were included to help conduct a broader analysis.

Informed by psychologists' efforts to decipher the structure of human rights, we initially constructed a wide spectrum of the human rights structure in the questionnaire, ranging from knowledge (Stellmacher et al., 2005), awareness (Koo et al., 2013), support (McClosky and Brill, 1983), commitment (McFarland and Mathews, 2005b), and (self-reported) behavior (Cohrs et al., 2007). For analytical purposes, we collapsed knowledge and awareness into one category simply labeled as "awareness" and considered it with two other more crucial components of endorsement and engagement. The three chosen components are defined and observed among Koreans as follows.

*Awareness* measures an aspect of individual cognition and combines the two sub-components of knowledge and awareness. The knowledge sub-component involves how much a person knows about key facts regarding human rights. When asked about their recognition of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fact that the National Constitution upholds basic human rights, 78.5% and 65.7% answered that they are knowledgeable about these facts. The awareness sub-component represents the extent to which a person recognizes the human rights situation in his/her own country or society. When asked about the human rights situation in the country as well as in other parts of the world, 52.3% and 47.7% indicated that they are aware of the situations at home and abroad.

*Endorsement* is an attitudinal dimension representing a person's overall support or lack of support of specific human rights policies. Among the respondents, 52.7% said that the right to association and assembly must be guaranteed even when it causes inconveniences (e.g., traffic or noise), and 65.1% considered the obligatory participation in religious rituals in secondary schools as contradictory to human rights. On the contrary, regarding the National Security Law, which was often viewed with the suspicion that it prosecutes political

prisoners and thus constrains the freedom of expression, only 23.8% of respondents agreed that it should be outlawed. Koreans seem to recognize the continued necessity of the law and link it to the salience of national security in the face of a hostile North Korea.

*Engagement* is a dimension indicating self-reported action regarding the promotion of human rights through the means, such as making donations, joining protests, or signing petitions. It is most contrasted with mere cognitive and attitudinal dimensions and most closely related to — arguably — the normative goals of human rights. Few existing public polls or surveys explicitly measure this dimension of action. The results show that 29.7% had participated in signing petitions for the promotion of human rights, and 21.4% reported to have supported human rights related NGOs. When asked about experiences of joining protests events, only 3.9% answered “yes.”

Figure 1 shows averaged percentages of respondents who show favorable human rights orientations on the multiple items analyzed, which range from awareness (58.28%), endorsement (43.58%), to engagement (11.84%). In this continuum, respondents show the highest levels of human rights when the dimensions involve awareness, but the positive attachment withers away when considering the dimension of engagement. Consequently, we note that the structure of human rights might involve a continuum that displays human rights components from more accepting cognitive and attitudinal dimensions to the more restrictive behavioral one.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Other human rights dimensions might include commitment and assessment. The commitment represents a person's preference for human rights principles or policies, even in the face of costs to one's lot or nation. It is specifically contrasted with the mere endorsement of human rights. Research suggests that although most Americans value human rights, the American public en masse does not appear to care enough about human rights, if it involves making a significant investment of American resources and troops (McFarland and Mathews, 2005a). In contrast, assessment conceptualizes how a person feels about the treatment of specific human rights or the current state of human rights practices in certain areas. Several scholars studied this dimension, labelling it as “perceptions of respect for human rights (Anderson et al., 2005)” or “perceptions of human rights conditions (Carlson and Listhaug, 2007).”

Figure 1. Dimensions of Human Rights Orientations

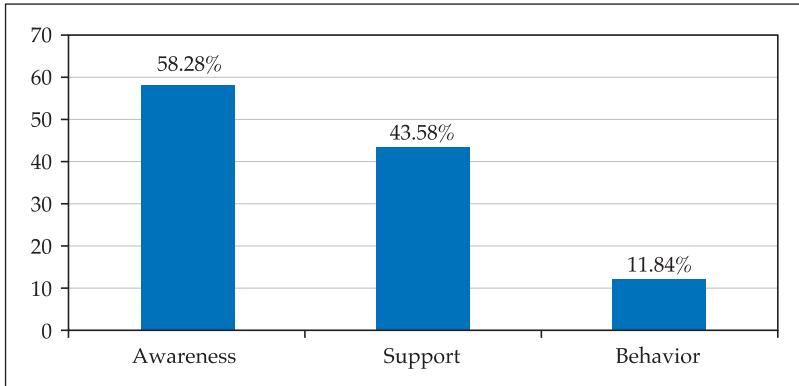
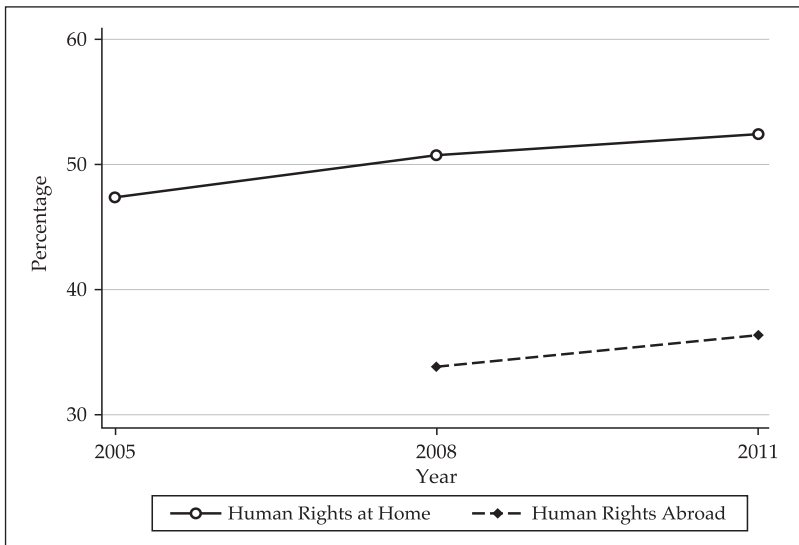


Figure 2 displays temporal changes in the extent of Korean citizens' awareness of human rights situations or practices at home or abroad. The data come from the three comparable surveys: First, the 2005 National Human Rights Survey of South Korea with a national representative sample (N=1,263); second, the 2008 National Survey on

Figure 2. Awareness of Human Rights Practices, South Korea, 2005-2011



Danger, Safety, Energy, Mad Cow Disease, and Human Rights (N=1,000); third, the 2011 Human Rights Survey of South Korea, the one analyzed in this article. According to these surveys, Korean citizens' awareness of domestic human rights increased from 47.4 % in 2005, 50.7% in 2008, to 52.4% in 2011. Though it was substantially lower, the awareness level of international human rights also increased from 33.9 % in 2008 to 36.4% in 2011. The patterns that emerge from these two temporal changes are largely consistent with the story of the human rights diffusion that numerous scholars — especially those in line with the world polity theory — documented with different sorts of data (Koo and Ramirez, 2009; Cole, 2010; Meyer et al., 2010).

#### **IV. Who Thinks and Behaves According to Human Rights?: Hypotheses**

Despite the acknowledgment that citizens of South Korea have increasingly developed their orientations toward human rights, it seems evident that they also show substantial differences in their perceptions, attitudes, and behavior regarding human rights. As such, the key empirical question becomes as follows: who is more likely to think and behave according to human rights ideals; and what determines individual differences on their human rights orientations. We utilize several different explanations to explore the factors responsible for individual differences in human rights orientations. Past studies identified the conditions such as individual demographic characteristics, socio-economic status, political ideology, religion, social capital, and globalism as main determinants, though they largely lacked empirical analyses.

Several studies have routinely attributed citizens' perceptions and/or behavior toward human rights to their demographic characteristics such as age and gender; for example, they present age-based or gender-based differences in human rights concerns. The perceptions held by younger or older generations are likely to differ, especially in Korea, since human rights is a relatively new concept and the younger



generations have higher affinity with it largely due to the recently expanded human rights education (Moon and Koo, 2011). Scholars also attribute individual differences to the gender gap on the grounds that cultural differences lead women to be more concerned with human rights. The cultural difference often takes the form of actual experiences of abuses; and women are more likely to be discriminated against with respect to job opportunity, health, education, and reproductive freedom (Peters and Wolper, 1995).

Related to demographic characteristics is geographical location, which received little attention in the literature. Our expectation is that the people in urbanized or industrialized areas are more prone to know and favor human rights as an important guiding principle, due to a higher presence of social institutions responsible for promoting rights-related awareness and experiences and a higher concentration of — broadly defined — educational institutions, including universities and NGOs.

H1: The younger generations, women, and people living in urban areas have higher propensity to think and behave according to human rights.

Other studies found consistent causal connections between affluence and human rights concern. Inspired by the affluence-based post-materialism, scholars attribute higher human rights concerns to higher levels of post-materialist social values (Zhou, 2013). Post-materialism coupled with affluence propels self-expression, individual rights, gender equality, and the quality of life. Human rights are, undoubtedly, in line with such new social values. As such, we expect the income, a conventional measure of affluence, to exert influence over the extent to which individuals care about human rights.

H2: Individuals with higher income will have higher propensity to think and behave according to human rights.

Research also links religion to human rights, though anticipated causal directions are far from being clear-cut. Religious conservatism,

for example, is treated to be negatively associated with positive orientation for human rights. Yet, the literature compares religious people with non-religious people, yielding some mixed results on the effect of religiosity; negative effect of religiosity was observed among Canadian college students, compared with no effects among Russian citizens (Moghaddam and Vuksanovic, 1990). Scholars tracing the origins of modern individualism and the associated human rights ideals assert that there exists affinity between early Christendom and human rights principles (Elliott, 2007). Likewise, non-western scholars have concurrently asserted that Buddhism, Islam, and other religions have also ascertained a set of values that parallel human rights doctrines (Muzaffar, 1993; Bell, 2000). Inspired by these historical accounts, we hypothesize that religious people are more likely to consider human rights.

H3: Religious faith makes it more likely that individuals think and behave according to human rights.

Several studies stress the importance of considering political orientation. Particularly, self-identified liberalism is attributed to an underlying motor for heightened human rights orientations. Despite the universalistic nature of human rights, political liberals are more attuned to the ideals of human rights because they are naturally linked to equality (Donnelly 2003). In fact, in Korea, lawyers and politicians with liberal political outlooks have taken the lead in incorporating worldwide models of human rights into domestic laws, institutions, and social movement sectors (Koo, 2012; Goedde, 2011).

H4: Individuals with liberal political outlooks are more likely to apply the ideas of human rights when they think and behave.

The social capital line of research emphasizes the importance of the level of trust, which seems to trigger the exchange of key information and to facilitate the diffusion of widespread models. A sociological inquiry naturally brings to the fore the potential effects of the level of trust — especially the trust toward other people when examining

individuals' social orientations. Individual persons who have a higher level of trust are, undoubtedly, more communicative with generalized others, including neighbors and institutions; and subsequently, they are more susceptible to the inflow of information on the importance of human rights values in sociocultural life.

H5: Individuals with a higher level of trust are more likely to employ human rights as guiding principles for their thoughts and behavior.

After controlling for the major correlates identified by the literature, we still expect to see a strong effect of the political and cultural globalization, which might shape individual orientations, yet with a great deal of variations. In other words, we expect to find the support for the world polity claim that views nation-states, organizations, and individuals as entities defined and formed by world cultural, institutional processes.

World polity scholars assert that the increasing structuration of world society shapes the actions of culturally constituted actors (Boli et al., 1985; Boli and Thomas, 1997). Global cultural formulations with a highly standardized script construct and legitimize individuals, as well as collective entities including nation-states (Meyer and Jepperson, 2000; Meyer, 2010). The most recent cultural changes in the global society involve the worldwide expansion of education. Human persons are schooled and instructed in virtually every country to an unprecedented degree. The education involved becomes highly standardized and supranational or global in character.

More specifically, the expanded education system is anchored in the two underlying cultural principles. The first one is scientization that stresses the existence and relevancy of general and universal principles in social life. And the other principle involves the centrality of individual rights and their choices and powers (Meyer, 2012). As such, human rights ideals are progressively coupled with the curricula of primary, secondary, and even tertiary education. That is, a set of ideas acknowledging and celebrating human rights institutions and norms are naturally instilled on pupils who are socialized through

education. The role of education in passing on the ideas relevant to human rights leads us to formulate the following hypothesis.

H6: Individuals with higher levels of education will have higher propensity to think and behave according to human rights.

Furthermore, several world polity scholars document the recent changes in educational curricula from emphasizing national citizenship to legitimating global citizenship. To an extraordinary extent, human individuals are promoted to a transcendent global standing that accentuates virtues of being a global citizen living on the planet earth, not in a local village. In fact, the new model of global citizenship prescribes that human rights are a central component of global citizenship (Moon and Koo, 2011) and human rights need to be added to “identity kits” as citizens (Kamens, 2012). The world polity argument subsequently leads to a conjecture that individuals with higher levels of global citizenship nurture higher levels of human rights concern. As global citizenship emphasis strengthens worldwide, individuals in general have become more tolerant to a wider range of social minorities and are more likely to embrace human rights ideals. Individuals who see themselves as global citizens are more likely to be influenced by the global emphasis on human rights. Concurring with the core argument of the world polity theory, several scholars also link levels of human rights concerns to globalism. For example, they argue that the people who support democracy abroad and care more about combating world hunger are more likely to champion the protection of the global environment and are more prone to endorse and support human rights (Barrows, 1981; Holsti, 2000; McFarland and Mathews, 2005a).

H7: Individuals with a closer linkage to global society and see themselves as global citizens have higher propensity to think and behave according to human rights.

## **V. Data and Methods**

### *A. Data*

From July to August, 2011, we, along with other associates, constructed a comprehensive human rights questionnaire and made the questionnaire available for the survey agency. From September to October 2011, sponsored by NHRCK, the Institute of Social Development and Policy Research (ISDPR) at Seoul National University and the Hyundai Research Institute conducted a nationwide survey through face-to-face interviews in South Korea.

The statistical population of the 2011 NHRSK represents all residents in South Korea with age of 15 and above; and this includes the residents in Jeju islands, who have often been excluded from national surveys. A multi-stage area cluster probability sampling was used for a random selection of households. This cluster sampling was repeated to select, stage by stage, metropolis/provinces, cities/districts, and urban or rural areas (administrative units) to determine an unbiased sample. After 150 areas were sampled, the qualified and trained supervisors and interviewers visited each selected area to seek the list of households. Then, households were systematically selected from the list to be included in the survey. Interviewers were provided with a list of targeted households, while they had no role in selecting these households. When more than one person in the household was eligible, one family member was instructed to be selected as a respondent, according to a pre-determined selection method (by recent birthday). Moreover, interviewers were instructed to administrate interviewees' answers to the questions rather than allowing them to fill in the questionnaires. Prior to administering the survey, a pretest was conducted to detect any possible errors or problems, which included wording, displaying of questions, survey procedures, etc. The completed questionnaires were thoroughly screened, checked, and verified by the supervisors.

### B. Dependent Variables

We examined three dependent variables that tap different dimensions of a person's cognition, attitudes, and behavior toward human rights. First, the awareness variable was constructed from both sub-dimensions of knowledge and awareness. The "Knowledge" sub-component was derived from the following two survey questions: a) "How often have you heard about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights promulgated by the U.N?"; b) "How well do you know about the protection of basic human rights being upheld in the Constitution of the Republic of Korea?" The first question was coded from 1=*very often*, 2=*once or twice*, to 3=*never*, while the second from 1=*very well* to 4=*not at all*. Similarly, the "awareness" sub-component was measured using the following two survey questions: a) "How familiar are you with human rights situation in Korea?"; b) "How familiar are you with human rights situation worldwide?" The measure was coded from 1=*very much* to 4=*not at all*. For analysis, the scale was reversed, so that the higher scores indicate that respondents hold a higher level of human rights knowledge and awareness. The mean value of the four items was used as a dependent variable.

To construct the endorsement variable, we initially examined 12 items that were designed to ask respondents about their support for 12 policies formed to protect civil and political rights. A factor analysis indicated that two factors account for a substantial part of the variation in these items. To determine which one to use, we considered both the magnitude of variation explained by each factor, and the R-squared value obtained from regression analysis. The chosen factor is based on the six survey questions asking respondents about their level of support of the followings: (a) Obligatory participation in religious rituals in secondary religious schools; (b) introduction of X-rays at the airport; (c) protection of right to association and assembly; (d) the National Security Law; (e) alternative military duties for conscientious objectors; and (f) voting rights of Koreans living overseas. The scales were coded from 1=*strongly agree* to 4=*strongly disagree*. The scales were rearranged so that the higher numbers indicated stronger support for

human rights supportive policy outcomes.

As the last measure of the set of dependent variables, engagement represents self-reported action taken to promote human rights. The indicator of the action was based on the following seven items measuring whether the respondents participated in human right promoting activities: a) Supporting religion nonprofit organizations; b) making donations in support of minorities; c) having memberships in human rights NGOs; d) expressing opinions on the internet; e) signing petitions; f) joining campaigns/protests; and g) voluntary activities to support minorities. The scales were coded 1=yes and 0=no; and we summed these scales to produce a continuous variable measuring the number of participatory activities regarding the promotion of rights.

### *C. Independent Variables*

#### **(1) Demographic Characteristics**

Our models included measures for gender, age, and residence of respondents. We considered a dummy variable for gender, designating female respondents as 1 and male counterparts as 0. The straightforward variable of age measured in years was included in the models. The multi-category scale of geographical areas was recoded into a dummy variable, such that people living in metropolitan areas were scored as 1; and all others received a score of 0.

#### **(2) Socio-Economic Status**

As a proxy measure of SES, we used “household income”, which is measured using 11 intervals of monthly incomes that begins with the household income of \$1,000 and ends with over \$10,000.

#### **(3) Political Orientation**

To determine and measure political orientation of respondents, we asked the question, “How liberal or conservative are you, in terms of political orientation?” This question yielded a five-category scale that ranges from 1=*very liberal* to 5=*very conservative*. Consistent with the findings of previous studies that showed liberals have higher

affinity with human rights ideals, we reserved the scales so the higher scores indicated more liberal political orientations.

#### **(4) Level of Trust**

To gauge the level of trust, a proxy measure of social capital, we asked the following question, "Do you think you can trust people around you or should be cautious about them?" This is a 5-category scale, excluding the "don't know" option, which ranges from 1=*cautious all the time* to 5=*trustful all the time*. The higher the scores, the more trust a respondent has of others.

#### **(5) Educational Attainment**

To examine how education, with its increasingly global character, affects the ways that individuals think and behave according to human rights, we controlled for the number of years of educational attainment. We treated education as a mechanism through which global ideas diffuse into individuals' orientations.

#### **(6) Level of Global Citizenship**

To test whether world polity theory provides a useful explanatory framework to better understand why individuals think and behave according to human rights, we created a variable of "global citizenship" where we asked respondents whether they are familiar with the notion of global citizenship and the extent to which they feel attached to this borderless citizenship. The exact wordings of the two survey questions were, "Have you heard the term global citizen?" and "How closely do you feel as being a global citizen?" The first question was introduced to make respondents familiar with the notion, and the second one was intended for the construction of an independent variable. We therefore excluded the first question and used the second question to construct a continuous variable measuring the extent a person is linked to being a global citizen. The scales ranges from 1=*far away*) to 5=*very close*) and these were reversed so the higher scores indicated better linkage to a global community.



## VI. Results

Table 4 shows the results of OLS regression models. Each pair of models is devoted to each dimension of human rights orientations as follows: Models 1-2 for awareness, Models 3-4 for endorsement, and Models 5-6 for engagement. Models 1, 3, and 5 are the models with the predictors, which were suggested by past studies. Furthermore,

Table 4. OLS Regression Models of Human Rights Orientation, South Korea

		Knowledge		Endorsement		Engagement	
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Demographic Characteristics	Female (d)	-.082** (0.031)	-.058† (0.030)	.012 (0.036)	.008 (0.036)	-.018 (0.078)	.013 (0.078)
	Age	-.001 (0.001)	.002† (0.001)	-.007*** (0.001)	-.008*** (0.001)	-.002 (0.003)	.002 (0.003)
	Metropolitan (d)	.203*** (0.033)	.154*** (0.032)	.120** (0.038)	.126** (0.039)	.654*** (0.082)	.617*** (0.083)
Socio-Economic Status	Income	.000* (0.000)	.000 (0.000)	.000 (0.000)	-.000 (0.000)	.000 (0.000)	-.001** (0.000)
Religion	Buddhist (d)	.084* (0.040)	.102** (0.039)	.108* (0.046)	.104* (0.046)	.172† (0.100)	.204* (0.099)
	Christian (d)	.036 (0.037)	.010 (0.036)	-.056 (0.043)	-.052 (0.043)	.728*** (0.093)	.702*** (0.093)
Political Orientation	Conservative vs. Liberal	.064*** (0.018)	.040* (0.018)	.019 (0.021)	.023 (0.021)	.108* (0.045)	.084† (0.045)
Social Capital	Trust Level	.073*** (0.016)	.039* (0.017)	.068*** (0.019)	.070** (0.020)	.000 (0.040)	-.005 (0.043)
World Polity	Education		.046*** (0.006)		-.010 (0.008)		.077*** (0.016)
	Global Citizenship		.090*** (0.019)		-.002 (0.023)		-.008 (0.048)
Constant		1.860*** (0.100)	1.181*** (0.123)	2.439*** (0.115)	2.561*** (0.148)	.293 (0.250)	-.621* (0.316)
N of Observation		1152	1152	1088	1088	1152	1152
R <sup>2</sup> (Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )		0.091 (0.085)	0.157 (0.150)	0.054 (0.047)	0.056 (0.047)	0.133 (0.127)	0.150 (0.143)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. All (d) letters added in some variables represent dummy variables.

† p<0.10, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)

these models serve as the standard baseline models to which we add the factors derived from the world polity theory — i.e., education and global citizenship. With the addition of the world polity variables, Models 2 and 6, involving the levels of awareness and engagement, significantly improve on Models 1 and 5; and their R-squared values appear to be fairly high with .157 and .150, respectively. Model 4, by contrast, doesn't improve on Model 3, suggesting that the world polity variables have no additional explanatory power when considering the level of endorsement. The R-squared values for the models that examine endorsement of human rights are much lower than those for knowledge and engagement dependent variables.

With respect to the demographic characteristics of respondents, such as gender, age, and region, we note mixed results and thus partial support for Hypothesis 1. Residential location consistently shows a positive effect on all three human rights dimensions. Those who are more urban know more about human rights, are more generally supportive, and are more likely to have engaged in pro-human rights activities. This finding might suggest that human rights ideals are more easily penetrated into citizens living in metropolitan areas with a plethora of rights-promoting organizations or institutions. Women appear to have a significantly lower awareness of human rights than men, though the effects of gender on the other dimensions are not statistically significant. As anticipated, younger people have a significantly higher propensity for supporting rights-promoting policies than the older people, but their effects are not statistically significant when examining the dimensions of awareness and engagement.

SES characteristics measured by the level of income show only a marginal effect, hardly supporting Hypothesis 2; the level of income appears to be largely irrelevant except in Models 1 and 6. Income has a positively significant effect on awareness in Model 1, but its effect diminishes after controlling for world polity effects on Model 2. On the contrary, the effect of income is negatively significant when examining engagement alongside the world polity variables in Model 6, which suggests that affluent individuals tend to refrain from engaging in pro-human rights action.

Compared to respondents with no religious faith, those with Buddhist beliefs show higher levels of awareness, support, and engagement; and its effect is statistically significant on all models except in Model 5. Christians (both Protestants and Catholics), by contrast, are not more likely to be knowledgeable or concerned with human rights. However, they are much more likely than others to engage in rights-promoting activities, as revealed in positively significant effects of the Christian dummy in Models 5 and 6. The association between Christian faith and their higher propensity to take actions might reflect the well-documented trends that Christians are prone to charitable and philanthropic activities. However novel the human rights regime may be, identifying with Buddhism or Christianity does not impede favoring human rights.

As predicted in Hypothesis 4, a more liberal political orientation shows statistically significant effects on human rights orientations, especially on awareness and engagement. Its effects remain significant even after controlling for the world polity variables on Models 2 and 6; this suggests that the widely known polarization argument between progressives and conservatives might be still valid.

In support of Hypothesis 5, the level of trust also shows statistically significant effects on two of the three dimensions of human rights concern — i.e., awareness and endorsement. Our preliminary explanation is that those with a higher level of trust are more prone to be altruistic, especially toward social and race/ethnic minorities, and this altruism makes them more aware and supportive of either human rights policies or situations. However, this does not lead to more engagement in human rights activities.

Turning attention to the effects of the world polity predictors, we first note that more educated respondents have higher awareness and are more likely to take action in rights-promoting activities than the less educated respondents, which is consistent with Hypothesis 6. Second, we find that global citizenship has varying effects; the degree to which individuals are linked to global citizenship identity makes them more knowledgeable about and/or better aware of human rights but fails to influence their level of endorsement and engagement.

This exploratory analysis has generated both expected and unexpected findings. As expected, some factors that positively influence knowledge of human rights did not also lead to human rights promoting activities. Having a gap between cognition and action is not surprising. So, we find that the individuals who are more liberal, more trusting, and more likely to identify themselves as global citizens are more knowledgeable about human rights, but they are not more engaged. Residential education and educational attainment, on the other hand, positively influence both awareness and engagement. It was somewhat surprising that the more educated are not more endorsing of human rights. Even more surprising is that younger people are much more likely to endorse human rights, without being more aware or more engaged with human rights. The same pattern is evident regarding those who consider themselves as Christians; though in this case, it is the level of engagement that is strongly influenced. One might assume that the gap between the set of factors influencing awareness and engagement would be the greatest; but in fact, there is more overlap in these factors than in those that influence endorsement. These findings suggest that the interrelations among human rights dimensions are more complex than earlier imagined. These findings also suggest that we need even more refined measures of the different dimensions of human rights. That is, we need to probe deeper into what distinguishes endorsement from engagement as regards human rights.

## **VII. Concluding Thoughts**

Our pioneering effort to design a human rights questionnaire in conducting a national survey in Korea was mainly spurred by the relative lack of sociological investigations of human rights at the individual level of analysis. Thus, we addressed this question — who thinks and behaves according to human rights standards and why. From a policy perspective, the positive effect of education on both awareness and engagement is encouraging, but wealth, age, and gender

are clearly not important predictors. From a research perspective, further studies can directly ascertain whether education interacts with other individual characteristics or whether its positive influence is truly not contingent on other factors. Further studies can also find whether it matters what type of education one has attained — for instance, a more liberal versus a more professional education. Lastly, further studies can also explore the mechanism through which education and residential location lead to favorable human rights outcomes. Is access to human rights promoting organizations the crucial mechanism? Would enhanced exposure to these organizations, in rural areas and among the less educated individuals, reduce the human rights orientation gap?

A second set of considerations hinges on the importance of variation in national, political, and cultural climates. Here, the question is whether the results of this study would hold in other kinds of societies. Would the educational effect still be found in countries with less educational development than Korea? Is the level of trust more important in more individualistic countries or in societies with greater ethnic heterogeneity? Is the global citizenship identification as consequential in societies with high levels of such consciousness? These questions call for more complex research designs that may require data for different levels of analysis — for example, individual and societal data. But, such cross-national data is increasingly available, and methodologically sophisticated analysis of the data is now more feasible.

Public opinion polls or surveys have great potential to be an extremely valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, who seek more accurate identifications of those who care about human rights, the breadth and depth of the diffusion of human rights, and ways to make reliable public human rights policies. We maintain that the Korean human rights survey and our analysis of this invaluable data will pave the way for the further development of empirical analysis of human rights or the sociology of human rights. If adopted and conducted in other countries in the future, we can have an important opportunity to significantly advance our understanding

of the diffusion of human rights and its incorporation into the fundamental foundation of human rights, i.e., individual persons.

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