
South Korean Culture

Culture shock is when a person involves themselves with another culture and comes into contact with their way of living and sees that every culture does things differently and can perhaps leave with a different mentality after that experience. Ethnocentrism is when someone takes what they are familiar with from their own culture and use it to some extent to make judgments on another culture, particularly negative ones. Cultural relativism is when someone does not judge another culture but rather tries to understand it. South Korean culture is a culture that has always been intriguing to me, personally. In South Korea, the people here value hard work more than anything and believe that anything can be achieved as long as faith, determination, and strength are kept within the person. The country, alike others, have developed their own customs and etiquettes over time.

Their main way of greeting someone is bowing, and this is usually done with the motion of the person's head bowing down, acknowledging those in front of them, especially those of high authority. This bow to the person is also a form of respect being shown to each other. In this instance, I experienced a sense of cultural relativism because I was confused at first as to why they are expected to bow to everyone, and who in particular are they supposed to bow to. Once I realized why they do it or who they bow to, it made sense to me. It showed me that this is their way of being respectful towards everyone. Another custom particularly interesting is how the South Koreans are a year ahead in their age. Everyone is automatically a year old the day they were born. Ethnocentrism is applied to my experience of discovering this because I believed it to be something quite out of this world.

I have never heard of something such as this where someone would basically be considered a year older than their Western age, and have it be considered a norm in their culture. It is quite odd how the Korean age system works. Lastly, I experienced culture shock when I discovered that there is a lack of diversity, in this case, cultural diversity. South Korea is known to be racially pure, and this is because of a political ideology known as the Korean ethnic nationalism. Being from California, I grew up seeing so much diversity and people from all over the world like to come to this particular state. So I am rather used to the diverse atmosphere, and seeing that the South Koreans barely have any cultural diversity did shock me.

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