

# Being True to Oneself: Sewol Ferry Disaster and Homeland Politics of Korean Immigrants in Britain

Mijoo Shin\* and Heejin Han\*\*

London School of Economics·Pukyong National University

## Abstract

After the tragic incident of the sinking of Sewol in spring 2014, Korean migrants in Britain began to hold street protests in London. These protestors condemned the Korean government for the lack of appropriate responses to the accident, and for its failure to conduct proper investigation on the issue. The small group of protestors held silent street protests every month at Trafalgar Square, despite not gaining much media coverage nor public attention. These migrants' almost three-year long protest outside their homeland is puzzling. Not only did they live in Britain for a long time to the extent that they regard the country as their second home, but they also exert scant amount of influence on the political landscape in South Korea. What can then account for these individuals' participation in activism related to their homeland politics? In this paper, we utilize the concept of 'moral identity' to explain the behaviors of Korean migrants involved in the street protests. These migrants had strong 'moral identity', which triggered a sense of responsibility to act when their cherished moral values were jeopardized. Korean migrants who possessed a strong sense of moral identity placed huge importance on living in accordance with their moral values. It is a way of upholding their self-esteem and sustaining their ideal self.

## Keywords

Social Movement, Migrant Political Participation, Moral Identity, South Korea, Homeland Politics

---

\* First author; MSc in Comparative Politics, London School of Economics; Producer, Change Ground, Songpaju Garak-ro 13 Gil 18, #201, South Korea; mijoo213@hotmail.com.

\*\* Corresponding author; Assistant Professor, Division of Undeclared & Exploratory Majors, Pukyong National University; Namgu Yongsoro 45 A12 #1319, Busan; polhan@pknu.ac.kr.

## I. Introduction

In April 2014, 304 people died from the sinking of MV Sewol, a ferry which was carrying 476 passengers from Incheon to Jeju in South Korea. This tragic incident led Koreans living in Britain to begin to protest silently every month in London. The protestors demanded the truth behind the tragedy and speedy recovery of the nine missing people. The protests, which went on for three years, were attended by ordinary Koreans who were not personally related to the victims. What did motivate these migrants to protest about their home country's issue that had little apparent influence on them, and despite the lack of any responses from the Korean government? What individual factor can explain these protestors' readiness to sacrifice their time and money to take part in the protest?

Existing theories focusing on national identity and ideology to explain motivations behind movement participation by migrants do not seem to adequately account for their actions. This study argues that moral identity has been an important source of motivation for these migrants' protest participation. Moral identity can lead to a sense of responsibility to act when the values that individuals strongly believe in are perceived to be violated. Individuals with strong moral identity place high importance on living in accordance to their moral values because it is a way of maintaining and being consistent with their sense of self. In particular, identity centered on the principle of social justice can cause migrants to take actions when they perceive certain home country issues to be socially unjust. We support this argument based on our qualitative interviews with seven Korean migrants who regularly participated in the Sewol protest.

## **II. Existing Literature: What Motivates Migrants to Participate in Homeland-related Movements?**

Many studies have sought to explain why migrants take part in movements in relation to issues in their home countries. In these studies, migrants' mobilization for issues that do not directly influence them have been explained by non-material factors. The existing literature that examines individual motivations behind immigrant movement participation focuses on the notion of national identity and ideology, in particular.

### **1. National identity**

The theory of national identity posits that migrants take part in social movements related their home country's issues because they identify with the place of their origin (Klandermans & Roggeband 2007). Migrants retain a strong sense of belonging to their home country based on shared culture, ethnicity and language with the members of the country. Scholars have argued that national identity engenders emotional attachment to the country and increases people's desire to see the country prosper (Huddy & Khatib 2007). Tajfel (1979) argues that when migrants perceive the country they identify with is in crisis, they are likely to have an urge to act on behalf of their nation's survival and well-being of its people. This is partly because the success of their home country is also related to their own feelings of pride and self-esteem (Kim 1997).

Schiller (2005), for instance, argues that national identity motivated Haitians in New York to mobilize to support the presidential candidate who they deemed to be most suitable for the country when Haiti had its

first democratic election. The strong national identity was largely based on the shared history of independence movement from France and the collective memory of the struggle to eradicate slavery. Similarly, Albanian diaspora's mobilization for Kosovo's independence in the U.K. and the U.S., and Korean Americans' mobilization to aid the independence movement in Korea during the Japanese annexation are examples of movement participation by migrants who retained a strong sense of national identity (Kim 1997; Koinova 2013).

Other studies have looked at sub-national identity embedded in the broader national identity as a motivating factor. For instance, Okinawan migrants, who share strong regional identity build around the indigenous culture of Okinawa and the history of U.S. oppression, have been protesting the construction of U.S. military base in Henoko in Okinawa (Lutz & Enloe 2009).

While the national identity theory is useful to explain motivations based on the sense of belonging and emotional attachment to one's nation, it cannot account for the variation of movement participation among migrants with strong national identity. Furthermore, it is unable to explain why migrants engage in political actions for some home country issues, but not for others. It is unclear when and how national identity is translated into a motivator for action. Lastly, national identity is less applicable for explaining movement participation among the second or third generation migrants who hardly identify with their mother country.

## **2. Ideology**

Other studies have focused on the role of ideology as the driving

force behind migrants' social movement participation. Migrants take part in social movements regarding their home country's issues to promote values and ideologies they believe in. Migrants who live in a more advanced country often embrace liberal ideals such as democracy, human rights, and social justice (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans 2007). They feel the inner moral obligation to spread the values they acquired in the host countries to their own country when they perceive these values are lacking in the country. For instance, Oo (2006) suggests that Burmese migrants in the U.S. and European countries have embraced democratic values, leading them to participate in the movement to democratize Burma. Similarly, Indian diaspora in the U.S. who have come to strongly support the values of equality and human rights took part in the collective action to promote the rights of the Dalit in India (Clifford 2007). In the past, immigrants educated in the U.K. sought to promote communism to their home country, as exemplified by the South Asian students who organized communist movement to spread the ideology in their home countries after learning leftist ideals from U.K. universities (Brown 2006).

Although these ideology-oriented arguments are broadly applicable and shed light on the inner moral obligations as a basis for motivation to act, it has several limitations. First, it overlooks the fact that migrants often try to resist embracing new values in order to protect their sense of identity in a foreign country. Furthermore, migrants who stay within their own diaspora communities might have limited opportunities to be exposed to new ideologies, as they mainly interact with other migrants who share similar values. Moreover, ideologies alone are often insufficient to explain the fact that many individuals with strong beliefs fail to take action.

### **3. Integrative approach**

Overall, the theories mentioned above provide limited insights into the process through which motivation to participate in social movements arises. A causal mechanism that can explain how the motivation to act emerges is needed to better understand migrants' movement participation. Furthermore, there are few studies that combine identity and ideology to analyze how the two factors interact to propel individuals to act. In the following section, We propose a causal mechanism to explain how migrants are motivated to take part in social movements, by using the concept of moral identity. Moral identity encompasses both ideology and identity, in particular identity based on personal moral values (Egreteau 2012).

## **III. Alternative Explanation Based on Moral Identity**

### **1. Moral identity: A driver of movement participation**

Scholars of social psychology suggest that moral identity can compel individuals to take action for causes that are non-material. Moral identity is the degree to which morality constitutes an important part of an individual's identity (Lawrence Kohlberg 1969). Morality refers to the belief that individuals apply when determining whether certain actions are right or wrong (Huddy & Khatib 2007). The notion of moral identity was introduced to address the inconsistency observed between individuals' moral belief and action. Often, individuals' belief of morally right or wrong behaviors does not translate into actions. Balsi (1984) argues that it is insufficient to have a good understanding of what is right and wrong to motivate moral action. He proposes that possessing moral identity

can lead moral belief to be translated into actions by engendering a sense of responsibility to act. The more morality is central to one's identity, the higher the probability that one will regard taking some kinds of action as his or her responsibility.

When morality constitutes the core of one's self-identity, individuals have the desire to act morally so as to remain consistent with their sense of self (Lapsley 2004). Moral identity consists of two aspects: moral schema and character (Youniss 1999). Moral schemas refer to individuals' mental image or web of knowledge of what it means to be a moral person, including memories of morally relevant events or interactions (Narvaez 1998). People with rich networks of moral schema have clear understanding of what constitutes a moral person through social learning and social behaviors. Their everyday actions are also more likely to be guided by their own moral construction. The second aspect of moral identity, character, refers to high importance that individuals attach to moral ideals as guiding principles in their lives (Shao & Freeman 2008). Individuals who have strong moral identity see morality as central to their character such that acting immorally would constitute self-betrayal. Furthermore, there is little psychological conflict between their moral judgement and actions because their desires are morally based (Tappan 2000). Therefore, people who have strong moral identity act in accordance to their moral beliefs without hesitation.

## **2. Moral identity development**

Moral identity can develop and go through changes throughout a person's life. The character aspect of moral identity often develops during one's youth, a time period in which one actively tries to define oneself and is

likely to seriously ponder upon the importance of moral values in life (Damon & Gregory 1997). Thus, moral development and identity formation occurs concurrently, resulting in the integration of identity and morality. The development of character dimension is influenced by personality traits and contextual factors including parenting and education.

On the other hand, moral schemas can be built through social learning and social behaviors (Narvaez 1998). Social learning takes place when one deliberates what it means to be a moral person based on their interaction with others and personal experiences. Individuals can also develop moral schemas through social behaviors such as volunteering and helping others, such that memories about these experiences form part of their morally relevant knowledge (Aquino & Reed 2002).

### **3. Model: Movement participation based on moral identity of social justice**

While individuals with strong moral identity in general possess wider range of moral values than those with weak moral identity, the types of values central to their moral identity differ across individuals (Graham et al. 2009). We argue that the value of social justice can constitute the core of moral identity among those who participate in social movements. Social justice is the principle that economic, political and social rights and opportunities should be distributed fairly and equally among members of the society (Youniss 1999). It also includes notions like compassion and human rights and the idea that the weak and the poor in a society should not be marginalized by more powerful groups. The notion of social justice has inspired justice movements around the world, seeking



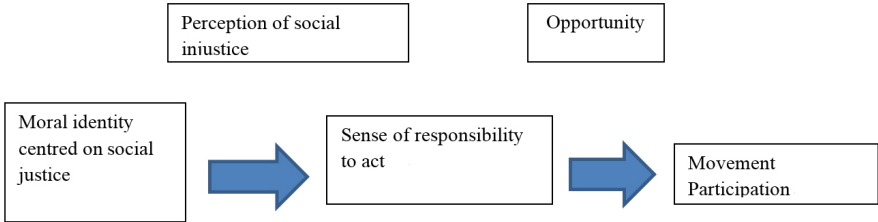
to create more equal and fair societies (Della Porta et al. 2015). People with moral identity centered on social justice tend to have their own moral standards on how one should treat different groups in the society and possess clear visions of the kinds of society they want to live in (Powers, & Faden 2006). They find great meaning in helping the weak and derive satisfaction and meaning of life from contributing to the creation of a more socially just world (Prilleltensk & Nelson 1997).

Migrants with strong moral identity based on social justice are likely to be motivated to participate in a movement when they perceive that the principle has been undermined in their home country. Several factors can explain why social justice is central to migrants' identity. First, migrants who live in a country that places a great emphasis on the notion are likely to develop rich moral schema of what means to practice social justice through their everyday social interactions (Baubck 2002). Thus, they are able to recognize social injustice by comparing their home country's case against the standards of the society they live in. Second, it is possible that migrants have personally experienced unjust situations in their host country due to their minority status, or in their home country, which could have contributed to their decision to migrate (Van Dijk 2000). As a result, they might develop strong feelings against unjust treatment and engage in challenging the practices of social injustice based on such antagonism.

The causal mechanism for movement participation we propose in this study is as follows (Figure 1). First, moral judgement is triggered in reaction to a situation in their home country, which leads individuals to believe that social justice has been undermined. Second, migrants with strong identity centered on social justice will feel the sense of responsi-

bility to act to express disapproval and to influence the situation to the “morally right” direction. Because morality is central to their identity, they feel the imperative to take action in order to remain consistent with their sense of self. Not acting would also result in negative emotional consequences such as shame and a sense of regret. Therefore, when the opportunity to take part in a collective action arises, migrants are likely to participate without hesitation. They are likely to participate until they are satisfied with themselves. Figure 1 illustrates the causal mechanism.

Figure 1. The Moral Identity Framework



**3. Method**

We used qualitative interviews to explore the motivations of those who participated in the Sewol-related protests. Qualitative interviews can provide in-depth and detailed information about participants’ motivations for protest participation. Interviews also allowed us to understand personal backgrounds of migrants and the reasoning process that went on in their minds. We interviewed seven protest participants randomly approached at the protest site in March 2017. We conducted five face-to-face interviews, three phone interviews and one email interview, including multiple interviews with two of the participants. The mode of interview was decided

according to the preferences of the participants, although we cited face-to-face interview as the most preferred option. Before the interviews, one of the researchers built rapport with the interviewees by participating in the protests and by having conversations over teas or meals with some of the interviewees after the protests. The average duration of the interviews was 1 hour 41 minutes, with the shortest interview lasting for 48 minutes and the longest one lasting for 3 hour 2 minutes. The interviews were conducted either in English or Korean, depending on the preferences of the interviewees. The interviews were recorded with permission, transcribed and analyzed for common themes.

The history of protest participation varied across the interviewees, with some participated twice while others protested for nearly three years. The interviewee who protested twice nonetheless considered herself as a regular, and joined many other events organized by the protestors. The interviewees' age ranged between 27 and 47 and the duration of living in the U.K. ranged from 1.5 to 18 years, with the average of 9 years. As the protest was mostly attended by women, six out of seven interview participants turned out to be female. None of them were full-time activist, and the interviewees had a wide range of occupations, including lawyers, university administrator and university student.

We used inductive method to build our framework. We chose inductive method as it would allow for greater flexibility and reliability in theorizing individual motivations. It is also suitable for a study that seeks to establish new theories which requires creative perspectives.

## **IV. Case study: Sewol Ferry Protest Participation by Koreans in Britain**

### **1. Sinking of MV Sewol**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2014, a ferry which was carrying 476 passengers capsized en route from Incheon to Jeju, killing 304 people including 245 high school students on a field trip and leaving nine people missing (Paik et al. 2015). Even though it was shown that if appropriate measures were taken, all the passengers could have been rescued within 7 minutes, the Korean Navy missed the golden time to save most passengers (Park 2015). The whereabouts of the then President Park for seven hours after the news first broke out was not revealed to the public. The incident led to mass demonstrations in Korea that demanded government investigations to understand what had happened in the disaster and the rescue process (Lee 2014). During the same period, Koreans living in Britain also launched silent protests in London's Trafalgar Square. The monthly protest in London went on even after much of the protests in Korea subsided.

### **2. Development of moral identity on social justice**

Although the protestors are from diverse backgrounds, they shared strong moral identity based on the value of social justice. Their personal stories revealed that the idea of protecting socially oppressed groups and practicing compassion towards them had great personal importance to these protestors. They seemed to have developed moral identity around social justice mainly based on their childhood and adolescent experiences, social learning in the U.K., and by practicing the value in their

everyday lives.

### **3. Character: Parenting, education and religion**

M29 emphasized that he came to regard justice as an important value by observing his father's actions since he was young. He described a time when he saw his father helping a stranger and how he came to regard justice as his "life motto" which also influenced his career:

My father is a man of justice. When I was young, my father ran towards a pick pocket when he saw him pickpocketing a lady. He chased the man, leaving behind my mother and me... I think if I did not become a lawyer, I would have become a doctor, or a journalist. I think they all protect something. Doctors protect the sick and their family. An ideal lawyer protects those who can't protect themselves, and a journalist protects the truth and keeps the society free from corruption.

F28, a university student who wishes to work in a humanitarian organization, embraced the notion of social justice through her education in alternative schools. The schools "promoted progressive values" and gave her opportunities to experience "candlelight demonstrations", making her "naturally interested in social issues". She explained that contemplating what to do in life has been largely based on her desire to contribute to a socially just world:

When I see those human rights lawyers in Korea, I seriously contemplate whether I should go back to Korea to become a lawyer,

although I can't imagine how hard it must be and whether I can do that.

To some protestors, personal experiences of injustice have increased the importance they attach to social justice. F47, who had a chance to observe many “despicable” actions and corrupt behaviors by conservative elites in Korea, described her experience:

When I look back my Korean life, one word I can remember is injustice. My life was super hardline, very hurtful, prejudiced. I'm from very elite parents. From young, I saw the awful and devilish things that right-wing people did. By the time I was in high school, my relationship with my father was completely broken I think people who contributed to my politics most is my family. They made me think I don't want their politics, I don't want their life.

Other protestors' strong attachment to the notion of justice was based on their religious beliefs. F34 suggests how the teachings of her religion made her regard social justice as important value:

I'm Christian from birth and I'm really devoted. I do what I do because I believe and practice teachings of the Bible. It says how you treat the poorest and most pitiful people is how you treat yourself. I believe that and practice it. I volunteer regularly and have the general mindset that I need to share with others.

#### **4. Moral Schema: Social learning and practicing moral values**

Many protestors seem to have developed rich moral schema from their social interactions and practicing the value in their everyday lives. First, protestors have been involved in various activisms to fight social injustice. F46 who used to work at an NGO said she organizes protest for comfort women issue and “regularized protests every year around international comfort women’s day”. M29 explained that he is preparing to “initiate a lawsuit on the Oxy Sterilizer incident against the U.K. headquarter”, an incident which killed hundreds of people in Korea who inhaled the toxic disinfectant from dehumidifiers. He also protested the Four River Project<sup>1)</sup> by the Korean government which was notorious for its environmental destruction as well as the construction of the Transmission Towers in Milyang in Korea.<sup>2)</sup>

Many protestors have come to understand what it means to practice social justice in the U.K. by observing how the law and common practices in the country seek to protect those who face social risk. F34 described how her experience in the U.K. has changed her views:

I realized how much I was conservative when I arrived in the U.K. Here, temporary jobs get higher pay because of lower job security. I

- 
- 1) The Four River Project which involved investment of 22.2 trillion won, has been alleged to be initiated to personally benefit ex-president Lee Myung-bak and his family. The project has been highly controversial as creating environmental damage and destroying the livelihood of residents in affected regions
  - 2) Residents in Miryang were protesting against the construction of the high-voltage transmission cable towers in Miryang, which could potentially pose safety threats to the residents. More than 80 people have been hurt or killed since the tower construction began, with around 50 people arrested by the police.

learn so many things every day, not just about the progressive politics. The world is changing. I want to face the change with to the best of my ability. It changed my philosophy about how to live life.

F46 similarly described that she came to understand how unjust Korean society is after living in the U.K.:

I have been ignorant, rather than not interested. When I moved to the U.K. after getting married and found a stable life, my viewpoints expanded. Here, I'm having a comfortable life, but when I saw the news in Korea, it was different. Government is arresting protestors and people like Kim Jin-suk protest on the crane for a year...<sup>3)</sup> I tried to compare the common sense I have with that of a U.K. person. I explained to my husband, who spent his whole life here, about Korea's events and ask what he thinks would happen in the U.K. A lot of things did not make sense to him.

In sum, different personal experiences have all led the protestors to develop strong belief in social justice and regard the principle as central to their identity. Participants commonly cited justice as their most important value. For instance, to M29 "Justice, truth and courage" are most important for him. F46 similarly cited "justice and common sense" and "realizing justice" as most important to her.

---

3) Kim Jin-Suk from Hanjin Heavy Industry climbed 35-meter tall crane and stayed for one year to protest against the layoff of 400 employees by the country's former biggest ship-builder, Hanjin Heavy Industries & Construction Co. LTD. Labour activists argued that the difficulties faced by the company were not severe enough to justify the layoffs.



In the next section, , we discuss how the participants commonly felt a sense of moral responsibility to act when the Sewol tragedy occurred and how they participated in the protest without hesitation.

### **5. Sense of Responsibility toward Victims' Family**

All the protestors seem to have felt inner obligations to act when Sewol tragedy happened, upon perceiving that the way the Korean society dealt with the incident was deeply unjust. First, the protestors expressed disapproval towards some of the Korean people and media portrayal of the victims' families as those who simply seek more compensation. F28 described a conversation with her grandmother:

I was talking to my grandmother and she said, “don't the families of victims receive a lot of payment?” I suddenly had choking feeling in heart, and I could not reply to her. Later I thought whether I should have asked her whether she would say the same thing if I died.

Protestors also expressed strong disapproval against the false information that has been circulated by the government which depicted families as demanding a large compensation and even associated them with “pro-North Korean factions”. One protestor asserted that “all the remarks towards the family are totally unacceptable” and that she “could not believe those who said the families were manipulated by the North Korean spies”. Another participant pointed out that this situation happened because Korean people are too “sensitive about using government money to help others” and they lack understanding of the importance of social safety net due to the

culture of individualism and materialism.

These perceptions of social injustice have created a strong sense of responsibility among the protestors to support the families of victims. They share the belief that it is morally wrong to keep silent when some groups in the society receive “inhumane” treatment.<sup>4)</sup> F46 claimed that “keeping quiet in any way is abetting” and “it can be considered a crime”. She admitted that she “feel(s) less connected” to her family members who do not act. To M29, it was the “entire society’s responsibility that allowed such disaster to happen”. Similarly, for F47, Korean public’s silence “haunts” her “more than the crime done by Park.”

The protestors also felt the sense of duty to act especially given that Britain is a less hostile environment for protesting than Korea. F34 said her “heart breaks” when she heard the brother of one of the victims commented that in Korea, people “curse” but in the U.K., people say that “hope the ferry will be raised soon”.<sup>5)</sup> She believed that what she should do most is to “go through the pain with them and remember the victims.” F46 explained that she felt the obligation to protest as protesting in the U.K. is “more effective than having thousands of people protesting in Korea” because foreign news media reports them more readily. F34 also pointed out that it was “easy not to keep silence” in the U.K. given the “freedom” to protest, whereas in Korea, she might be arrested.

They also felt the obligation to pass on the notion of social justice they had to Korea. F46 thought that “the idea of giving to others or the

---

4) A remark by F47.

5) Overseas Koreans have been generally more sympathetic towards the victims of Sewol, and Sewol protests have been held by Korean migrants in other countries including Germany, France and the United States.

government providing social safety net is absent” to Korean people. She wanted to “change people’s mindset and spread the common sense” she knows. F34, contending that she was “lucky to live abroad”, compared herself to “government delegates in the olden days who went abroad to bring back advanced cultures” and she felt the duty to spread progressive values.

The protestors agreed that they did not plan to do “something big” but still wanted to take action. F27, who pondered “for whom Korea exists”, said she wanted to “do something” although not “something grand”. She explained that protesting can give a sense of solidarity to the families and so it is meaningful to protest “even though the scale is small”. Similarly, F46 admitted she joined the silent protest when she felt the urge to take action, thinking that it was “free and easy”.

Their sense of responsibility did not seem to be closely related to Korean identity. F47, who identifies herself as European and who never felt “wholly comfortable with Korean people”, explained that she protested to “help make our world better.”<sup>6)</sup> Similarly, F46 admitted detachment from her Korean identity after bad experiences with the government when married to a British husband.<sup>7)</sup> She regarded Korea to be a place

---

6) F47 abandoned her identity as Korean as after leaving the country from the traumatising experience. She said, “Once you go to abroad, you become a patriot. That never happened to me even one day... There was no day I missed Korean food or something. There were days that my nightmare, all the airport was closed Everything that is going to do with Korea was my threat”.

7) F46 said, “I am a British and this is my country. I have more affection towards Britain than Korea I’ve seen many unreasonable immigration policies of Korean government It has so many unreasonable and self-conflicting systems. I gave up my passport after waiting 10 years, when I finally realised that if you do not fit into its institutions, you become an outcast”.

where she knows “a little better than other countries” and so where she could “apply the values she has.”

## **6. Political Participation and Self-Identity**

The protestors’ actions have been an attempt to be consistent with their own moral identity. To them, it was natural to participate when the opportunity emerged. When F46 heard “someone said he would do a one-man protest”, she immediately said that she would accompany him. Likewise, F29 recalled that he saw the protest one day when he visited the National Gallery, and joined the protest since then. For F44 and her husband, joining the protest was “natural” when they heard about it from a friend in Korea.

Moreover, protestors regarded protesting a meaningful activity which strengthened their self-identity. F46 explained that Sewol protest has been a crucial part of her life:

I think this is probably the most important period in my life. I have never focused on one thing for so long before. This gives motivation to my life and hope to me. I think it’s more meaningful than earning lots of money.

Similarly, F46 explained how much she values the protesting experience:

I think it has been one of the best decisions I made in my life. I am very grateful to people who organized it. After the protest, I go back thinking today was great.

Protestors also described potential adverse consequences of not acting on their self-perception and emotional well-being. For them, not acting knowing something is morally wrong would constitute a self-betrayal. F47 explained:

If I leave them when they are abandoned by the nation, I would feel too ashamed to say I sympathies with them. So I stay.

F46, who have been participating for three years, described her reason for staying in the protest:

A large part of it is not to regret later. I would do it until the moment that I can say I have done enough. If I stop when I don't feel that way, I think I will regret.

For F34, when she learnt about the incident, she could not bear to stay at home as she felt the emotional need to take action. She said:

Sometimes I feel the urge to swear even in the middle of the night, when I see how the country is now... I think people who come to this protest come because they feel too frustrated not doing anything at home. I think if I don't even do this, I might go crazy.

Several participants also stated that their actions were in a way "selfish" because they are for their own good and satisfying own needs. F40 said, "it (protesting) is my business. It's my feeling and my urge to be there, requested by my own belief". F46 explained that "in a way it's selfish

and individualistic. I give back to the society and by doing well, my happiness goes up”.

Thus, the participants expressed the intention to protest even though “no one acknowledges” them.<sup>8)</sup> F40 and F34 said they would protest even though one person was at the protest. M29 also intended to protest “as long as it is possible” even though “there is a high chance that the truth will not be revealed.”

## **7. Summary**

Protestors’ strong moral identity around the value social justice seemed to have been a strong motivating force behind their participation. They came to understand and familiarize themselves with the principle of social justice through various ways, and routine practice of the value strengthened their identity around the notion. Thus, even though many of them were pessimistic about the impact that their protests would have on the Korean government and many did not even have strong Korean identity, they nonetheless felt the obligation to act. The qualitative interviews with them revealed that these individuals took part in the protests in order to uphold their self-identity and be true to themselves.

---

8) A remark by F34.

## V. Conclusion

What motivates migrants to participate in social movements regarding issues of their home country? We argued that moral identity based on social justice can be a strong motivating factor. Although this study looked at migrants' movement participation based on moral identity, such an explanation can be applied to other types of social movement participants. Furthermore, stronger theoretical foundation needs to be built to increase moral identity's usefulness as an analytical concept to explain motivations for social movement participation. Lastly, more evidence would be needed to strengthen the empirical validity of the argument, including how moral identity develops among individuals who participate in social movements. This research presents the first step towards exploring moral identity as a notion that can potentially make a meaningful contribution to the social movement literature.

## References

- Aquino, K., & Reed II, A. (2002). The self-importance of moral identity. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 83(6), 1423.
- Baubck, R. (2002). Farewell to multiculturalism? Sharing values and identities in societies of immigration. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 3(1), 1.
- Blasi, A. (1984). Moral identity: Its role in moral functioning. *Morality, moral behavior, and moral development*, 128-139.
- Bob, C. (2007). "Dalit rights are human rights": Caste discrimination, international activism, and the construction of a new human rights issue. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 167-193.
- Brown, J. M. (2006). *Global South Asians: introducing the modern diaspora* (Vol. 1). Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, J. L. (1985). Strategy or identity: New theoretical paradigms and contemporary social movements. *Social research*, 663-716.
- Damon, W., & Gregory, A. (1997). The youth charter: Towards the formation of adolescent moral identity. *Journal of Moral Education*, 26(2), 117-130.
- Della Porta, D., Andretta, M., Calle, A., Combes, H., Eggert, N., Giugni, M. G., & Marchetti, R. (2015). *Global justice movement: Cross-national and transnational perspectives*. Routledge.
- Eder, K. (1985). "The new social movements": moral crusades, political pressure groups, or social movements? *Social Research*, 869-890.
- Egreteau, Renaud (2012), Burma in Diaspora: A Preliminary Research Note on the Politics of Burmese Diasporic Communities in Asia, in: *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 31, 2, 115-147.
- Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives



- rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 96(5), 1029.
- Hardy, S. A., & Carlo, G. (2011). Moral identity: What is it, how does it develop, and is it linked to moral action? *Child Development Perspectives*, 5(3), 212-218.
- Hart, D., Atkins, R., & Ford, D. (1998). Urban America as a context for the development of moral identity in adolescence. *Journal of social issues*, 54(3), 513-530.
- Huddy, L., & Khatib, N. (2007). American patriotism, national identity, and political involvement. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(1), 63-77.
- Kim, M. J. (1997). Moments of danger in the (dis) continuous relation of Korean nationalism and Korean American nationalism. *positions*, 5(2), 357-389.
- Klandermans, B., & Roggeband, C. (Eds.). (2007). *Handbook of social movements across disciplines*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Koinova, M. (2013). Four types of diaspora mobilization: Albanian diaspora activism for Kosovo independence in the US and the UK. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 9(4), 433-453.
- Lapsley, D. K. (Ed.). (2004). *Moral development, self, and identity*. Psychology Press.
- Lee, S. Y. (2014). Public accountability of the Sewol Ferry case: Comparative analysis of the Korean individual ministerial responsibility and accountability in Japan. *J Govt Policy*, 7(1), 99-120.