Black Koreans in Korean children’s literature

A study of Won You Soon’s book “Please find Chartlon Sunja Kim”

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Abstract

**keywords:** multiculturalism, multicultural literature, Korea, black Korean

The purpose of this study is to depict and examine the perception of black Koreans in South Korean children’s literature. This study examines my research questions through four theoretical frameworks: “culture and identity”, “post-colonialism, nationalism and racism”, “blackness and black Koreans’ portrayal in Korean media” and “multiculturalism in Korea”. My study raises the question how multicultural literature can help or not promote a new perception of otherness in South Korea.

The method used for this study is qualitative text analysis. The primary source of information is a close-reading of Won You Soon’s book “Please find Charlton Sunja Kim” and interviews with the author of this book. The findings show that there are still some stereotypes about black Koreans and blackness that prevail in South Korean society and can still be found in recent literary works.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

As the world becomes more interconnected, the notion of the nation-state, which consists of people who share the same ethnicity, beliefs, and culture, is expected to disappear (Hong, 2010: 387). For a long time, South Korea has been known for being one of the most homogenous countries in the world in terms of language, ethnicity and culture. Koreans have maintained the view that they are a homogenous society.

However, as Korea has become more modernized it has also become a more popular country to move to. The country is now exposed to yearly increases of foreigners settling down in South Korea, some for work purposes and others for e.g. study or marriage. The increasing number of immigrants has since then given rise to new social issues such as social inequality expansion and racial discrimination (Park, 2014: 62).

Migrant workers who come to South Korea for work constitute one of the groups that receive a lot of mistreatment and discrimination. In a poem, titled “What are foreigners?”, one foreign worker expressed the discrimination that migrant workers experience in trying to make a life in South Korea (Chung and Yim, 2012). In one sentence, it reads: “for not being able to speak, for having skin that’s a different color, why can’t foreigners be migrant workers? What are foreigners?”. 

The notion of Korea being one ‘blood community’ was rationalized by nationalist historians already during the Japanese colonization of Korea (Park, 2014: 37). The concept is known as minjok, which used to be the common word of ‘people’ but in that time the word became equivalent to a ‘family’, which can draw a line between ‘we’ and ‘others’. It puts emphasis on a ‘group based on homogeneous descent’ and a ‘group sharing common territory, culture, language, history and fate’ (Ibid.). In a country where the emphasis on the ‘purity of blood’ is so strong, how will South Korea manage new challenges of social changes i.e. the concept of multiculturalism? Also, what is further stressed in the poem, how do Koreans look on Koreans who may not look Korean (e.g. the biracial population).
In 2008 it was estimated that 19,000 biracial children were enrolled in Korean schools. In an attempt to solve the issues of racial discrimination, schools have tried to implement multicultural education. The multicultural education in South Korea has been subjected to much critic as it is not inclusive of all children but it targets only those children who are perceived differently from “ordinary” Koreans (Kang, 2010: 294). Thus it signals a stigma that “we are different from you”. Multicultural education is aimed to help children identify with their own culture; it exposes children to other cultures and opens the dialogue on issues regarding diversity (Harper & Brand, 2010: 225). Knowledge and understanding is one of the foundations for social change, which is the ultimate goal of multicultural education. Multicultural literature can contribute to that knowledge (Bishop, 1997).

The selection of quality multicultural literature should be done on the basis of author’s “cultural consciousness”. The issue was first brought up by Harris (1996). She meant that works of culturally conscious literature “provide exceptional aesthetic experiences; they entertain, educate, and inform; and they engender racial pride”. There are two perspectives of which multicultural literature can be produced. An inside perspective is one that portrays a cultural group is made from the view of one who is a member of the group (Yokota, 1993). An outside perspective is the opposite, where the portrayal of a cultural group from the view of someone who is not a member of the group. The latter gives the view of how others perceive the particular group’s beliefs and behaviors and is oftentimes not as accurate as the former. Many scholars argue that authors who write from an outside perspective often misses nuances which would not be missed if written by a person from the culture (Bishop, 1997).

However, there are some authors that have been recognized for their multicultural literature, despite not being from the culture themselves. In the same way, it is not always that being born into a cultural heritage environment gives one the expertise to write about it (e.g. if one has essentially lived outside that culture). The questions that this background bring forth is:

- Can someone from an ethnically homogeneous country portray an accurate picture of a minority group living in the same country?
This question is quite broad so in order to make the discussion more manageable, the scope of this research has been limited to the minority group “black Koreans” living in South Korea. The term “Black Koreans” refers to black mixed-blood people born, raised and living in Korea who were never culturally and socially regarded as Koreans until 1997 when they were entitled to full Korean citizenship (Kang, 2015). This leads us to the second question:

- Has the view on black Koreans changed in literature over time?

To circumvent the existing prejudice toward mixed blood people as non-Korean nationals, which assumes 'the purity of blood' of the Korean nation, hereafter I will use the term Black Koreans or biracial instead of 'mixed blood' to denote people of different skin-color.

1.2 Aim of study

The purpose of this study is to see if the available literature on the topic of black Koreans gives a balanced and fair representation of the minority group. I hope to find possible evidence of the representation of black Koreans in Korean literature and see how multicultural literature can help promote a new understanding of otherness in South Korea.

This thesis aims to question the common belief that only people from a specific ethnicity can write about a culture. It will review one author’s level of ‘cultural consciousness’ upon analyzing a work of multicultural literature in South Korea. Thus this study aspires to contribute to a better understanding of the recent phenomena of multicultural literature in South Korea and how it is perceived in the society.

1.3 Research questions

In the chapter about the background of this study there were two questions presented. These two questions will serve as the core of this study. The questions are as following:

- Can someone from an ethnically homogeneous country portray an accurate picture of a minority group living in the same country?
- Has the view of black Koreans changed in literature over time?
Furthermore, through a detailed review of previous research literature, I seek to understand how past experiences have shaped and influenced the way the Korean society views multiculturalism in the present.

2. Method

2.1 Methodological approach

This thesis tackles the question of how minority groups have been perceived in literary works in recent years (in particular black Korean in Korean literary works). Because of the novelty of multicultural literature in South Korea this is an unexplored research area with not much prior research on it. In order to fully explore the research area this thesis will apply an exploratory research design and be of a qualitative nature. The qualitative research approach serves the purpose of creating a deeper understanding of how concepts should be perceived and discussed (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010).

The epistemological research tradition I follow is interpretivism and critical realism. These two are most commonly used in qualitative research. The aim is to grasp individual and unique truths with an emphasis on understanding. To do this, I will conduct interviews with the author of one Korean children’s multicultural literary work followed by a close-reading of the author’s fictional work. The findings in the literary work will be contextualized with the author’s answers in the interviews. Due to the restrictions of the study the results will therefore showcase a contextualized and limited reality.

2.2 Criteria for book analysis

The book will be analyzed from the criteria of its authenticity as multicultural literature. Harris (1996) argues that quality multicultural books should be written by “cultural conscious” authors. She means that the literature should present a cultural experience in culturally and historically authentic ways. The criteria range of sources informing the selection of multicultural literature and include the following elements:

(1) The text and illustrations use historical information and develop settings accurately
(2) The author portrays characters positively
The text and pictures affirm diversity within a cultural group
The story integrates cultural content and events naturally
The author portrays individuals and communities authentically
The work resists stereotyping or romanticizing the experiences of minorities

(Ching, 2005: 129)

However, as scholars stress, it is not to forget that reading literature, especially fiction, no matter what culture it reflects, ought to be an aesthetic experience (Bishop, 1997; Yokota, 1993; Harris, 1996). Thus, criteria should be the same as when reading children’s literature in general. Literary elements such as plot, characterization, setting, theme, and point of view must be interwoven to create a convincing story in an age-appropriate manner (Harper & Brand, 2010: 225) and hence will also be considered when reviewing the book.

2.3 Interviews
One semi-structured interview was conducted with the author of the book. The semi-structured interview allowed the author to speak more freely and allowed me to ask follow-up questions, add or remove questions throughout the interview (Yin, 1994). A second interview was conducted through email exchanges. The reasons for choosing to collect interview answers as a primary source were (1) to compare the reality of the author’s reality to my own observations, (2) to establish the intention of the author writing about the topic and (3) to provide validity to my research.

2.4 Validity of research
To ensure the authenticity and validity of this research the interviews have been transcribed and sent to the author for approval. In order to minimalize personal bias and increase the credibility of the study, relevant previous research literature on the topics of multiculturalism in South Korean literary works and media will be carefully reviewed. Using multiple approaches to the data collection can give me the advantage of triangulation which also increases the validity of the research.
As nuances in translation can affect the way someone interprets a text, all Korean translations will be reviewed and accepted by my supervisor. In order to guarantee validity, the Korean sentences are also added in the thesis.

2.5 Translations

When translating sensitive topics (e.g. race), Kim-Russell (2015) argues that one has to bear in mind that translations are done for a readership that has its own history and set of expectations regarding the use of language, sensitivity, and authenticity. She poses the question whether translators have a responsibility to address depictions that may be stereotypical or problematic (Ibid.).

The fundamental question behind translation, though, is whether to preserve the author’s word choice as accurately as possible, or to adapt the text to the sensitivities of the target readership (Kim-Russel, 2015). When dealing with literature that is meant to be problematic, a representation of a historical moment or a prevailing sentiment of the society, then it makes more sense to proceed with the former (Ibid.). Following this argument, the translations will preserve the authenticity in the author’s word choices. As multicultural literature should provide an authentic and truthful depiction of the lives of another cultural group, it is in accord with this principle of authenticity to review the literature in regards to language usage as well.

2.6 Transcriptions

The transcription in this thesis will follow the McCune-Reischauer system, which is one of the two most commonly used systems to transcribe Korean into English script. Exceptions will be made for widely known Korean persons such as high-ranking politicians who are frequently mentioned in English publications and media. Those Korean authors who have written their names in English language publications in a different romanization system, will be cited as their names appear in the publication. For consistency, Won You Soon’s name will also be given not in the McCune-Reischauer system, but according to the Arts Council Korea publication about her.
2.7 Personal ideology and bias

I am fully aware of the fact that personal biases may be generated based on life experiences. Family, education, social norm, cultural values, and diaspora experiences may construct these biases (Sung, 2009). As a person born of mixed race (African and European origin) questions regarding racial identity and multiculturalism are intimately familiar to me. My experiences, social identity and cultural values may therefore affect the way I view particular questions and may influence the statements I make in this paper.

2.8 Limitations

Due to constraints of time and distance, I was not able to conduct more than two interviews with the author of the book. Naturally this cannot be regarded to be sufficient enough for gaining a fair impression of a human’s line of thoughts to make any final statements. The Korean author, Won You Soon, has written a handful of children’s books that fall into the category of multicultural literature but as the study of them would go far beyond the scope of this study, they have not been mentioned in this thesis. It would be worth to examine these books in future research works, in order to get a fairer depiction of how ethnically Koreans describe the life of minority groups in South Korea in children’s literature.

3. Research literature review and theoretical frameworks

3.1 Culture and identity

The term culture has been defined in multiple ways by different scholars. The meaning of the concept varies depending on different disciplines and contexts. It often refers to the intellectual, musical, artistic and literary products of a society (Harrison & Huntington, 2000). However, Geertz (1994) referred culture to the entire way of life in a society. He laid the emphasis on the importance of values, practices, symbols, institutions and human relationships. In this thesis the definition of Triandis (1973) will be referred to. Triandis defines culture as “shared attitudes, beliefs, categorizations, expectations, norms, roles, self-definitions, values and other such elements of subjective culture found among individuals whose interactions were facilitated by shared language, historical period, and geographical
region” (Triandis, 1973). This definition will be referred to as it puts emphasis on the collective societal factors such as shared language, historical period and geographical region.

Identity is a broad concept to define. In whole, a person’s identity is, in large part, made up of social roles and cultural categories. The self is composed of multiple identities and roles - familial, territorial, class, religious, ethnic and gender (Smith, 1991). For example, one person can be a sister, a student or a consumer depending on the situation.

There are numerous definitions of identity but a discussion of these go beyond the scope of this thesis. Basically, there are four relevant concepts of identity that go in line with this thesis: social identity, national identity, cultural identity and racial identity. Social identity is defined as “the part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 2010). Nationalism is the ‘belief that citizenship in a state should be limited to one ethnicity, one culture, one identity group’ (Park, 2014: 12). The national identify is derived from this shared citizenship and unity.

There are two ways of looking at cultural identity (Hall, 1990). The first view takes its foundation in ‘one shared culture’, meaning a collective ‘one true self’. It refers to people with shared history and ancestry hold as ‘one people’ (Ibid.). The second view takes its foundation in cultural identity being a process of constant transformation. It discusses “what we really are” contra “what we have become” (Ibid.). Racial identity is described by Helms (1995) as “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he/she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group”.

3.2 Post-colonialism, nationalism and racism

Korea was colonized by Japan from 1910 to 1945. Japanese colonialism promoted Korean modernization, but at the expense of the Korean people’s welfare and cultural identity (Kim, 2007: 30). The Korean language, history and culture were largely distorted by means of a manipulative ideology of racial inferiority (Kang, 2010: 288). In face of colonial oppression and control, Korean agency developed into organized struggles for national liberation and freedom. The focus of the Korean people moved to national- and cultural identity. The
beginning of the resistance movement was marked with a rally in Tapgol Park in Korea on 1 March 1919 (Chapman, 2007). They carried on for 35 years until the end of the colonialization. Although the reforms and opposition against the Japanese colonial power were largely unsuccessful, the nationalistic spirit remains clear in the Korean society.

After liberation from Japan in 1945 and the immediate division of territories and the arrival of the US army in South Korea (Kim, 2014: 10), the notion of national identity was stressed further. At first the soldiers had been regarded as the saviors from the Japanese but after the “massive influx of facially distinct foreign soldiers” the foreigners’ presence was regarded as a crisis for the nation (Ibid.). The Korean war waged in 1950-1953, killing approximately three million people. Under the conditions of national division, nationalism became an important ideology for the two separate parts. In South Korea nationalism has been promoted as a tool to defeat the enemy and develop the economy such as other powerful nation-states (Kang, 2010). Globalization has been shaped by the ideology of ethnic nationalism as well as its own specific history of national development (Shin, 2006: 207). As a consequence, immigrants or people were perceived differently from themselves and not fully included in society (Kang, 2010).

The issue of mixed-blood children in Korea was already brought up in the 1940s. Intermarriages, used as an assimilation tool during the colonial period, had been strongly promoted by the Japanese (Caprio, 2014: 148). This in turn lead to issues of Korean and Japanese mixed offspring, ethnic discrimination and class-based exclusion. The issue was further emphasized after the Korean war when the problem of mixed-blood orphans was brought up. This concerned all children who were of foreign origin mixed with Korean blood. Most children were born by Korean mothers, so naturally one would think they should be considered Korean. However, according to the Nationality Act in 1948 in South Korea, this was not the case (Kim, 2014: 23). The act defines Koreans by 1) when the father is a Korean citizen at the time of birth, 2) when the father died before the birth, and the father was Korean at the time of death, 3) when the father is not known or does not have any citizenship, and the mother is Korean, 4) when the parents are not known or do not have any citizenship, and the child is discovered on Korean land, babies found on Korean land are deemed born in Korea (Ibid.). The patriarchal law was amended in 1998. This amendment changed every line that
read "father" to "father and mother" (Ibid.).

Thus, before 1998 if a Korean woman married a foreign man, the child would not be considered Korean. In other words, nationality or citizenship was determined by *jus sanguinis* (the right of the blood, descent from a person of that nationality). This is a common trait of ethnic nationalism, which is defined as ‘nations determined by a shared heritage, which usually includes a common language, a common faith, and a common ethnic ancestry’. Common blood becomes the condition for membership in the nation state (Park, 2014: 13).

In most cases where the children would be registered in either a stepfather’s family register or a maternal side family register, the child would technically be considered Korean. However, in practice, if the children were not recognized (e.g. clear biracial appearance) by others as Korean, they would not be treated as Koreans (Kim, 2014: 24). Derogatory racial terms upon discovering biracial children and their mothers were commonly used among the Korean population (Kim, 2014: 10). Especially, biracial children born of black men fell victim to these terms because of the obtrusively discernable skin color. The emphasis on the “problem” in these cases thus gradually shifted from mixed-blood to the blackness of skin color.

There are clear examples of racism toward biracial children in South Korea. One is practical implementation of the Korean Military Service Enforcement Ordinance written in 1949. It states the national duty of every Korean man to serve a certain period of time in military. The children of mixed origins, who were registered as Korean citizens, also abide to this law. However, in late the 1960s and early 1970s when most biracial children reached adulthood this became a problem. A high level of hesitation and tension whether whom to include in the military service arose and the hesitation was directed toward the people who were racially perceived differently (Kim, 2014: 25-26).

In the early 1970s, the Ministry of Health and Society announced that they would exempt mixed-blood people from military duty. The ministry claimed that the particular situation of biracial children did not fit to the military because "their birth and physical appearance is so different from [Korean] that it is very difficult for them to adapt themselves into [the Korean] society and in the military there is a high possibility of causing an accident" (Kim, 2014: 25).
Hence, biracial Korean people were categorized as "improper" and relegated to "secondary citizen military", which is a category for criminals and the handicapped (Kim, 2014: 26). The standard of exclusion was reaffirmed by the amendment in the Military Service Enforcement Ordinance in 1984. The amendment prescribed that the exclusion was for those of "clear physical difference in appearance" (Kim, 2014: 23).

This clause set a significant marker in deciding inclusion and exclusion in the nation. It made clear that being perceived physically different automatically meant that they did not belong to the nation. Although "blood mixing" had occurred before in Korea during the colonial period, it had mostly been between Korean and other Asian races, in particular Japanese. This was therefore not as “bad”. The mixing of Korean blood with that of black people “generated a color-line that signified a ‘dangerous crossing’ that should not exist in society” (Kim, 2014: 27). Visible blackness became the symbol of the violation of national dignity and illicit sex.

An even harsher form of exclusion appeared as early as in the mid-1950s. Under Syngman Rhee's government they pursued the most virulent form of racism by setting a national policy on mixed-race orphan children to have them deported “back” to their fathers' land. Not many in those times would argue that these children should be adopted nationally. (Kim, 2014: 29) This was because Korean people firmly believed that biracial people would damage their image of a homogenous nation. The “we versus them” way of thinking, which led to the deportation of biracial black children, is not specific for Korea. It could also be seen in post-war Germany. After World War 2, West Germany had a lot of mixed-blood children in the country. Based on a still lingering Nazi ideology in the society, the people of West Germany believed that the best solution was to send the children “back” to their perceived "home countries" (Kirst, 2011).

Because of this misconception of black Korean children, the South Korean government actively promoted international adoptions toward the Americans. The image of black mixed race children awaiting help often appeared in American media. At the same time, the Korean government instituted their policy by highlighting the good life the mixed children were having in their “home countries”. This was in attempt to appeal to the emotional side of the Korean people. Newspapers often published long, detailed articles describing the good lives the
children led in their claimed “father’s land”.

**3.3 Blackness and black Koreans’ portrayal in Korean media**

The first record of blackness known to have appeared in Korean literature dates to 1598. (Kim, 2015: 212). According to Chosŏn Wangjo Sillok (the annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty), a general from the Ming dynasty brought an African mercenary from Portugal. He was probably an African slave taken by the Portuguese. It is described in the historical annals that the king of Chosŏn had been very pleased by the black man's bravery (Ibid.). However, later, the concept of blackness in literature drastically changed at the end of the 19th century. As Korea came to be confronted with threats from neighboring countries, it became clear that they needed to stay together. When Korean borders opened for the outside world because of the Japanese intervention, Korea was naturally exposed to new Western ideal and policies. The idea of Social Darwinism which had appeared a trend in Western countries quickly reached Korea. Darwinism is a biological theory about how new species are formed and existing ones can become extinct (Hawkins, 1997). Following this theory, Social Darwinism involved the assumption that humans’ social existence (e.g. all aspects of culture - religion, ethics, political institutions, the rise and fall of empires and civilization) also is determined by the emerging of new species and the elimination of others (Ibid.). In broader terms this meant that if a nation failed to modernize, it was juxtaposed with the failure of race.

Under the influence of these Western ideas Yu Kiljun, who was a promising Korean intellectual of the times, wrote in 1895 that "lazy Native Americans (the Reds, in his words) do not appreciate white civilization, and the blacks do not know how to use their natural resources and would be extinct soon". The intention was to refer to these races as “lower races” while propagandizing warning signals to what could happen to the Koreans (Kim, 2015: 212).

In times of turmoil it became more important for the Korean people to create a strong national identity. Although they regarded the Japanese as a threat to their nation, they also felt comfortable to be classified in the same racial category, the so-called yellows, as the Japanese and Chinese. This can be seen in an article published by Haejo Sinmun in 1908, a time when all signs indicated that Korea would become colonized by Japan. The article titled ‘Look back at your home country’, complained “how mortifying it is that we could gradually become
extinct, like the American Reds and African blacks" (Kim, 2015: 213). It clarified that falling into the same status as the blacks and reds was the worst thing Korean would have to expect for in the future (Kim, 2015: 9). After the colonization, Koreans despite of their status as colonized people, saw their country as a sacred land with a history of 500 years and one ethnic people speaking the same language, different from barbaric and ignorant African or American blacks (Kim, 2015: 214).

After the Korean war the representation of black Koreans in public media was very limited. As an effect of Syngman Rhee’s policy of international adoption of mixed-raced children there were instances in media were they would portray the children living happily with their new families in another country. There were also newspapers writing on similar topics. Aside from that there were not many cases where black Koreans were mentioned in public media. Instead they lived almost “invisible” in Korean society. Only on special occasions, especially if the story invoked “a story of success” they were featured (Kim, 2014: 6). Otherwise they would almost always be portrayed as troublemakers by the media.

It was not only black Koreans who received bad representation in Korean medias. Black people (mostly black Americans) have also been labeled a bad reputation. Han (2001: 30) states that it is usually the black American soldiers who abuse women in Korean literature. Other representations of blackness in Korean literature often describes black people as having “animalistic” and “barbaric” features. They are also often described as savages or beasts.

An early example of this can be found in Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s “The case of Western Cookies” published in 1948. The book compares a prostitute who has black costumers with a prostitute who only has white costumers. The prostitute who has black costumers is described as almost nauseating compared to the "clean" and "pretty" prostitute who only takes white costumers (Kim, 2014: 12).

Kang (2014) brings forth yet an example from another novel written by Chu Yosŏp in 1947. The novel is titled “Mixed blood”. The novel discusses a village woman and her illicit sexual relationship with an African-American soldier which results in a baby who was buried alive soon after it was born. The author highlights the issue of mixed-blood and focuses on the
effects of it. Based on the allegedly “scientific” evidence of atavism, he means that black blood can become visible in later generations and because of this the baby must be buried alive. He continues to say that to prevent such a tragedy, killing the baby was not a bad idea (Kang, 2015: 11).

In this passage there is a strong, special emphasis on the “tragedy” which will happen and have long term effects in Korean society. The author explains the tragedy as the shock that ethnical Korean parents may experience generations ahead when they give birth to a black child. However, the underlying meaning of tragedy in Chu’s statement is even deeper. It refers to not only to an individual or a certain family’s case but it touches the destiny of the Korean nation as a whole. The prevention of tragedy is described as the very prevention of an increase of black mixed blood in the Korean blood as the biracial child becomes older and eventually gives birth to children of his/her own. In fact, there is a direct correlation between Chu’s novel and the perception of Koreans in real life. Historical evidence shows that it was not until black Korean children reached adulthood that they came to be regarded as a serious societal problem and a threat to society which was reflected in i.e. the amendment of the military service ordinance.

Part of the reason for the distorted representation of black people (and other minority groups) in literature is based on power distribution in the society. The groups of individuals who do not reflect the characteristics of the dominant group or culture are often subject to misrepresentation or misunderstanding, leading to being marked as out-group members through complex strategies of othering (Sung, 2009).

Despite bad views of blackness in Korean literature, the image possessed some ambivalence in post-liberation popular culture and films. In 1949 the popular stage musical “Porgy” was reproduced by a Korean producer. He changed the title to “A Negro is Sad” and from this title it is fair to assume that the emphasis on ‘black’ and ‘sadness’ was to expose hidden racism against black people in South Korea. The main attraction of the play, however, was the skin color of black people, rather than their sorrow (Kim, 2014: 4).

A film version was released in 1955. The film highlighted both the hardships of the mother
and the child. The story revolved around the mother who fell in love with a black soldier but after being ridiculed by people for being a prostitute, she asked the man to leave. He granted her wish and left but soon after she found herself pregnant. She raised the child despite hardships and in the end of the story the man returns. He returns as a successful man and he is portrayed in a positive light. He brings the child back to the United States after they agree that it was for the best. The story sympathizes with both the mother and also the child. It was used for propaganda purposes under Syngman Rhee’s policy of sending children away to their “father’s country”.

3.4 Multiculturalism in Korea

The foreign population in South Korea has massively increased in the past twenty years. In the beginning, the foreign population was mainly composed of overseas Koreans who came as job seekers. However, the composition of foreigners slowly started to diversify. It was not only job seekers who came but often people came for other reasons such as travel, study, marriage, etc. In 2007, the total foreign population of South Korea reached 1 million (Park, 2014: 52) and by 2014, almost 1.8 million foreigners lived in South Korea, constituting a 14.1% increase from the previous year (Korea Immigration Service, 2015). These changes have triggered the discussion whether South Korea is becoming more multicultural.

However, South Korea has proceeded in modern state building with an ambivalent sense of national identity (Kim, 2007: 6). As a consequence, in part of the ethnocentric national pride in one’s own culture and history immigrants are not fully included in society. This naturally goes against the notion of living in diversity that multiculturalism promotes.

However, the Korean ethnic nationalism is contextual and brought about during colonialism. The dual ethnic bias based on ethnic exclusivism is also known as “white complex” among Koreans (Kang, 2010: 289). There is a sympathetic orientation toward people from advanced countries, and the other is an antagonistic orientation against ethnic minorities from less-developed countries (Ibid.). Thus it implies that certain ethnic minorities are discriminated upon because of the status of their home country. These minority immigrants often include people with darker skin living in Asia, Africa and Latin America.
In 2005, 43000 multiethnic couples were married in South Korea, constituting 13.6% of all marriages (Hong, 2010: 389). Many of the spouses are from foreign countries such as China, Vietnam and the Philippines. The growing number of mixed marriages lead to integration challenges, especially in schools. In recent times, Korean schools have become more ethnically diverse, and this has forced educators to consider the incorporation of multicultural education into their programs and practices (Ibid.). As previously mentioned, the Korean multicultural education system has been criticized for their exclusive methods. Instead Kang (2010) suggested an inclusive approach to Korean multicultural education by getting all children involved equally in social life. Bishop (1997) also denoted that it is important for all students to participate in multicultural education. Bishop meant all students need to recognize the diversity that defines their society, learn to respect it and see it in a positive light (Bishop, 1997: 3). Multicultural literature is another way to teach children about diversity.

### 4. Book analysis

The book that will be reviewed in this thesis is "Kim Ch'alt'on Sunja-rûl ch'aja jwôyu (Please find Charlton-Sunja Kim)" written by Won You Soon in 2010. The book was printed three times and approximately 10 000 copies were sold. The book can be found in most libraries in South Korea (Y. S. Won, personal communication, June 6, 2015).

Although the sales numbers were comparatively low for a Korean publication, the reactions toward the book were very positive. The book was much mentioned in newspapers such as Seoul daily newspaper, Kookmin daily newspaper and Munhwa daily newspaper etc. and it was also strongly recommended by readers and reviewers. The book also won the Socheon Children's Literature Award 2010 which is one of the most respected children's book awards in South Korea. The book has also been a topic of multicultural discussions in different book clubs. The Study of Children's books which is a critic's group of children's books is one example of these clubs which have used Won You Soon's book as a topic. The Reading Teachers of Children's Books is another (Y. S. Wón, personal communication, June 6, 2015).
4.1 Author and her publications

Won You Soon is a respected author of Children's books in Korea. She has written over 70 children's fiction and story books. Her works include famous titles such as Hipong Laundry (2012), describing a son whose mother is a Vietnamese immigrant who married a Korean man. Another of her books, Trees that Eat Colors (2008) explores the journey of children who seek their national identity. Last but not least, Catch Me If You Can (2013) is an omnibus edition of short stories about the damages of the ecosystem.

Before becoming an author, Won You Soon worked as a primary school teacher for many years. She obtained her PhD in Creative Writing at the prestigious Dankook University in Seoul. Now she works full-time as a writer of children's literature. Won You Soon bases most of her writing in her long-term experience of working as a teacher. While working as a teacher she gained first-hand experience of the hardships that children of both Korean nationality and other nationalities living in Korea can encounter growing up. Her writing is mostly set in contemporary Korean society and accurately reflects children's struggle and pain. Through her child protagonists she aspires to help children overcome their own hardships.

In an interview on November 24, Won You Soon was asked about her intentions of writing multicultural literature. She replied that working as a teacher she has seen many unhappy children from many different nationalities and therefore she wants to highlight their stories (Y. S. Wŏn, personal communication, November 4, 2014). Previously the author had expressed her intention of writing multicultural literature in one of her books titled “U-ri ŏmma-nŭn yŏja Pŭllangk’a (The woman called Blanka)”. The book is about a mixed Vietnamese and Korean child whose Vietnamese mother married her Korean father and moved to South Korea. The book centers around the child and her mother’s hardships living in a society where they are different from the norm. In the author’s note at the end of the book Won You Soon writes a chapter titled “U-ri sŏ-ro chonjunghamyŏ sarayo” which translates as “Let’s live in respect of one another” (Wŏn, 2005).
The intention of the author is written in the last sentence that reads “나는 이 동화를 쓰면서 지구 위의 모든 사람들이 차별받지 않고 서로 존중하며 살았으면 좋겠다고 생각했어요”

In English this sentence translates to “As I wrote this book, I was thinking of how nice it would be to live in a world where nobody is discriminated upon and everybody lives together in respect”.

4.2 Book analysis

4.2.1 General contents

The book *Please find Charlton-Sunja Kim* is a book of 179 pages. It revolves around Kim Minjŏng, a regular middle school student, whose dream is to become a singer. However, her father opposes her dream to sing. Minjŏng is a third generation black Korean and her skin color is a bit darker than the norm. The book focuses on the hardships of Minjŏng’s family and Minjŏng’s own questions of identity. The book brings forth cases of discrimination against black Koreans in different generations. The hardships of Minjŏng’s great-grandmother’s mother are explained by highlighting the isolation she faced in society upon giving birth to a first generation black Korean.

The hardships of the grandmother, Charlton-Sunja Kim, are the most elaborated and they are revealed in early school diaries. The discrimination and isolation the grandmother had faced is clearly shown in her writings. In the beginning of the book, Minjŏng showed no interest for leaning about the history of her identity. She does not try to understand the reasoning of her father who opposes her dream to become a singer. The fact is that he had also once tried to become a singer but because of his skin color, he was looked down upon. Minjŏng also doesn’t try to understand her great-grandmother. Instead of appreciating the time she has with her, she thinks of her great-grandmother’s presence as an annoyance. This is because Minjŏng never encountered discrimination toward herself in the same degree. Minjŏng states herself that she has not faced many instances of discrimination, or at least as she says “nothing enough to leave a scar” (Wŏn, 2012: 84).

It is not until her great-grandmother dies that Minjŏng by chance finds the diaries of her grandmother. As she reads about the struggles against discrimination and isolation her
grandmother had faced, she finally understands the hardships that both her great-grandmother and father had gone through. She starts to sympathize with her father and his decision to give up his dream to become a singer (although she still does not give up on hers). She also regrets not having spent more time with her great-grandmother.

In school Minjŏng is known for being a star. The moment she goes on stage to perform everyone shouts her name as if she was an idol. This is the moment Minjŏng lives for and the reason why she wants to continue her dream to become a singer. In school there are a few characters of importance. There is a potential love interest, a boy named Sŏngmin who she had known since she was young, and who attends the same class. There is also the classical antagonist which is a girl in her class named Chŏnga who continuously questions the identity of Minjŏng in questions such as “너보고 하프블러드라고 말하는 게 아니야. 그렇지만 난 분명히 흑인의 자손이잖아[...] 자기부리를 모르는 건 부끄러운 일이잖아” which translates as ”People [usually] do not say you’re a ‘half-blood’. But you’re definitely the descendant of a black person [...] It’s a shame to not know your own roots.” There is also another child who has foreign background. Her name is Ina and her mother is Vietnamese and her father is Korean. The author has used the character Ina to highlight differences between her and Minjŏng and their identities.

Minjŏng’s mother is Korean. Minjŏng looks up to her mother and she mentions on a few occasions that she wishes she was more like her mother. Minjŏng’s father is a trouble-maker who shifts work every now and then because he gets fired. He has a temper, which is because of his troubled past. Minjŏng does not look up to her father in the same way as to her mother. She also doesn’t understand why he opposes her dream to become a singer and feels like it is unfair.

It is toward the end of the book when it appears in an announcement in the news that In Suni, a black Korean singer, will have a concert in New York. The whole family rejoices. They are surprised that a black Korean is going to perform on a world stage and the father admits that the world is changing now. He also finally agrees to let Minjŏng pursue her dream to become a singer.
4.2.2 Diverse representation of black Koreans

The book will be analyzed according to the steps that Ching (2005) proposed. The text will also be reviewed in regards to how well the author understands the characters. This will be reviewed based on facts supported by empirical research literature regarding the identity building of biracial children.

Herring (1992) denotes that biracial children are particularly vulnerable to differential treatments by their parents and relatives, social rejection by their peers and ambivalent attention in their schools and communities. The Korean author, Won You Soon, apparently has taken this into consideration and highlights the interactions between Minjŏng and her peers. These interactions play an active role in the identity building of the character. When Minjŏng is asked the question about where her roots are from, it triggers an internal debate on her identity. It reads:


It translates to: “Where is my hometown? Where are my roots from? I was born in Korea and certainly I am Korean. My father, too, is a Korean born in Korea although he is mixed black. Not even once have I ever thought differently. But all of a sudden mentioning Africa.. Scarcely 25-30% of my blood is mixed with black blood”.

The notion of identity building gives the reader a chance to imagine Minjŏng’s life and thoughts. The author provides a truthful and authentic portrayal of the community and the miscommunication which may happen between children. This passage is one of many and the author writes the book in a way that is thought-provoking for both people inside the cultural group and people outside of the cultural group.
In other examples too, the author has further provided a correct portrayal of Minjŏng’s way of thought and reasoning. Herrings (1992) described that biracial children have problems of identification with the minority parent. In the beginning of the book Minjŏng is more inclined to sympathize with her mother and cast aside the history and the struggles of her grandmother and her father. One example reads: “나는 가끔 내가 왜 엄마를 닞지 않고 아빠를 닦았는지 속상하다[...]”. This translates as “Sometimes I get upset because I am more alike my father than my mother” (Won, 2010: 68). Another example can be found on page 80 where it reads:

This translates to “Because I am a third generation black Korean, my circumstances are very different from my father’s. Firstly, from my appearance it is not so obvious that I am mixed black as my father. I can deal with my black features such as curly hair by fixing them through straightening perms even if I would not do so, I’ll have my curly hair to look cooler.”

Another point that the author highlights is the ordeals Minjŏng’s family have endured throughout the years. Families of biracial children often struggle with concerns like family approval, community acceptance, job discrimination and social isolation (Herring, 1992). Systematically and historically accurate, the Korean author explains the struggles of the family and she successfully brings forth some of the common problems of biracial families.

The first example is from Minjŏng’s grandmother’s diaries. It narrates how the neighborhood ladies gathered to teach the great-grandmother a lesson. It describes how both the great-grandmother and the grandmother had been beaten and the ladies had called the great-grandmother ’양갈보 [yanggalbo]’, which is a derogatory word for ‘foreigner’s whore’. 
This paragraph serves as a proof of the historical hardships that black Koreans have faced. The author does not romanticize the events but instead describes them in an authentic way. It presents the problem of exclusion that black Koreans have faced in the past.

The author also mentions the problems of racism that prevails in society in present time. It is mentioned in the school setting. The English teacher, an American white female, announces that she will quit because she is getting married and moving back home. She brings her fiancé, who is black, to school. The children are all curious as it is their first time they see a black person. Ina, the Vietnamese Korean, expresses her hopes that the fiancé will become a teacher in Korea too. Chŏnga replies that it probably won’t be easy because “the mothers hate black teachers” (Wŏn, 2012: 95).

An important aspect in this passage is the fact that it is a Vietnamese-Korean who expresses her acceptance and welcoming to the foreign fiancé. On the other hand, Chŏnga, who is Korean, expresses skepticism at the thought. Another aspect is that the teacher is American and not Korean, who marries another American. This indicates that the author cannot believe that a Korean woman would marry a black person so she introduces the idea through another foreign person.

The same way of thinking regarding intermixed Korean-Black marriages can be found in the description about Minjŏng’s parents who are also not married. How the parents met is described as:

 엄마는 스무 살에 아빠를 만나 불 같은 사랑에 빠졌단다. 아빠와는 동갑내기였다. 엄마는 말했다. 지독하게 외로웠다고. 외로워서 죽을 것 같았다고. 그때 아빠도 엄마만큼 외로웠다고. 외로운 사람들끼리 서로 보듬어 주니 그 외로움이 훨씬 줄어들었다고. 그랬는데 덜컥 임신을 했다는 거다 (Wŏn, 2012: 79).

It translates as “My mother was 20 years old when she met my father and fell in love. My father was the same age. My mother told me that she was terribly lonely, so lonely she wanted to die. At that time my father was just as lonely as my mother. An embrace between
two lonely people immensely diminished the loneliness, she said. It was like that but then unexpectedly she found herself being pregnant.” The passage continues to explain that the mother was happy at the idea of a baby but Minjŏng’s father opposed the idea. He was worried that the baby would have to go through all the pains he had gone through. In the end the mother secretly gave birth to Minjŏng and then found the father again. When the parents met again they still did not marry as the father’s worries were too strong. Usually it is the mother who opposes giving birth to a child or marrying when the circumstances are not so good. However, in this case it was the father who was against it. This passage shows how strong discrimination the father has endured and his disappointment in the society.

Contradictory to the teacher’s situation, who is an American who marries another American, Minjŏng’s mother is native Korean and Minjŏng’s father is a black Korean. It is explained in the book that Minjŏng’s father was subsequently discriminated upon so the fact that he is lonely is explained well. However, the mother’s loneliness is not elaborated at all. This implies that the author could not imagine the parents’ meeting unless it was under extraordinary psychological conditions. The author also explains that it was impossible for the two to marry.

4.2.3 Quality multicultural literature analysis

The author brings up societal problems in an interesting, thought-provoking manner in this book. Even though she writes about the culture through an outside perspective, it is clear that the author has done research beforehand. The events are explained in a systematic order and the feelings of the characters are believable. The book is written in a way that is easy to understand and follow while at the same time it does not overlook unpleasant events and situations. It is also clear (perhaps because of her background as a teacher) that the author understands children and the way they think and act.

There are many instances in Won You Soon’s work proving that the work qualifies for quality multicultural literature (see above in 4.2.2). The author addresses the criteria with success e.g. (1) the text and illustrations use historical information and develop the setting accurately. (2) The author portrays the characters positively. (3) The text and pictures affirm diversity within a cultural group and (4) integrates cultural content and events naturally (5) and the author portrays individuals and communities authentically.
However, there are instances in the book which do not satisfy the final criteria for what Ching (2005) denoted as criteria for selecting quality multicultural literature, i.e. that the work resists stereotyping or romanticizing the experiences of minorities (6). These occurrences in the text will be referred to as “misrepresentations”. A misrepresentation is when something is falsely described, the term is very fitting in this context.

4.2.4 Misrepresentations

In many cases the book successfully describes the experiences of the characters without romanticizing or stereotyping it. The author informs the reader of hardships of both the father and the grandmother in a natural historical and cultural authentic fashion. It highlights discrimination and ordeal without romanticizing the experiences.

An example of this is the episode when Minjŏng finds old school diaries describing the life of the grandmother. The entry describes when her grandmother sits nearby a river, washing her hands and face with a stone in the hope of whitening the skin. The text reads “아무리 박박 때를 밀어도 하야게 되지 안한다[...]. 피가 났다. 피는 빨가다. 그래도 까만 건 하야게 안된다.”, which translates as “No matter how hard I scrub it doesn’t whiten [...]. Blood appears. The blood is red. But the black doesn’t become white.” (Won, 2010: 142).

The text is corrected by, what appears to be the grandmother’s teacher, in red pen but the revision only concerns typographical errors. The teacher gives no other comment on the grandmother’s desperate situation (Ibid.). There are many reports on black Korean children during the time to have acted similarly (Kim, 2014: 22) thus this is a fair
representation of historical and cultural authenticity.

Another example is the passage where Minjŏng informs the reader about the hardships her father experienced when trying to live out his dream as a singer in the 1980s. The example reads:

[...] 첫 음반을 냄을 때, 사람들 관심은 아빠의 노래가 아니라 아빠의 개인에 속했다. 지나치게 곱슬곱슬한 머리, 까만 피부, 두툼한 입술, 새하얀 눈자위에 커다란 눈동자, 그리고 선 굵은 쌍꺼풀..., 아빠는 혼혈이었다. 노래보다 혼혈에 대해 가지고는 관심을 아빠는 소름 돼도록 싶었다. 그래서 아빠는 가수의 꿈을 접었다. 아빠는 사람들 앞에서 웃음거리나 심심풀이 오징어 땅콩처럼 질경질경 씹히는 주전부리감이 되기는 싫었을 것이다 (Won, 2010: 26).

The paragraph translates into “[...] When the first record was released, people didn’t focus on my father’s music but rather they looked at his personal traits: his excessively curly hair, his black skin, thick lips, pure white eye balls and big pupils and bold double eyelids..., my father was black mixed-blood. He hated the fact that people focused more on him being mixed-blood rather than his profession. Because of this, my father gave up on his dream of becoming a singer. He hated the thought of becoming a laughing stock or someone people watched just to kill time, like someone would snack on squid or peanuts.”

Both these examples highlight the hardships and sorrows of the characters in a truthful way providing the reader with information that is historically and culturally authentic. However, in the cases of both Minjŏng and Minjŏng’s father, their dream was to become a singer. The stereotype that all black people are good at singing is a global stereotype, so it is not particular for Korea. However, as Kim (2014) denoted in her thesis, there have not been many instances of black Koreans appearing in media but only on special occasions, especially if the story invoked “a story of success”. The particular dream of both Minjŏng and her father to become a singer consolidates the stereotype that black Koreans can only achieve recognition in society if they invoke a “story of success”.
Another example of stereotyping can be found when the mother explains the story of Minjŏng’s great-grandmother and how she had been raped by an American soldier. It is historically accurate that there were many instances of rape during and after the war in South Korea. This is an unfortunate but common occurrence during wartime. But the question is how such an incident is described in Wŏn’s book. Literally the wording is: “돌아보니 시켜먼 잔승… [toraboni shik‘ŏmŏn chimsŭng...” (Won, 2010: 110), which translates to “As she turned around, a black-jet beast...”. As mentioned previously, this is a typical example of how blackness is portrayed in Korean literature. The example encourages the stereotype that black people have “animalistic” and “barbaric” features.

4.3 Comments on the artistic medium

The illustrations in Please find Charlton-Sunja Kim are created by Pak Yun-hŭi. When examining illustrations and pictures for authenticity in multicultural literature, elements such as (1) representation of diverse populations, (2) representation within cultural groups, (3) realistic and genuine representation of characters, (4) avoidance of reinforcement of societal stereotypes, and (5) demonstration of respect for other cultures are of importance (Harper & Brand, 2010). Realistic elements in the illustration are instrumental in children’s ability to comprehend text and make meaningful connections with the theory (Ibid.).

The illustrations are aesthetically appealing and characters are portrayed in a truthful way. The illustrations also refrain from reinforcing societal stereotypes. However, some illustrations of native Korean persons can sometimes have very neutral features, not implying their ethnic background. This is the case for some situations but not in others.
Another difference in the illustrations is the depiction of the father. In most illustrations the color of the father’s skin is medium brown. However, in one illustration when the parents are in a fight, the skin tone of the father is distinctively darker than it usually is. It also appears that the darker skin color was added only after the medium brown color was painted on.

4.4 Comments on the intended audience

The intended audience for this book are children aged 8-12 years old (Y. S. Wŏn, personal communication, November 6, 2014). In my opinion, the theme and topics presented in the book are suitable for this age group. The book is written in a language that is adjusted to
children at this age i.e. simple English phrases are romanized to Korean script. This can be found on page 91 when the English teacher walks into the room and says “hi everyone”. When more complicated English words are mentioned they will still be written in Korean script but in brackets the English equivalent will also be given. This can be found on page 40 where the English word “half-blood” is mentioned.

In regards of fair representation of the cultural group in question, this book is suitable for children both in the cultural group (who may see his or her own characteristics, interactions, and feelings reflected and affirmed in a character) and children outside it (who have the opportunity to view and appreciate the life of a person from another inherited cultural background).

4.5 Results
The book has been examined by looking at six criteria that qualify a book to be regarded as quality multicultural literature. Both text and illustrations have been considered while reviewing the book. The first step to reviewing these criteria is to look at the aesthetic experience the book gives the reader. The book is an interesting read and because of the historical and cultural authenticity of the characters the events in the book easily invoke interest in the reader.

The book depicts the characters in a positive light although the themes and events can sometimes be unpleasant. The author does not romanticize the events but rather she puts them to light in a historical and cultural accurate way. The setting described in the book is mostly in Minjŏng’s home or in school. While Minjŏng is in school the text is mostly gendering conversation between Minjŏng and classmates. According to Ching (2005) school setting are usually written about in multicultural children’s literature as these spheres “teach children to work collaboratively, to cultivate interethnic friendships, and to see each other through eyes of care rather than hate” (Ching, 2005: 135). The author has used the school setting as a strategic advantage. In the school setting, one of the reoccuring themes is the topic of identity.

One of the reoccuring themes while in school is the topic of identity. The author demonstrates in this setting that she is aware of the issue of blackness as she uses a character
from another minority group (Vietnamese-Korean mixed) to highlight the differences and similarities between different minority groups. This is another smart move of the author to portray individuals and communities authentically. The text provides a good framework of what quality multicultural literature should be. The illustrations further strengthen the cultural consciousness of the literary work.

In the home setting the focus is mostly on the hardships and the struggles of the family members. The family is under a great deal of stress as Minjŏng’s great-grandmother, who lives with them, is dying. Because of the stressful situation, Minjŏng’s parents often fight. The reasons for the fights are never mentioned but rather the author jumps right into the heated conversations. This suggests that the topics of the fights are not the main point, it is the underlying reasons for the fights that are important. Minjŏng’s father is under a great deal of stress and he is constantly fired from his jobs after he gets into arguments with colleagues. Discrimination at work is described to be the reason for the fights.

In the biggest fight between the parents explained in the book, the parent’s history is explained. The father expresses his worries that Minjŏng will have to endure the same hardships as him. In all fights between the father and Minjŏng, the same worries are expressed. All fights take place in the home environment and it suggests that the author has used the home setting as a way to put further emphasis on the everyday hardships for black Koreans.

Another approach that the author has taken is to put emphasis on the struggles of the females. Women and children are often portrayed in media with humanitarianism and empathy. The author has taken this approach and showcased most of the tragic stories of the great-grandmother and the grandmother through school diaries from when the grandmother was young. The author has also chosen not to focus on the male characters. There are passages in the text which focuses on the struggle of the father (e.g. his sorrows for not finding his mother and his dream to become a singer) however the spotlight is not put on the father but rather the grandmother’s struggles. Aside from Minjŏng’s great grandfather, who was portrayed as a beast, her grandfather is also not mentioned once. This further proves the strategy of the author to appeal to people’s emphatic side by highlighting the hardships of women and children.
Toward the end of the book it is explained in one of the school diaries that the grandmother went to America to find her father. She changes her name to Charlton after a famous male actor as she hopes that her father will be a person similar to him. The travel serves as a big step for the grandmother. The grandmother does not only go to America to find her father but she also goes because she has realized her half-American side. Her change of name further implies a change of identity.

Although the author has written a great work from an outside perspective, there are some aspects that have to be critically marked. As previously mentioned there are instances when the author stereotypes the cultural group e.g. Minjŏng’s dream to become a singer. As these stereotypes date back to the 1950s (Kim, 2014: 36), it is possible that these stereotypes are so deeply rooted in the way Korean society, that the author did not notice that it was a stereotype when she wrote it. However, if this book had been written from an inside perspective, from someone inside the cultural group, it might be assumed that this kind of stereotyping probably could have been avoided.

Another example is the representation of blackness in Korean literature where African features are often portrayed as “animalistic” or “barbaric”. This refers to the passage when the mother speaks about the great-grandmother’s experience and she refers to the African American soldier as a “beast”. In regards to the flow of the story, it fits well as the man committed an act which was worthy of such a title and the mother expressed her anger in the word choice. However, as blackness is typically represented in Korean literature in this fashion, it can also be seen as a case of stereotyping in the author’s word choice.

However, as five out of six criteria were successfully realized in this book, the book is a remarkably positive step in the direction of quality multicultural literature in South Korea. Despite a few misrepresentations, the book provides a good insight in the lives of black Koreans.
5. Summary and implications

5.1 Conclusion and summary of study

The study raises the question that the strong focus on nationalism versus multiculturalism in South Korea in recent times may cause possible problems of globalization in South Korea. The study looked at this problem through an analysis of a South Korean multicultural children’s book with the intention to answer the following two questions:

- Has the view of black Koreans changed in literature over time?
- Can someone from an ethnically homogeneous country portray an accurate picture of a minority group living in the same country?

The children’s book was analyzed from four theoretical frameworks:

- Culture and identity
- Post-colonialism, nationalism and racism
- Blackness and black Koreans portrayal in Korean media
- Multiculturalism in Korea

The author of the book Please find Charlton Sunja Kim highlights the struggles and hardships of black Koreans throughout the years. Black Koreans have lived almost invisible in the Korean society until recently and the author of this book reminds us of their existence. She also authentically explains their history and their struggles in South Korea. The author brings forth a highly relevant topic in lights of a society that is gradually becoming more globalized and multicultural.

The author describes the lives of black Koreans but it also touches on the topic of biracial children and identity questions in general. Therefore, this book is relevant not only for understanding the struggles of black Koreans but for anyone who is perceived differently from the norm in South Korea. The author describes issues not only related to a specific ethnicity but they could be applicable to anyone who is perceived differently (e.g. questions asking...
where ones’ roots are from). The book successfully tackles the issue of how otherness is perceived in South Korea.

However, findings of the book review also indicated that there are still problematic aspects of how blackness and black Koreans are portrayed in Korean literature. The author has written the book for a positive purpose to describe the situation of another cultural group but still works with some stereotypes. Some prevailing stereotypes in the Korean society about black Koreans were found in the analyzed book (e.g. the dream to become a singer). There were also implications that black men should not marry Korean women.

All these aspects include the potential to contribute to a step back in the development of multicultural literature in South Korea. When authors write about different cultures it is important to take all nuances into consideration so their works’ descriptions do not negatively portray the culture. This can be especially important in children’s literature as children are the targeted group and children are more easily subjected to what they read. In the case of *Please find Charlton Sunja Kim* there are still some aspects that could be improved for further development of multicultural children’s literature in South Korea.

**5.2 Suggestions for future studies**

In a more extensive research of Won You Soon’s children’s literature, more of her books could be reviewed and compared. Examples of the author’s works are listed in “4.2 Author and publications” of the present thesis.

The recent trend of multiculturalism in South Korea has lead to an increase of children’s books’ authors focusing on the topic. Multiculturalism can be found in all literature: fictional and factual. It can also be found in literature toward all age groups. In a more extensive study of multicultural literature in South Korea more literary works from different authors and for different age groups could be reviewed and compared.
REFERENCES


