

TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN THE CULTURE OF AGING IN KOREA

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With rapid societal changes and demographic aging in recent Korea, cultural value system related with aging has been changing dramatically. Korea has become youth-centered society and cultural context of family life has been altered. In this paper, the nature of the changes in some of the major themes of the Korean culture is discussed. The various impacts of these changes on the status, role, and life styles of the elderly people in contemporary Korea are also examined. The need to create a positive social attitude toward aging and cultural context friendly to the aged is discussed.

Aging is a cultural as well as a biological process. Meanings, interpretations, expectations, and learned behaviors with references to aging and old age is the cultural product. How old age is defined, when it begins, what is expected of older people, how they are valued, how other people act toward them, who is responsible for their care, how much care and concern for them is warranted are all aspects of particular culture (Cowgill 1986). Thus aging experience of the people in different cultures are varied. And even in the same culture, people born in different historical time ages in different ways as cultural definitions and settings for aging change over time with societal change.

The purpose of this paper is to describe some of the major themes of the value system of Korean culture, traditional and modern, as it influence the status, role, and functions of the individual elderly in contemporary Korea. Culturally constructed perceptions of becoming old and being old have various and profound implications for the of the elderly. Personal adaptation to aging depends upon self-perception which is also a product of cultural norms and values (Clark & Anderson 1967). Therefore the experience of aging cannot accurately be understood without attention to the cultural value system within which the meaning of aging is embedded. Sociocultural changes and demographic aging in recent Korea are producing new pressures and new needs, and so our culture is in the process of changing and adapting to these new needs. In a very real sense,

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we are in the process of inventing new culture to adopt to these new circumstances. However, much of the traditional cultural pattern still exert its own insights into how people ought to behave and ought to age. In this regard, we are in the midst of what might be called a "cultural transition." For many elderly people, because of the enormity and rapidity of change, it is to be more than a transition, thus results in cultural discontinuity.

However, there are dearth of systematic studies on the cultural aspects of aging in Korea. For example, we know that in traditional Korean culture, the ideal of filial piety and veneration of the old was pervasive theme. However, since there is a lack of materials which tell us the actual aging experiences of ordinary elderly in traditional Korea, we do not know to what extent the cultural image of venerated elder surrounded by numerous progeny was ever achieved by ordinary people. There must have been a discrepancy between the idealized norm and universality and actual behavior.

Most of the studies done on inter-generational relations in contemporary Korea also paid less attention to the cultural aspects, and mostly focused on the exchange pattern or elderly support or care-burden issues. Consequently, we lack the empirical data or materials to examine how cultural aspect of aging have manifested itself in the lives of ordinary Korean elderly and have changed with modernization. Thus, following important questions are largely remain unanswered: How and to what extent traditional cultural principles such as inter-generational reciprocity, filial piety, and respect for elders exert continuing influence on the lives of the aging elderly in modern Korea? How traditional culture is perceived and idealized by ordinary people-old and young- in modern Korea and thus effects aging experience ? How the content and the nature of traditional cultural assumptions are modified in rapidly changing Korea? How the continuity and discontinuity of cultural patterns and values influence the welfare of the elderly people and their family members?

In this paper, at first, contents of some major cultural value are discussed in brief. Next, changes in the cultural context of family life of the elderly are described. Finally, the changes in life style of the elderly are discussed. We have to keep in mind that elderly are very heterogeneous group. The age category broadly defined as old is in fact a collection of successive age cohorts and these successive cohorts are different in significant ways. Different cohorts arrive at old age with differing life styles and resources in terms of education, income, health. Thus aged are varied in functional capacity, in socioeconomic status, in social competence and in life-styles and show wide spectrum of attitudes and behavioral styles. There exist big

differences in the experience of aging between women and men and between the elderly in different socio-economic class. While keep these heterogeneity in mind, discussion in this paper, however, will be confined to the typical or 'median' level of attitude, behavior and aging experience around which there are rich variation.

COEXISTENCE OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN CULTURAL VALUE

In describing value systems which has particular implications for the elderly, Cowgill (1975) mentioned filial piety, familism, individualism, work ethic, and the cult of youth as salient cultural themes. According to the favorability to the aged, he dichotomized value system: At one pole are filial piety and familism, which are favorable to high status and full involvement of the elderly in society. At the opposite pole are the work ethic, egalitarianism, individualism, and the cult of youth. He suggests that each clusters at opposite extremes are mutually incompatible.

In contemporary Korea, these values coexist. Filial piety and familism which was a pervasive cultural value in traditional Korea, are still influential societal value while individualism, and cult of youth have increasingly become major characteristics of contemporary Korea. In the following section, some of the major aspects of these cultural theme and consequent implications on the aging experiences in contemporary Korea are discussed in some detail.

Filial Piety and Familism

In traditional Korea, the primacy of family values over individual values, and the ethical principles of filial piety have long been important for the relationships of family members to each other, particularly to elderly members. One of the important issues from generation to generation has been the extent to which these values have been internalized by young generation through the traditional processes of value transmission in family and community.

For elders in traditional Korean society, the image of 'good life' and 'blessed elderly' was the image of 'long life' surrounded by many filial children and grandchildren, enjoying a place of honor, authority and respect in family and community. The actualization of this image was based on the ethic of filial piety and familism. Filial piety have had most obvious and profound implications for the condition and status of the elderly in Korea. The ethic of filial piety imposed heavy obligations upon children concerning

their behavior and responsibility toward their parents. Children owed their parents absolute obedience and support in their old age. Given the principle of primogeniture, these burdens rested mostly upon the eldest son, but other sons were also held responsible.

Familism was another important theme in traditional Korean culture. Family was depicted as the core of the social structure and the honor of the family was crucial. Individual members were expected to sacrifice for the family, and avoid bringing shame on the family name. The elderly are honored and respected and therefore are secure in their old age, both financially and emotionally. While love and affection is important in Western culture recognition and respect in terms of individual's place in family was very important. The place of elderly in the family was a place of respect regardless of the roles that they played or the functions they performed. They had authority by virtue of their position as elders. They controlled property, were the keepers of tradition, presided over ritual events, and enjoyed the position of household headship. Within the context of the family, in its ideal form at least, the position of the aging members was clearly defined and relatively secure.

Individualism, Independence and Inter-dependence

With industrialization, individualism and its associated value of independence have become prevalent theme in contemporary Korean culture. Individualism and independence are the antithesis of familism, thus as individualism spreads in Korean society, traditional nature of familism is changed. Consequently, many elderly have lost protective shield of familism and have subjected to the risk of isolation and insecurity not found in familistic value system.

In traditional Korea, elderly parents' dependence on children was expected. Elderly parents who have dependable sons are not only be happy and content about it but is likely to the whole community know that they have filial children. In a way, dependence in old age was a privilege. Thus, there was no trauma about growing old. On the contrary, more and more elderly nowadays state that they wish to be independent and do not want to be dependent on their children and to be a burden to them. Mass media introduces self-reliant elderly, with heading such as "Be independent" or "Stay active", as a role model of successful aging. Studies show that elderly who can sustain the semblance of self-reliance seem to have higher morale and self-esteem than those who entirely dependent on their children.

Notion of independence is the core value of Western culture and is based

on the view of human development as a progressive move from dependence in childhood to independence in adulthood and back to dependence with age. Yet, as Stafford (1982) mentioned, 'independence' is largely a false concept and is an unattainable goal for many people. In contrast, traditional Korean model see human being and their life course as basically interdependent. Reciprocal interdependency was major theme in inter-generational relationship. In the early years of the parent-child relationship, the parents are clearly the providers of care, but many years later the parents will be the recipients of care from their children.

It seems that this notion of interdependency seems to be replaced by the notion of independence. I suspect that elderly in contemporary Korea, caught up in changing society stressing independence and productivity, are forced to choose so called independence. Elderly, not wishing to be thought of as useless or burdensome might have preferred independence in the belief that way out of such treatment is to keep their social independence even at the cost of loneliness and isolation.

Youth-centered Culture and Attitude toward Aging

With high value placed on productivity, efficiency, and adaptability, Korea has become youth-centered society. And the young have an advantage within this kind of value system. Emphasis is upon achievement and success than ascribed status, and therefore upon keeping doors of opportunity open. This resulted in the assumption that the parent generation has responsibility for their children providing them with these opportunities. And this assumption brought about consequent "accent on youth".

One consequence and manifestation of such an youth-centered culture is the formation of the prejudice against old and negative stereotype of the aged. Old age often come together with adjectives such as lonely, poor, sick, dependent, neglected, and isolated. As Hagestad (1985) noticed, the word 'aging' or 'elderly' is all too often associated with the word 'problem'. The old are and have problem. Older people themselves held these beliefs and come to define old age negatively, leading them to deny that they are old, and to dread becoming old.

In traditional Korea, attitude toward aging has been more positive. Old age was source of pride and congratulations. Their long lives were acknowledged as testimony to their personal strength and they had experienced much and learned from their experiences. Silver hair and wrinkles are often admired as signs of wisdom and authority. On the

contrary, elderly nowadays take various measures to avoid appearing old. They dress like young, use skin cream and dye their hair, fostered by the commercials and advertisements.

What makes life of the elderly more difficult in youth-centered society is the cultural lags in defining the aged and their place in changing society. These exist discontinuities between current realities of demography of aging and cultural definitions of life course. Traditional cultural concepts of aging and age-appropriate personal and social behaviors are largely incongruent with contemporary patterns of mortality, and survivorship. Cultural definitions of old age were developed when life spans averaged as little as 30 years and living to age 60 was exceptional achievement. Trends in life expectancy, changing demographic patterns, and improvements in healthcare are outpacing cultural definitions of aging. At the same time, definition of old age has increasingly become a formal rather than a functional one in recent Korea while in traditional culture old age had defined in functional terms or changes in social roles, such as becoming a grandparents or changes in physical condition. Now, 'aged' are more and more designated as those who have lived so many years.

Combined with outmoded definition of old age, this emphasis on chronological age pose some problem to healthy and able elderly, especially to those elderly who belong to young-old category.

CHANGES IN FAMILY-RELATED CULTURE

As mentioned above, the ideal place of elderly in the family secured in traditional culture has been challenged by the changing cultural context in contemporary Korea. Majority of Korea's elderly continue to live in family settings, yet in industrialized Korea they lost material leverage to control their offspring. Should children fail to live up to filial responsibilities, there is no wider kin network or solidary community which will play the role of norm enforcer. Attitude of the younger generation toward the value of filial piety has changed and even the interpretation of the concept also differ from the ones to which elderly are accustomed. Almost thirty years ago, Hong (1964,1969) reports that over 70% of the respondents answer that filial piety is 'for the children to live desirable life' and only minority choose 'obey the parents' or 'take care of parents in old age'. He concluded that filial piety concept is modified from the traditional one. On the other hand, some others argue that filial piety and respect for elders continues to be an important emphasis in the Korean culture and that increased isolation of elderly are rather due to a changes in life style, especially increased

emotional nuclearization and individuation of the family.

Emotional Nuclearization and Individuation of the Family

While familism is still very important value orientation in contemporary Korea, its nature has been changed to a direction unfavorable to the elderly. The emotional boundary of family has been shrunk considerably to the extent that it is not rare that the elderly parents are not included within the inner circle of the immediate family. This is so called increased 'emotional nuclearization' of the family, and elderly are marginalized even when they live at the same household with younger generation. For children, only father and mother are really relevant to their life and if they have no surviving grandparents, they experience no sense of loss.

Family members tend to go their various ways—to work, to school, to activities—during the day and elders are isolated from other family members during the day time. As a result of this individuation of family life, there is little that is shared in common among family members, and older members are left to their own devices. And elderly have little opportunity for relationship or interaction with younger family members. Technological changes in family life contributed to the decreased interaction among family members and increase individuation, too. For example, telephone has made the communication between family members who do not live together easier but also may reduce the need or motivation for face-to-face contact. Family members have less time interacting as TV watching time occupy much of their time.

Unless the old person lives in rural area, it is not that easy to have social contact beyond the immediate family. This contracted sphere of social interaction can make the older person's constant presence in the home a source of conflict with daughter-in-law as it render privacy difficult. This is one of the reason why many elderly go out of the house without specific thing to do or place to go and spend whole day in the park or community center for the aged.

Elders have not much actual authority, either. Elders have little hope that they would have any influence over their children or grandchildren on important issues or choices they make. One of the often said phrase by the elderly is "Who pay attention to what useless old have to say? Young people do what they want to do. They only listen to what their wives say. Now I don't talk. No more."

Elderly parents living with their married children and grandchildren may have important functions of childcare when the grandchildren are small, but

as the grandchildren grow up, the importance of this role decreased. Grandparents are interested in and take pride in the accomplishments of grandchildren, but their relationship with grandchildren are not usually as intimate as they wish. This distance results mainly from physical separation and different social involvement. The grandchildren are preoccupied with school work, various after-school lessons and entertainment. All this and separate living arrangement tend to minimize contacts, reduce interaction, and attenuate the grandparent-grandchild relationship. The discontinuities which elderly grandparents experience with their grandchildren may be more powerful than continuities. Old people perceive their role as grandparent as 'powerless' or 'contentless'. In my opinion, grandparent role are not well institutionalized in changing Korea and can be considered as one example of 'roleless role'. Many elderly states that they do not know what to do and what to talk with grandchildren once they grow up to be too old for candy.

In some families it is the elderly parents who do not meet the image of traditional Korean grandparents. For example, not all parents want to make themselves available to their grandchildren. Some grandparents declare that they have their own lives to live and would rather not babysit. I saw an elderly woman appeared in popular TV program, where ordinary housewives are provided a chance to talk about their experiences, told audience how she refused to give a hand to her son and daughter-in-law who asked to babysit for her granddaughter for one afternoon due to a sudden illness of babysitter. She said to her son that she couldn't because she had scheduled to go sauna in that afternoon. Her statement reflects the attitude that the daily lives of elderly people simply do not revolve around children. This attitude seems to be spreading among the elderly, especially among middle class and relatively younger grandparents.

Changes in the Inter-generational Reciprocity

The traditional Confucian ideal of family relations made explicit the nature of the reciprocal relations between parents and children. Parents give to children when they are young and receive in old age. There are many stories and examples which effectively used for centuries to inculcate this reciprocal relations between parents and children.

Korean parents could plan for old age with certainty that one of their children would provide for them as they withdraw from the more productive sphere of society. With recent sociocultural changes, meaning of reciprocity and obligation in the parent-child relationship has changed and

expectations of prolonged reciprocity has declined

Elderly in contemporary Korea have lived their entire life in the expectation that their old age would bring comfort and respect with offspring surrounded them. They realize, in their old age, that their plans, well grounded in the cultural context of their younger days, have become staggered as society changed. When social change is severe, cutting the past from the present, older expectations simply do not apply. Now, fewer and fewer young couples seem to wish to share their household with parents even in the case of eldest son. The relative dominance of daughter-in-law and mother-in-law have reversed with latter now very much in the weaker position. Yet, increasing number of young women want to have a separate nuclear family household. History has changed rules and elderly must lose out.

In some case, the nature of the stem family coresidence have changed from the traditional one. Drawing on data from the large scale survey of Korean women, Chang (1989) showed that there is a strong negative correlation between the level of a women's education and the likelihood of her sharing her household with her parents-in-law. Amongst urban women, those who were employed outside their home were more likely to be living with their parents-in-law than were women who were full-time housewives. It is amongst the less educated married women employees that the stem-family household is most likely to be found. Chang interpreted this result as the instrumental adaptation of a traditional obligation to the pressures of two roles and new demands of modern urban life rather than a persistence of traditional pattern.

The worst case of unrealized expectation of inter-generational reciprocity is found among those abandoned elderly by their children. Abandoned or neglected elderly are quite frequent topic of mass media coverage in recent Korea. Whenever elderly gather around, there are much discussion and gossip of the families having problems between elderly parents and gossip of the families having problems between elderly parents and their children. Elderly talk about 'poor elderly being abandoned or being put in nursing home even though the elderly have sons' and feel that they are in better situation and that must avoid 'ending up like that'.

There is a increasing concern, expressed by many, about what will happen to the traditional value of inter-generational reciprocity when the present and future generations of children establish their families. Again and again, we hear the concern about the ethical values of younger generations who are becoming more individualistic and westernized. If one asks middle aged in Korea if they expect their children provide for them when they are old, it

is very likely that majority of them answer negatively. They provide for their children, yet they state that they do not expect reciprocity in that relationship. In old days, any person who failed to provide for his parents was not setting a good example for his own children and thus undermined his own security in old age. Thus, decreased expectation for inter-generational reciprocity means deteriorating very important motivator for filial piety, namely self-interest, in contemporary Korea.

Increased Desire for Economic Independence

Even with above mentioned cultural changes, given the absence of any expanded opportunities for old people to be financially self-supporting and the shortage of medical services and facilities for long term care and lack of public assistance, most of the elderly in Korea have no choice but to follow the traditional strategies of reliance on family ties. Yet, newspaper stories and TV dramas on abandonment of elderly parents or on decreased status of elderly in the family give old parents cause to ponder. It seems that elderly parents in Korea now become more calculating in their relationships with younger generation in the family. And elderly especially desire and prefer to be economically independent from their children.

Not long ago I had a chance to talk with a group of rural home improvement extension workers about the elderly in rural area. One of the extension worker told her recent experience with elderly woman who has been refusing her son's offer to move to his place in Seoul. Friends and neighbors of this elderly woman in rural community have been telling her not to sell the land and not to give money to her son. It seems that pervasive attitude amongst elderly is 'Keep your own purse if you want to have filial children'. Never give your children all the money you have. The extension worker also advised this elderly woman not to go to her son's and keep the money no matter what residence arrangement would be and asked to me whether she gave a good advise. It was not an easy question for me to answer.

This attitude and heightened desire for economic independence might be due to the increased awareness among elderly that their well-being is increasingly tied to their personal financial resources in recent Korea. If they have no income of their own and financially dependent on their children, the quality of their lives is in a way tied to the quality of their relationships with their children and their daughter-in-law and the degree to which young generation of the family honored the traditional values of reciprocity and filial piety. With sociocultural and familial changes described above,

there are plenty of reasons for the elderly to feel insecure and be compelled to prepar.

Traditionally, elderly shared family income and did not really need a cash. Now children's generation keep their own budget and daughter-in-law usually manage economics of the family. Most elderly do not even know how much money their children earn. And in contemporary Korea they need pocket money that they can spend on their own needs and interests, particularly in the city where most of the activities and necessities cost money. Shortage of pocket money is one of the most frequently mentioned problem by the elderly. And elderly seem to be hesitant and feeling uncomfortable to ask to their children. For them, filial children should notice what elderly parents might want because, in its traditional form, filial piety involves the anticipation of needs of parents without being told. It is quite likely that elderly parents feel children's failure to anticipate parent's needs as the child being neglectful, uncaring. This is an area of possible conflict between generations. Young people would complain, "why don't they tell us?! How we know what they want and that they need extra pocket money for that?"

Changing Preference for Living Arrangement

The patrilineal form of the stem family is the traditional pattern in Korea. In this living arrangement, as a cultural ideal, elderly parents are anchored emotionally at the center of a family and thus are secure not only economically and physically but also emotionally. Stem family coresidence pattern and is still widely observed. Based on this fact some argue that traditional ethic of filial piety is still quite pervasive and Korean elderly are not isolated. Yet the inter-personal relationship and emotional interior of the family have changed considerably, thus even though their structure are identical, the nature and characteristics of the extended stem family coresidence in contemporary Korea are quite different from the traditional one. The status of the elderly parents are lowered and they exercise much less control over decisions. It seems that harmonious inter-generational relationships within wstem family coresidence are accompanied by much of the parental relinquishment of real power over the younger generation. Children also avoid disagreement by simply not consulting their parents on sensitive issues.

It was mentioned above that there has been a increasing tendency for young generation prefer for nuclear family household. On the other hand, it was believed that elders prefer to live with their children, to keep their

family as the primary focus of their social interaction, and to find much of the meaning of their lives in their relationships with children and grandchildren. However, accompanied with the changes in family relationships in stem family system, preference of the elderly parents have also been changing considerably. Various studies show that increasing number of elderly prefer to maintain separate household.

Observing this trend, many people suggest that in contemporary Korea coresidence became more optional than cultural obligatory. It might mean that the potential for conflict resulting from different attitude and interests can be reduced. As a matter of fact many elderly and young generation alike believe that separate living arrangement is better than living together for maintaining good relationship between generations. They view that even a minor issues or small differences in lifestyle between young and old make it pretty difficult to live together on a day-by-day basis. For example, daughters-in-law are less willing to accept the traditional guidance of mother-in-law matters of household management and child care. A mother-in-law's advice on child rearing and training is considered out of date.

Apparently, with so called 'filial anxiety' in children's generation and 'parental anxiety' in elderly parent's generation, the preferences for separate living arrangement is growing. Increasing number of Korean elderly prefer to live 'near' and have good relationship with their married children rather than to live 'with' them and worry about possible conflict and tension with younger members of the family.

It is viewed that though increasing members of old people prefer to and do live in households apart from their married children, they are not isolated socially. Majority of them keep quite high degree of interaction with their children. However, even though relations are intimate and contacts are frequent, they are not the same as living together with daily, continuous interaction. That difference is illustrated by the tension caused when coresidence are resumed after living apart for some years. Thus some elderly parents insist on independent residence even after the death of one's spouse to avoid conflict and possible disappointment of having no filial children. This might be one of the reason why elderly one-person household keep increasing in recent years.

Meaning of life and the sense of personal worth

The changing patterns of family life in contemporary Korea create problems about the meaning of life itself and sense of personal worth of the elderly for whom family continues to be the primary source of meaning and

purpose for life. The family was a primary value in the traditional Korean context and the worth of individual was seen in terms of his or her "place" in the family. Yet, the 'place' of the older members of the family in Korea is becoming increasingly problematic.

Most of the elders in Korea had experienced hardships such as hunger, illness, war, separation from family or hometown, or death of loved ones when they were young. But they had struggled hard and overcome those difficulties, usually for the sake of their children and their families. The meaning and purpose of their lives and their struggle centered around their relationships to family, i.e., underlying sense of the meaning of life and continuity as tied to family, both as a present reality and as an on going entity. Yet, to achieve the sense of meaningful continuity and personal worth became increasingly difficult for some elderly in contemporary Korea. The older generation no longer had any real influence over the important choices whose children and grandchildren might make. There exists widening gap between generations and they share less and less in common. As mentioned earlier, increasing 'individuated' quality of the family relationship means that the most vulnerable members of the family is the elderly who has limited extrafamilial social contacts and resources. As a result, it become increasingly difficult for the elderly to gain social and emotional satisfaction from the family.

The most serious problem with generational continuity as a source of meaning and purpose of life are with rural elderly. As younger generation moved to cities, important links between the generations tended to be broken. In rural area, it is not difficult to meet elderly, living alone, who repeatedly expressing the wish 'to die and have peace'.

Even though the ties with children and grandchildren are so weakened by cultural change, there are no viable forms of community life to take their place. At the same time, as society increasingly values productivity, there is an increased commitment to the idea that activity is beneficial and that the aged should therefore maintain physical, mental, and social activity. However, there are not many activities reserved for the old that would allow them to realize social worth, thus many elderly in modern Korea have not much choice but to remain devoid of social meaning for a long span of years. With increased life expectancy, there is a new phase of considerable duration after elderly withdraw from active economic role until they experience serious functional impairment or die.

SEARCH FOR MEANING OF LIFE: SOME CHANGES IN LIFE STYLE

There seems that increasing numbers of elderly are seeking meaning of life and emotional satisfaction outside the family. Even though they are small minority in proportion, elderly who search for new roles and new sources of status in groups and activities that did not depend on home and family become more visible in recent years. They develop a life style that deemphasize relationships and roles in the family and increase the involvement with peers and leisure activities. At the same time, the images of 'the good life' for elders seems slowly changing. With the increasing fragmentation of family life and the weakening of the ties of continuity between the generations, images of good life and successful aging for elders have come to focus more on individual's self fulfillment.

Increased Participation to Extrafamilial Activities

Even though majority of elderly spend time watching TV or listening radio than participating group activities or active leisure, there seems to be a slow change toward a more involvement with community activities or various group activities. The development of various kinds of peer groups sponsored by the government, churches, temples, or voluntary associations to meet some of the social and emotional needs of the elderly had proceeded. Especially in the cities, informal groupings, activity centers are important sources of social interaction beyond the family. Participation in these kind of peer group provide the elderly with opportunities to enjoy activities with peers with common interests and to fill some hours of the day that otherwise might be lonely at home. Given the attitudinal differences which exist between the generations, there is probably a high need for peers with whom to share time and interests. In western culture, some studies shown that peer relationship rather than inter-generational relationship determine morale in old age (Blau 1981). Since traditional Korean culture has been strongly family oriented, friendship of Korean elderly may not involve the interpersonal intimacy which is found in the friendship in western culture. When I conducted a survey about friendship network of elderly people (Yoon & Han 1993), many elderly respondents frequently used expression like "they are not blood-related kin" as a way of explaining certain limitations in terms of intimacy with friend when they are asked to describe the emotional closeness with friends. The fact that some elderly described very close relationship with their confidant using

the expression 'she/he is like my sister/brother who share blood' also reflects the strong family orientation of elderly generation. However, it was also observed that friends function as a social support network and elderly who have wider friendship network seems to have higher life satisfaction. In a field study on elderly single/couple household in rural area, many elderly told us that they prefer to stay in rural area rather than moving to the city because of the prospect that there will be no readily available friendship network. These elderly didn't seem to expect that inter-generational relationship will be a source of emotional gratification.

Some elders are finding sense of personal worth in service to others. they participate as a volunteer to various service activities such as hot-line phone service for the elderly, environment protection activities or protecting children from the traffic accident in school zone. In a family oriented culture, volunteerism is relatively new to Korean. Yet, the elders who are learning the values of social service and the satisfaction of working as volunteers are healthy and happy. They seem to be growing in numbers even though we do not have exact figure.

Increased Concern for Good Health

There seems increased anxiety among elderly about the possibility of long-term illness and of losing their minds. In old days when the percentage of people over 60 years old was small, elderly were likely to be healthy. The sick elderly were not so visible because they died quickly from diseases which now days linger for years, due to the advances in medical science. As death is increasingly the consequence of chronic disease, old people in Korea are afraid that they will become a long-term burden to their children. The problem of dependency are most acute in time of incapacitating illness, given the lack of public assistance, shortage of service and facilities for those in need of long term care, the burden falls almost exclusively on the immediate family. Elderly people are aware of these problems and are conscious of the importance of good health to be able to take care of themselves. Elderly whom I met in field survey often said that they are not afraid of death, and yet they are afraid of being a burden. They want to have a 'good death' by which they refer to the death without longterm illness. Some elderly even said that it was their last or biggest wish. It might be that what these elderly are really afraid of is maltreatment from their family and losing their dignity as a human being as a result of long term illness. They often add the old saying like "there is no filial son with parent's illness lasted three years", when they explain why they wish for clean death.

The sign of consciousness about the importance of good health among elderly can be found in the scene of group of elderly doing various exercises at the hilltop park in the morning or at the sports center. Light sports or health-related classes are most popular subject at the elderly community center or at "Elderly College".

SUMMING UP

Elderly people in contemporary Korea tend to believe the idealized image of 'the good life' surrounded by filial children enjoying a place of respect and authority in the extended family as a reality enjoyed by all the elderly in traditional Korea. There is a wide spread belief with retrospective nostalgia that the world they have lost were better than the world they have now. In my view, this is one of the reason why many elderly feel deprived. We have to recreated cultural images of 'the good life' for thr elderly which is based on the realities of changed, contemporary Korea and that can sustain them as a source of meaning and purpose for the life.

On a societal level, there are much concern about the increased elderly dependency ratio and of burden of elderly support and economic dependence. However we need to realize that dependence and neediness requiring time, attention, and resources are found not only in old age but in all age categories (Neugarten 1982). It is time to pay attension to the positive side of aging andvalue of the aged in our society. There have been not much societal efforts to encourage respect for the elderly, though elders and young alike expresse concern about changing attitudes and practices of 'filial piety'. Only recently, there seems public consensus on the need to emphasize traditional moral values, importance of moral education, particularly education in filial piety and respect for parents. More efforts should be devoted to create a positive social attitude toward aging and a cultural context friendly to the aged. Only in that way, we can help elderly find coherence, integration, and social meaning of their lives, behind and remained.

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