An examination of the Korean community in the Dominican Republic

NELSON ORTEGA
Silla University, Busan, South Korea

Abstract

This paper is the first attempt to study the community of approximately 700 Koreans living in the Dominican Republic. Koreans in the Dominican Republic are a peculiar group that enriches Dominican culture and economy. There are 23 Korean companies operating in the Dominican Republic generating millions of tax dollars for Dominican government coffers and providing much-needed jobs. Despite their contributions, Koreans in the Dominican Republic have not yet been studied in terms of their adaptation, their day to day lives and the problems they face. This paper draws upon qualitative and quantitative sources such as questionnaires filled by 108 Korean adults, interviews with Korean community leaders and observations in an effort to document the experiences and business ventures of Koreans in the Dominican Republic. The survey results suggest that church and family are the basic units of interaction for Koreans in the Dominican Republic. Koreans have little socialization with people outside their inner circles although acculturation seems to be taking place with the young who expressed interest in Dominican food, dance, music and tourist attractions. The main problems facing Koreans are the crime, corruption in the Dominican government, and culture-driven conflicts between Korean employers and Dominican employees.

Keywords: Korean Community, Diaspora, Adaptation, Dominican Republic

INTRODUCTION

The Dominican Republic is an island country that shares the island La Hispaniola with the Republic of Haiti. It is the second largest country in the Caribbean after Cuba and just like other developing countries it relies highly on foreign investment to provide jobs for its populace. For many decades the bulk of foreign investment in the Dominican Republic came from the United States and Europe, but subsequent Dominican governments have sought to attract investment from emerging economic powers such as Korea (Rodriguez 2005). The Dominican economic advisors were mindful of the possibilities for growth and investment coming from Korea. When Danilo Medina took office as President of the Dominican Republic on August 16, 2012, he pledged to transform the Dominican and attract new foreign businesses to the nation. Consequently, the President instructed Dominican diplomats to promote Dominican products abroad, sponsor tourists interested in visiting the country, and lure foreign business people into investing in the Dominican Republic. It was equally important as a component of this reorientation in foreign policy to analyze communities of foreign business owners in the Dominican Republic so that they would attract compatriots and colleagues into starting companies in the Dominican Republic.

Since the early 1990s, Korean entrepreneurs operate more than 20 factories in the Dominican Republic that specialize in light manufacturing, apparel, and chemicals taking advantage of both Dominican’s relatively cheap labor and the countries strategic location as a stepping stone for exporting to the North American markets.

Over fifty years have passed since the Dominican Republic and the Korea first established diplomatic relations on June 6, 1962. Korean Ambassador to the Dominican Republic Park Dong-Sil highlighted the exponential growth in bilateral trade that stood at 250 million dollars in 2016 and mentioned the unprecedented visit of the first Dominican head of state to Korea in 2006 (Bolinaga 2011). In spite of undeniable accomplishments in Korean-Dominican relations, significant difficulties remain for Koreans living in the Dominican Republic such as an uncertain business climate, corruption, and a weak judiciary. Crime and safety are a big concern after a series
of kidnappings and murders that took place in recent years against Koreans living in the Dominican Republic have terrorized many in the Korean community (Carrasco 2012).

The main purpose of this investigation is to look into the lives of the members of the Korean community in the Dominican Republic in order to identify the challenges facing Koreans in the Dominican Republic and to understand the dynamics of their adaptation process. This paper will also study the characteristics of Koreans living in the Dominican Republic based on the answers to questionnaires distributed to members of the Korean community. The author intends to present relevant information that may be helpful to policymakers in the Dominican Republic so as to implement the policy for the betterment of the lives and business prospects of Koreans living in the Dominican Republic in an effort to make the country more attractive to foreign investment.

The Dominican Republic and Korea established diplomatic relations on June 6, 1962, but it was not until the early 1980s that the first Koreans began settling. By contrast, the history of Koreans in other Latin American countries runs much deeper. In an effort to present the Korean immigration process in a broader context a brief history of Korean immigration to Latin America will be discussed. As early as 1903 Mexican President Porfirio Diaz invited Korean farmers to work and populate the lands of the vast Mexican territory, however waves of Korean migration have taken place all over the world during most of the twentieth century (Hyon, 1976). A total of 1033 Korean women, men and children embarked on a 45 days voyage from Incheon to Western Mexico and from there to Yucatan where Koreans worked mainly in henequen plantations (Canal Once 2012). The second wave of Korean migration headed toward South America. Under the Immigration Law of 1962, the Korean government encouraged emigration to South America by purchasing land purchased land and promoting the migration of entire families to farm the sparsely populated country sides of Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina. However, most of these migrants had middle-class backgrounds and little training on agriculture and farming. Basically, all immigrants deserted the farms and headed for the cities. Eventually, Korean migration to Latin America waned in the 1990s, and the continent became a temporary bridge for Koreans intending to settle in the United States (Kim 2001). The descendants of these early Korean migrants constitute today important communities of Koreans in Latin America. There are approximately 50,000 Koreans in Brazil, 22,000 Koreans in Argentina and 19,000 Koreans in Mexico.

Korean migration to the Dominican Republic was a direct consequence of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). The CBI was the response of the US government to cold war drove conflicts that had affected the Latin America for decades. In 1983, the Caribbean Basin Recovery Act granted tariffs and trade preferences to Central American and Caribbean countries not aligned with the socialist bloc in an effort to prevent the spread of Sandinistas-like guerrillas across the region. Koreans took advantage of this new political development and moved a handful of light manufacturing and textile companies to the Dominican Republic (Pregelj 2003). Korean entrepreneurs received incentives from the Dominican government to open their factories and import machinery free of duties. All the produce from these Korean-owned factories was labeled “Made in the Dominican Republic” therefore subject to preferential tariffs when exported to the US market.

The Dominican Republic, sitting less than 1000 miles away from the US mainland, represented a strategic stepping stone for Korean textile manufacturers. Transportation time and shipping costs significantly reduced luring even more Korean businessmen to the Dominican Republic. Just as important was the fact that in the early 1980s Dominican labor force was cheap and not unionized, in contrast, the situation in Korea was problematic for business. Korean labor unions were calling on frequent strikes demanding better working conditions and higher wages. The early 2000s were also a fruitful period for Korean manufacturers in the Dominican Republic. During the Dominican financial crisis and bank runs of 2004, the Dominican peso lost about 50% of its value against the dollar attracting even more Korean exporters and leading to a heyday in Korean population in the country that topped about 1000 people. However, as a new Dominican administration took power and gave in to the demands of Dominican workers for higher salaries, Korean industrialists saw their profits reduce. At the same time, the Dominican Central Bank instituted contractive monetary policies that led to the appreciation of the Dominican Peso. By the end of 2005, the Dominican Peso had recovered almost all the ground lost to the US dollar during the crisis. A Korean business leader in the Dominican Republic interviewed for this paper illustrates this situation with the following example: “when I first arrived in the Dominican Republic in 2004, I could purchase a box of cigarettes and a bottle of beer with only one dollar, but after the Dominican currency reform and revaluation,
I could not afford either one of those items with only one dollar. The value of the dollar went down about 50% against the Dominican peso, and consequently Dominican wages became comparatively higher driving out Korean factories that same year.” At least 10 Korean run factories moved to other countries and with them all Koreans who worked there.

Countries like Vietnam, Bangladesh, Myanmar and even neighboring Haiti became more attractive in terms of labor costs. For example, a Bangladeshi worker earned on average 100 dollars a month while a Dominican worker demanded 250 in 2005. Another reason that drove Korean businesses out of the Dominican Republic was that many Korean companies had forecasted their costs many years in advanced forecasting stability in labor price. Therefore, the sudden increase in operational costs took a toll on their profits. Facing shrinking profitability and an increasingly competitive and overly saturated textile manufacturing industry some Koreans started importing various items from Korea to resell. Others sought to obtain licenses to distribute Korean brands in the Dominican Republic and other markets in the region. Today there are dozens of Korean businessmen selling power plant parts, automatic trash cans, boxes, ink, and spare parts. These are the Koreans who opted for continuing their business in the Dominican Republic even when it meant switching industries after the demise of the textile manufacturing industry. They became the community of permanent Korean residents and represented the subject of study of this paper. About 700 Koreans live in the Dominican Republic mostly religious missionaries or businessmen and their families. Koreans in the Dominican Republic constitute one of the most recent migrant communities dating back no more than 30 years. Important communities in the Dominican Republic such as Haitians, Spanish, Americans, Chinese, Lebanese, Syrians, and Jews, all arrived much earlier in the Dominican Republic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>458,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>4,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>3,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>13,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other North America</td>
<td>3,597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Central America</td>
<td>2,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>3,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>2,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other South America</td>
<td>3,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>3,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asia</td>
<td>3,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>6,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>4,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>3,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Europe</td>
<td>4,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other rest world</td>
<td>1,912</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dominican National Statistics Institute (2011)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Korean communities around the world has been of particular importance to academics of Korean origin living overseas. In the beginning, these studies focused mainly on researching communities in countries with large Korean populations such as China, Japan, and the United States. Hyon (1976) presented an interesting study that followed waves of Korean immigration through the last two centuries. Other authors such as Park (2006) presented an extensive study of the history of Korean communities in the United States. Similar studies were conducted on Korean Diasporas in countries like Australia, the Philippines, and countries that belonged to the former Soviet Union.
Some of our references focus on the experiences of Koreans who migrated to specific urban areas or specific geographical sports within countries. For example Min (1999) focused specifically on the challenges facing Korean entrepreneurs in New York City. Other studies narrow their scope to the point of researching only on specific occupations such as Korean laundry and trade businesses of people in the city of Los Angeles. Scholars who research on Korean communities in Latin America have begun to emerge as new generations of Korean descendants while second and third generations became interested in documenting their histories and studying their communities. Bialogorski (2008) published an interesting account of the Korean migrant experience in the city of Buenos Aires that very much served as one of the bases for this study (Mera 2000). Similarly, Kim (2001) presented a study that traced Korean immigration to Mexico as far back as the early 20th century. It is worth noticing that the study of Korean communities in Latin American countries has started to diverge from the purely historical to cover also sociological aspects of the members of the Korean communities in some Latin American countries. Take for example Im et al. (2009), in which the author conducts questionnaires and interviews targeting young second generation Koreans in Brazil in an effort to capture the lives and challenges of new Korean-Brazilians. This paper follows upon the work of other authors who have already done research on Korean communities in various Latin American countries and intends to put together a comprehensive report on the lives and times of Koreans living in the Dominican Republic.

METHODOLOGY

For the conduction of this study, a total of 108 Korean adults residing in the Dominican Republic were given a questionnaire sheet to fill. The field work took place in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic during the month of December, 2016.

The type of survey administered was group administered questionnaire. In this kind of survey, a sample of respondents is brought together and asked to respond to a structured sequence of questions. Traditionally, these kinds of questionnaires are administered in group settings for convenience. For this study, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to those who were present to be fairly sure that there would be a high response rate. If the respondents were unclear about the meaning of a question, they could ask for clarification. And, there were often organizational settings where it was relatively easy to assemble the group, for example, visits to churches, Korean companies, and homes.

The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions divided into 4 different sections. The first section dealt with demographic characteristics that included income, age, time living in the Dominican Republic and purpose of stay. The second section investigates the acculturation of members of the Korean community by asking them about their Spanish language proficiency and which aspects of Dominican culture they like. A fourth part focuses on crime and how Koreans feel about safety and the rule of law in the Dominican Republic. The final section is oriented to Korean business owners and how they assess the work and behavior of their Dominican employees. All answers were compiled in easy to read bar graphs that allow the reader to see clearly how Koreans living in the Dominican Republic feel about important issues.

RESULTS

In this study, the Dominican minimum wage as of 2016 wage was used as a standard for the level of income. In the DR, the minimum wage is about 254 dollars per month working full time. An income of between 10,000 and 20,000 dollars a month in the Dominican Republic enables that household to afford an extremely accommodated lifestyle. That is because price level and the price of non-tradable services are much lower in the DR than that in Korea or the United States. 16 out of 108 (14.81%) respondents said that their household has an income of about 1270 dollars a month, that is about 5 times Dominican wage and enough for a family of 4 to enjoy an adequate standard of living. 40 persons or a 37.04% said their families have an income of between 1271 and 12,710 dollars a month that is between 5 to 10 Dominican minimum wages a month and enables a family to afford a good living in the Dominican Republic. 18.52% of respondents said that they enjoy a family income of between 12,711 and 20,000 dollars a month. The remaining 29.63% or 32 people out of 108 enjoy a household income
of more than 20,000 a month. 86% of Korean households earn wages that are unimaginable for most Dominican families. Actually, 29.63 of Korean families earn more than 20,000 American dollars a month which is a fortune in the Dominican Republic and allows a lavish quality of life.

Unlike the first and second waves of Koreans who arrived in Latin America in the early 20th century escaping the crushing poverty in the homeland, Koreans who moved to the Dominican Republic in the early 1980s had middle-class backgrounds and skills in manufacturing (Mera 2009). More importantly, the first Koreans to arrive in the Dominican Republic had the capital to invest and unwavering support from the Dominican government to open businesses. Early Korean immigrants were almost entirely male technicians with factory work experience moving alone to the Dominican Republic. In typical Korean fashion, these men would eventually bring their families, and very often acquaintances and relatives would follow in the journey to the Dominican Republic. It was particularly the case during the years following the Korean crisis of 1998.

Table 2: Foreign residents in the Dominican Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>*1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Foreign residents in the Dominican Republic

Note. Estimations provided by the Korean Embassy in the Dominican Republic. Koreans living in the Dominican Republic often do not report their residence to the Korean embassy as a way to prevent other Koreans from starting similar businesses and turning into potential competitors.

* Estimation provided by Korean business leaders interviewed for this paper.

Koreans in the Dominican Republic maintain close ties with their families and traditions and seldom socialize with local Dominicans outside the working place. Koreans send their children to elite bilingual schools that charge tuitions of about 600 dollars a month putting them out of the reach of the majority of Dominicans. There are two Korean schools in the Dominican Republic, one in each of the two major cities, Santo Domingo and Santiago (Bosch 1971). These schools run after school programs in Korean writing, reading, traditional Korean art and craft-making and cooking that aim at maintaining and strengthening bonds with the motherland. Koreans congregate every Sunday in self-run protestant churches. The churches have become the most important institutions for the formation of Korean social capital in the Dominican Republic. Koreans living in the Dominican Republic express their interest in cuisine, music, traditional Dominican dances such as bachata and merengue and tourism.

Figure 1. Purpose of residence in DR as a percentage of respondents

Figure 2. Places to meet other Koreans as a percentage of respondents
Members of the Korean community cited the language barrier as the main limitation to acculturation with over 70% of respondents to the survey grading their Spanish proficiency as no more than intermediate. Koreans tend to retain the Korean language as the primary form of communication while living in the host country. Moreover, the culture of isolationism and lack of interaction with locals make it hard for Koreans to learn Spanish naturally. Korean parents in the Dominican Republic regard English language education and Korean language reinforcements as more important than learning Spanish which explains the overwhelming enrollment of Korean children in pricey bilingual schools and the weekly lessons on Korean reading and writing. Korean families showed no intention of sending their children to Dominican universities choosing instead to groom them for higher studies in American or Korean colleges. Koreans in the Dominican Republic are fond of traditions such as cuisine, religion, and child rearing. Interviewees for this paper reported that Koreans in the Dominican Republic order most of their food from Korean markets in the US or directly from Korea. The Dominican Republic has a pluralistic ethnic and cultural composition, and its population exhibits an almost perfect “mestizaje”, a melting pot of European, African, and indigenous peoples. On the other hand, Korea has one of the most homogeneous societies in the world with a history that dates back over 5000 years.

Members of the Korean community in the Dominican Republic have reacted to the Dominican unusual social and cultural makeup by remaining somewhat isolated. As a result, they tend to face more difficulties of adaptation, integration, and acculturation. The bright spot in the acculturation process of Koreans to the Dominican Republic is their new found love for Dominican food. Local cuisine was reported as the favorite aspect of the Dominican culture. As has been observed in other countries such as the United States (Choi, 2002) Koreans in the Dominican Republic are inclined to entrepreneurial ventures and seldom look for employment at local companies.
High crime rates and the associated sense of insecurity are the biggest concerns for Koreans living in the Dominican Republic. There have been cases of murders, kidnappings, and armed robbery involving Korean victims. In 2012, a Korean businessman was found dead after being kidnapped by two former employees. The tardiness in the investigations and the lack of an official resolution of the case further weakened Korean trust in the Dominican law and order bodies. Newspapers have reported incidents involving Korean citizens (Castillo 2013) that further strengthen the feelings of insecurity Koreans have while living in the Dominican Republic.
Crime and lack of safety are some of the biggest concerns for Koreans living in the Dominican Republic. Koreans reported feeling afraid walking in the streets of the Dominican Republic. 56 respondents said that they feel quite unsafe while walking in Dominican streets accounting for 51.85%. 20 people said that they feel very unsafe and it accounts for an 18.5%. It is important to point out that the cumulative percentage of those who feel “very unsafe” and “quite unsafe” is 70.4% corroborating what Koreans say about their feeling of insecurity in the Dominican Republic triggered by the acts of crime perpetuated against Koreans in the last few years. The results show that Koreans of second generation are more fond of Dominican cultural aspects such as dance and food. This is consistent with similar studies of second-generation Koreans in Latin America (Im et al. 2009).

It is going to be hard for Koreans to recommend their partners to move, visit or live as businesspeople in the Dominican Republic when more than 60% of Koreans feel unsafe walking in the streets. Koreans still feel terrified since the kidnappings and assassinations of Korean business leaders.

Members of foreign communities, chambers of commerce, and foreign investors interviewed for this paper complained about the lack of trust they have in the Dominican legal system. After surveying 108 persons about how much they trust the Dominican legal system, 32 individuals said that they trusted the judiciary accounting for a 29.63% while 76 people said that they distrust the system (70.37%). Dominican Republic faces major challenges in order to improve its law abiding and rule of law credentials. Transparency International already rates the Dominican Republic 118 out of 174 countries in its transparency index. Koreans said overwhelmingly that Dominicans have a weak judiciary plagued with corruption. I have endeavored to find to which extent Koreans living in the Dominican Republic trust law enforcement officers (police officers) in the Dominican Republic. When asked about how much they trust Dominican police officers, no respondent believed that police officers in the Dominican Republic were trustworthy. 52 respondents out of 108 said that police officers were not so trustworthy, accounting for a 48.15 percent.

Other 56 respondents or a 51.85% said that they would never trust Dominican police officers. In conclusion, Koreans have negative image of Dominican law enforcement largely influenced by cases in which Koreans were kidnapped in the DR and investigators were unable to solve the cases. Koreans participating in this study confessed they had acquired fire arms for self-protection; a stark contrast with Korean culture where civilians never carry fire arms. The survey results similarly show that Koreans regard Dominican government officials as corrupted. 63% of respondents said that Dominican government workers were dishonest.

Korean business leaders expressed their frustration in dealing with Dominican employees, in particular, factory workers. Korean managers are well-acustomed to a rigid, top-down almost militaristic style of management where bosses are widely respected and their decisions never challenged. Dominican laborers, however, perform better under more horizontal structures where managers and laborers have basically a friend-friend kind of relationship. Titles, age, and seniority do not necessarily imply differences in the way a person is addressed or treated. Korean employers, in their frustration for not being able to convey their orders in understandable Spanish, often raise their voices in an authoritarian manner. In the Dominican Republic, scolding someone can be highly offensive. Korean business leaders complained about the low educational attainment of Dominican white collar workers. A Korean business owner described how when being asked to read and sign their labor contracts some workers were not able to do either and routinely signed a letter X due to their inability to write their names. Korean business leaders complain about the inadequacy and express dissatisfaction for the quality of the Dominican labor force. When surveyed for this paper, Korean business leaders in overwhelming majority regarded their Dominican employees as disrespectful, lazy, not punctual, dishonest, and uneducated.

![Figure 11. Opinion on workers’ work ethic as a percentage of respondents](image_url)
Korea has a long tradition of industriousness and hard work that led to the rapid industrialization and development of their nation. Respectfulness, punctuality, honesty, and education are paramount in Korean labor relations. Korean business leaders naturally judge their Dominican employees using the yardstick of Korean working culture. Out of 76 respondents, 40 believe respect level coming from Dominican workers is “low” and that accounts for a 52.63%. 28 persons or 36.84% believe their level of respect is normal and the remaining 8 persons or 10.53% think that respectfulness is high. Another important aspect of Korean work ethic is punctuality. Korean laborers are known for starting their work day early in the morning and staying until late at night. Dominicans and other Latin Americans are known for a very relaxed approach to timing. It is considered normal or acceptable to arrive five to ten minutes late or to leave work a bit earlier on Fridays.

When asked about the punctuality of their Dominican employees 36.84% of Korean business people said that punctuality habits were very low among Dominican workers. 44 respondents said punctuality in the workplace was low. When summing up “low” and “very low”, we see that 94.7% of Korean business owners find Dominican workers not punctual at work. Only 4 respondents or 5.26% think that Dominicans are punctual. Korean business owners were asked about how hard working their Dominican workers were. Out of 76 respondents, 8 rated very low for a 10.53%. 32 persons marked “normal” for a 42.11%. 32 persons responded “normal” accounting for a 42.11%. 4 persons said very high which represents a 5.26%. Honesty is a noble an important feature in Korean culture. It is known that Koreans often conduct businesses under informal oral contracts. 32 out of 76 Korean business owners or a 42.11% think Dominicans rank “very low” in honesty. 8 respondents said that honesty in Dominican workers is “low”. 36 respondents believe Dominican workers rank “normal” in honesty. More than half of respondents said that their Dominican employees are rather dishonest. However, Korean business leaders told the author of this study that dishonesty issues such as stealing, lying, arriving drunk to work or taking secret naps, are the price they have to pay for employing very low skilled and low pay workers.

Korean employers place great importance on their employees’ education and training. High level of educational attainment enabled Koreans to overcome a shortage of natural resources and turn around their country’s economy. Koreans regarded the level of education of their Dominican workers as very low. Out of 76 business
people, 16 said that educational attainment was “very low” and that represented a 21.05%. 32 persons believe Dominican workers’ educational level is “low” for a 42.11%. The remaining 28 respondents said that the level of education of Dominican workers was normal accounting for a 36.84%. During our session of interviews with Korean business leaders, we were told that in repeated occasions, company managers mentored employees teaching them basics such as writing their names or operating simple machinery. According to a Korean company owner interviewed by the author, most employees come to his factory without much schooling and lacking the most basic skills. Korean companies generally locate in some of the poorest areas of the Dominican Republic where a good education is virtually inexistent.

CONCLUSION

The Korean community is one of the latest to settle in the Dominican Republic with its origins dating back no longer than 30 years. Despite being relatively small when compared to other communities of foreigners in the Dominican Republic the Korean community has made important economic contributions with some 23 Korean owned companies operating in the Dominican Republic and providing hundreds of jobs. Unlike earlier Korean migrants to Latin America the members of the Korean community in the Dominican Republic arrived in the country with sufficient capital and managerial experience that allowed them to start businesses and export textiles to the United States taking advantage of the preferential treatment given by the US government to imports from friendly Latin American countries including the Dominican Republic. In similar fashion to reports from international organizations such as Transparency International (2015), our study concludes that corruptions, crime, weak judiciary among other problems are big impediments to the development of more international business in the Dominican Republic.

For the conduction of this study, a total of 108 Korean adults living in the Dominican Republic were administered a copy of the survey to fill out. 108 participants could be considered an insufficient sample for this research, but in the case of the Korean community living in the Dominican Republic, the number seems appropriate due to the small number of Koreans living in the country. Field work for this research took place in Santo Domingo capital of the Dominican Republic in December of 2016.

Korean households reported monthly incomes several times higher than the average monthly income of a Dominican family. The results indicate that 90% of Korean households interviewed for this study earn at least five Dominican minimum wages per month. Poor Spanish language proficiency was cited as the main impediment to acculturation with only about a half of respondents to the survey identifying themselves as fair speakers of Spanish. Dominican food was found to be the aspect of Dominican culture that interested Koreans the most.

Crime was reported as the most pressing challenge facing members of the Korean community in the Dominican Republic. Over 50% of respondents to the survey pointed out that they feel unsafe walking in Dominican streets. Moreover, unsatisfactory resolutions of crimes involving Korean victims of kidnappings have increased a feeling of distrust for the Dominican legal system with over 70% of Koreans saying they do not trust the Dominican judiciary system.

Finally, Korean business leaders described Dominican workers as lacking in work ethic, punctuality, honesty, and education. Nevertheless, Korean business owners are of the idea that these deficiencies in the quality of the Dominican worker are the result of years of a failing Dominican education and social welfare system. It is fair to say that Korean business owners and professionals from other countries have expressed similar concerns and faced similar problems (Lim 2006).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND FURTHER STUDY

This research represents a first attempt at analyzing the Korean community living in the Dominican Republic. No previous studies have ever touched this subject, and therefore, there was not a single academic background on which to build at the time this paper was written.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is not to prove or even state a hypothesis but only to present and describe Koreans living in the Dominican Republic and document important aspects of their lives. This research
is purely descriptive. We have put emphasis on the economic aspect of the lives of Koreans in the Dominican Republic as a way of being able to recommend policies to Dominican policy makers to attract more foreign investment.

By not having a hypothesis formally presented this paper represents the first building block for further investigation about the Korean community in the Dominican Republic. For example, instead of just surveying how Korean people feel living or working in the Dominican Republic, new research can focus on the reasons why Koreans of a certain age or certain gender feel more or less safe in the Dominican Republic. Causal analysis can be conducted, and different presumptions can be tested. It would be interesting to test management styles of Korean business leaders both in Korea and abroad and develop the hypothesis based on that.

In this paper, we have just opened the doors for more critical thinking and testing. Future researchers can hypothesize on whether Korean business owners behave the same way in other Latin American countries based on the Dominican experience. Future researchers can elaborate more on the relationship between time of sojourn and adaptation to a new country. I believe it is possible to use this research as a building block to measure adaptability of Koreans to different environments and control many different variables. Equally important for future research is to explore how Korean opinions and feelings towards the Dominican Republic evolve. Previous researchers, for instance, targeted for Latin-American born Koreans of second and third generations (Kang 1993).

I hope my work has just sparked the curiosity of future academics to build on our discoveries and contribute to an even deeper understanding of Korean communities not only in the Dominican Republic but also in other Latin American countries.

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