

A Few Thoughts on Low Birthrate, Aging Societies: Reflections on Demographic Transition and Modernity in Korea*

KEONG-SUK PARK | SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

This essay is meant to put forth a few ideas regarding the societal changes exacerbated by low birthrates and aging populations, as well as the problems and tasks that lie ahead for Korean society. I first focus on conceptualizing the strong correlation between demographic transitions and modernity in Korea. The notions of developmentalism and the modern family claimed their places as the central organizing principles of Korean society and Korean citizens, and the desire of their lives. In the process of modernization, which was justified by the ideologies of development and the modern family, and its worsening contradictions, demographic transition occurred in a compressed manner. It must be also noted that while the races towards the desire for a standard modern life as well as the breakaway from it proceed in parallel to one another, the political conflicts reflecting the gap between realistic conditions and desires, values, and institutional regulations, are growing worse. Conservative administrations claimed they would solve the low birthrate, aging population problem by revitalizing the economy and making families wholesome again. However, conservative policies have roused considerable resistance from young women. The progressive bloc which had promised bold social reforms has not been able to truly empathize with the suffering of those unable to adapt to the systems of the modern family and development, those who are excluded and struggling through life.

Keywords: *demographic transition, low fertility, aging, modernity, subject, population politics*

*An earlier version of this paper written in Korean was presented at the 2019 International Symposium on Republic of Korea's Centennial Vision (Nov 7-9, 2019), and given as an academic lecture for the 3rd Graduate Students' Day, Korea University (Nov 15, 2019), and presented in commemoration of the 10 year anniversary of the establishment of the Migration Research & Training Center (Nov 22, 2019). I'd like to express special thanks to Grace Payer for her help in carefully translating and proofreading the English version.

Low birthrates and an aging population — what is the problem?

Low birthrates and an aging population are two massive social shifts that Korean society is currently undergoing. The social changes that these two phenomena implicate also signify that the very bases of life and living are largely shifting as well. Starting in the late 1990s, the chief reason for decreases in birthrates, delayed marriage, was a sign that individuals could no longer count on their family or community for intimacy, livelihood, and caring (such as for children or the elderly) but had to strive for these on their own. The growing rates of single-member households living alone throughout their youth, middle age, and twilight years illustrate that intimacy and care are something no longer afforded through stable marriage or family life. High rates of poverty among the elderly, as well as increasing instances of elderly people dying alone, only further serve to prove that the systems of family-centered (financial) support and care are atrophying.

In this sense, low birth rates and aging populations are symbolic of the current monumental transformations that the most basic conditions of life and living—survival, reproduction, care, and intimacy—are undergoing, both on micro and macro scales. The number of people abandoning what have been thus far considered the standard conditions of life is on the rise, and the growing hardship and conflicts which have arisen from this have naturally been considered grave social issues. However, perspectives on what constitutes the problem or crisis regarding the phenomena of low birthrates and aging populations are largely discrepant, and these discrepant perspectives propose very contradictory social agendas. The individual, social groups, and the government are all embroiled in the chasm between perspectives which contend that we must consolidate the institutions and ideas of golden-era modernity and perspectives which urge us to find a new path forward for life. Though the government has invested significant resources into implementing social countermeasures regarding low birthrates and aging populations, the fertility rate continues to plunge, and Korean society grows ever more segmented.

There is a need to clarify the nature and agendas of social change which have driven this shift towards low birthrates and an aging population. In order to do so, we must first focus our attention on conceptualizing the strong correlation between demographic transitions and modernity in Korea. Numerous societies have evaluated the demographic transition from high

fertility and morality rates to low fertility and death rates as a generally positive one. Rather than having a haphazardly born population comprised of individuals who endure hardship and impoverishment only to die prematurely, a condition in which individuals are able to live a long and comfortable life, without exposure to war or disease, was considered to be the ideal demographic balance (Livi-Bacci 2012). Demographic transition is both an enhancer of economic development and individual autonomy, as well as the outcome of these, and for societies which have yet to achieve such a transition, it has been considered as imperative to social development.

In a sense, what allowed us to call into question the predominant perspective which understood demographic transition in terms of positive social change was critical reflection on modernity itself. The discussion of a secondary demographic transition (SDT), which started with a focus on Western societies, focuses on the phenomena of modern construction and deconstruction of family and gender, which have a function in demographic changes (Lesthaeghe 2010; Van de Kaa 1996, 2004). The microscopic foundations of modern society—gender relations and the family—were examined from the perspectives of individual autonomy and equality. Moreover, there were concerns over the fate of future societies, in which the desire to live immortally was within reach, and humans' biological limitations could be overcome (Harari 2015). Paradoxically, the history of humanity, in which we have time and time again overcome the biological limitations of humans, has always been accompanied by an anxiety that we are speeding towards the extinction of our species. Such reflections on society and the lives of humans in the modern era, along with reflections on how the social conditions of production, reproduction, and care have changed in diverse ways, are the attributes of secondary demographic transition theory. The social conditions of reproduction, survival, care, and intimacy are being carried out in diverse ways in each society with more focus on the individual than ever before.

Korean society is a representative example of a society which passionately strove for demographic transition and social development. Korean society galloped towards developmentalism and the desire for the modern family. The notions of developmentalism and the modern family claimed their places as the central organizing principle of Korean society and Koreans, and the desire which defined their lives. In the process of modernization, which was justified by the ideologies of development and the modern family, and its worsening contradictions, demographic transition transpired in a compressed manner. Populations and life itself became

managed in a calculated manner due to the desire for and the attempts to realize development and the modern family. However, as the ideas of developmentalism and the modern family became increasingly consolidated, a demographic transition of individuals abandoning the modes of modern life ensued. Demographic transition, which had been believed to be a better state of balance in life, has suddenly presented us with the worrying notion that it may in fact lead to the end of reproduction all together.

In short, the shifting meaning of our current low birthrate, aging population society is that the number of individuals forgoing the mode of life and social structure organized on the ideas of developmentalism and the modern family is mushrooming. The internal contradictions of development and the modern family system meant that life became overly selected and increasingly unequal on the bases of development, power, production, and success. Furthermore, in family-centered lives based on gender disparity and instrumental familialism, anxieties surrounding intimacy, support, and care have increased. Delayed marriages, declining fertility rates, increased singleness among all age groups, and isolation among the elderly are all examples of lives which have departed from the standard model of life in modern society, which placed development and family as the paramount virtues. In a situation in which the aspirations of modernity and the contradictions inherent in them are worsening in a compressed manner, frustration, abandonment, and resistance have erupted, and conflicts along the lines of gender, generation, and class have grown amplified. While a wide variety of social groups consider the concomitant low birthrates and aging population phenomenon in Korea a problem, in terms of investigating its origins or providing countermeasures, approaches are considerably self-interested and stratified.

Transitions in Population, Life/Living and Modernity

Demographic transition as accelerated by the desire for development and the modern family

Population was designated the most critical social issue for modernization in Korean society starting in the early 1960s. At the time, massive reforms in society were directed towards modernization and development (Repetto et al. 1983). The generations which held strong aspirations for economic development and modernization believe that a charismatic leader's influence

had a large effect on Korean society's compressed economic development. Despite this belief, the main agents who substantively drove Korea's economic development were civilian executives, intellectuals, and ordinary Korean citizens. In order to assemble new values for society through development, Korean intellectuals played an active role by learning from the successes of developed societies, particularly the US and Japan, and spreading their lessons (Yang 2001; Park 1999; Kim 1988). Modernization was a plan to create subjects who had strong desires. Amidst the poverty and discrimination they faced under colonial rule, Koreans longed for their own civilization, and fostered a spirit of resistance that would not bend to fate. This allowed them to speed towards compressed economic development and modernization. Under the colossal goal of modernization, towards which the government, intellectuals, and regular civilians worked together, demographics became a vital task for reform. In this context, family planning became the most central social reform program of the 1960s, linking together medical care, health, population policy, and foreign policy (Calderone 1970; Coigney 1990). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, family planning began to be widely accepted across the world as a politically desirable and economically effective movement. As Korea began to receive financial and technological aid from the international community regarding the implementation of family planning, it began to actively practice family planning as a component of economic and social development. However, the belief that family planning and population control was indispensable for development gradually morphed into a compulsion which equated the population control index itself with development. Just as development targets were quantified into production scales, precise figures proposed, and economic strategies created to reach these target figures, a target figure for family planning was specified by the state, and detailed methods for achieving this target were shrewdly shared and enacted by the primary organizational units (Hong 1998; Gong et al. 1992; Bae 2009; Cho 2018).

Reductions in both birth and death rates are a result of factors such as a society's economy, public health, medicine, politics, and changes in values interacting in complex ways. The combination of factors of social change such as expansion of education, industrialization, urbanization, the advent of conjugal families, and changes in intimacy are founded on the agency unique to each society. The process of modernization was not one of unilateral export of the Western experiences, nor of their universal import. Though the desire for the modern was great, that does not mean that the longstanding customary system of agency had completely disappeared. The disposition of

the agents who carried out compressed modernity are characterized by compromise and amalgamation; they were highly oriented towards the modern, highly patriarchal, and highly developmental.

The traditional gender order and views of the family were interrelated with the stratified social problems of feudalistic status, poverty, ethnicity, and the paradox of class, but absent from the list of reforms, they remained stuck in traditional customs (Yang 2005; Kim 2013). In order to achieve economic development and improve the way of life as fast as possible, the state, the family, and society gave their all, but in the myth of modernity what had conflictingly remained were patriarchal gender relations and family (Park 2017). The institutional definition of the family from the 1950s until the abolishment of the *hoju-je* (head of family system) in the 2000s had a deep-seated patriarchal nature to it in which the exclusive rights of the head of the family met the traditional patrilineal kinship community (Yang 1995; Yi 2002). Though some scholars have emphasized that the reason for the focus on the family as the ideal system for ordinary people was so predominant because it was a survival strategy forged in the context of an absent social safety system (Cho 1985; Chang 1994), the family-centered life in Korea had been paramount in the public and private value systems of the Joseon era as well.

The confluence of Confucian ideology, the system of patrilineal families, and the principle of family planning was an unintentionally devised compromise tactic between the patrilineal family and the system of conjugal families, the purpose of which was secular success. The Western idea of the modern family stressed a family life for the children's generation that was independent from the parents' generation. Because with the international spread of family planning, the idea of the small family began to be understood as the civilized form of family relations, many domestic modernization theorists worried that Korea's patrilineal family system could become an obstacle for family planning (Cho 1988).

Interestingly, there was hardly any resistance on the part of customs regarding the embrace of family planning. Not only in Korea, but in other countries which had strong preferences for sons, such as India and China, this preference did not become a large obstacle for the implementation of fertility control (Guilmoto 2009).¹ In fact, the deeply rooted preference for

¹ Guilmoto focused on the serious and rapid drop in fertility rates and gender imbalance in three countries (China, Korea, India) which had implemented family planning as a state policy, and he explains these phenomena as the results of a combination of an active attitude towards fertility control, an active utilization of fertility control technologies, and a preference for sons.

sons capitalized on the modern birth control technologies in that families were able to calculatedly regulate their pregnancies (Nie and Wyman 2005). The idea of having multiple children is something based in an agrarian economy, and is not practical in an industrialized society. At the same time, public opinion believed that even in modern society, preference for sons needed to be upheld as the ideal for patriarchal families. With the introduction of new technologies by which to practice this long-held view of the patrilineal family, many families participated in the boom of family planning. Fertility regulation was considered by many as an expansion of technology that allowed couples to differentiate the preferred sex in utero, and not give birth to children that they did not want.

In another sense, however, for a more widespread implementation of family planning, the state strove to combine the ideologies of patrilineal families and conjugal families. Not only were slogans asking Koreans to not discriminate between sons and daughters and to raise children well regardless of gender, repeated enthusiastically, but the number of occupations women were prohibited from working in were dramatically reduced, and working daughters became institutionally recognized as family providers whose parents could receive benefits of health care insurance (Cho 1988; Wang 2013). Though it was not the primary interest or plan of the government, from the perspective of women, the execution of family planning allowed for a chance to start the discussion of gradual reforms to family law following the 1950s in earnest.² Through continued reforms to family law, women were able to transcend their statuses as daughters, wives, and mothers (Yi 2002). Though women's social and economic participation were limited due to gender norms, women's identity as the central subject of the family was bolstered.

In this manner, as development and the ideologies of patrilineal families and conjugal families were being negotiated, the microscopic bases for modern, patriarchal conflictual gender and family relations were formed. Because the idea of the modern family and the generational relationship of gender is complex, the responsibility of supporting one's parents was emphasized, the relationship of marriage as legal and moral partners in sex

² The movement for family law reform was empowered following the government's integrated population policy of 1976. A call center for problems relating to marriage of people with the same surname and family origin was created in 1977, and the civil code was partially amended in the same year. This 1977 revision included shared parental rights, co-ownership of property of which the title is uncertain between husband and wife, equalization of legal inheritance, and the ability for a man and woman who are both over the age of 20 to wed without the consent of their parents.

and reproduction gained authority, and parental contribution to the education of their children was stressed.

Family planning became the motor of Korea's developmental society as well as the principle of its population governance. Through the family planning program, the prototypical notions of development and the modern family sought by modern society invaded the most private realms of life. Family planning was a process in which population control was actively introduced and intensified for the sake of development and family reproduction. It was successful in widely spreading the values, attitudes, knowledge, and methods of population control, and furthermore solidified the value of reproduction as a tool of economic development, as well as constructing the conflictual idea of the modern family and structuralized gender identity. Calculated fertility, child rearing, and education became idealized as the foundation of happy families and a prosperous nation. It was an unprecedented biopolitics in which the state actively intervened in the lives of its citizens, and it was the plan for subjectification that would bring about the modernization of Korean society (Kim 2002).

Amid this desire for development and the modern family, birthrates quickly fell, and none doubted that this signaled a transition into a better society. From the perspective of the state, society, and the individual, the quality of production and reproduction had been advanced. Though development was pregnant with conflicts regarding gender, generation, class inequality, and fairness, within the tacit hope regarding the fruition of development, these conflicts were sutured. But this balance would not last long.

Parallel paths of desire and abandonment for developmentalism and the modern family

In the late 1990s, strange prognoses started to be detected in population figures. Birthrates continued to fall. Confidence in the success of family planning meant that the architects of policies did not pay close attention, but the understanding that it would be suitable for the total fertility rate to stabilize around 1.7 had also been a vision laid forth in the 5th economic development plan, enacted in 1987 (Cho 1988). The understanding was that the birthrate had successfully been lowered, so now it only needed to stabilize and there would be no more population problems. The turn from optimism and half-hearted negligence to concerned attention is linked to the massive unemployment shock and accompanying restructuring following the 1997

foreign currency crisis. As the out of work population swelled and the employment structure grew flexible, the door of social mobility that everyone dreams of passing through quickly shut. In a similar period, the trend towards later marriage became more distinct, and the problems of isolation, poverty, and alienation of the elderly intensified.

The primary cause of the drop in birthrates following the late 1990s was delayed marriage. Starting in the 1970s, the average age at the time of first marriage in Korea had consistently gone up, but following the turn of the century, this figure climbed quickly. Causes of this rapidly progressing trend towards later marriage were debated: Was it just a temporary effect of the economic shock? Was it economic anxiety? Was it a crisis of the family? Was it resistance on the part of women? Was it the advent of individualistic life? Discussions focusing on the connections between the complex levels of social change and low birth rates were on the rise.³ Through the course of numerous arguments, I have highlighted that delayed marriage is intimately tied to the life crises driven by the paradoxes inherent in gender inequality, developmentalism, and familialism (Park et al. 2005). The desire for development which had compromised the gendered social system faced setbacks in the system of growing segmentation of the labor market and growing marriage along class lines, and a vast rupture occurred in the process of transition to working and family life as a young adult. The logics of development and the modern family which had functioned as the basic principles of social organization remained formidable, but instances of people being unable to attain the desires of development and the modern family and thus abandoned them were on the rise. Rifts in the two main domains of modern life—the workplace and the home—emerged widely beyond the limits of sex, age, and class. Finding a decent job grew increasingly difficult, and holding onto a job gained through strenuous effort proved to be no easy task either. In a society where the institutional safety net was anemic, the loss of work threatened the basic conditions of life, such as income stability, independence, care, and social recognition.

In this regard, the balance between the desire for a life oriented towards development and the modern family and the opportunity to achieve these were shattered, paradoxically, due to gradually intensifying developmentalist

³ *Donga Ilbo* April 21, 2005 “[Weekend Focus] Marriage? Life is Won Through Work!”, *Choson Ilbo* June 21, 2005 “[The Power of Six Million Singles] ‘We’re the Frontier Singles of Korea’”, *Donga Ilbo*, July 12, 2005 “[Cultural Landscape of Marriage in Korea, 2005] ‘I Want This Type of Spouse’”, *Joongang Ilbo* July 22, 2005 “Things most accounted for when going from dating to marriage: education, money, appearance”.

action and institutions. As modernization intensified, Korean society became a world ruled by the logic of survival of the fittest beyond even the dreams of Malthus. Malthus(1798) emphasized that in order to achieve balance between production and reproduction, the most ideal selection process was to select the fittest via unfettered competition. He argued that within a system of unfettered competition, wherein everyone was afforded an equal opportunity, a healthy labor force would be reproduced, and production would increase. Free competition was not a competition of virtue or altruism, nor of civilized intellect. In fact, he elucidated that free competition was a narcissistic struggle for one's own survival, independence, and freedom from poverty and disastrous circumstance. He believed that free competition could, in a limited way, improve a defective society both materially and spiritually. As he wrote in his seminal "An Essay on the Principle of Population": "The mass of happiness among the common people cannot but be diminished when one of the strongest checks to idleness and dissipation is thus removed; and when men are thus allured to marry with little or no prospect of being able to maintain a family in independence. But as from the laws of our nature some check to population must exist, it is better that it should be checked from a foresight of the difficulties attending a family, and the fear of dependent poverty, than that it should be encouraged, only to be repressed afterwards by want and sickness(Malthus 1798, pp 34-35)."

It is surprising that this prediction by Malthus should be so in line with the general disposition of modern Koreans. For the past 200 odd years, Malthus's calculated assertion has been the blueprint and the catechism of modernization not only in Western societies, but in a majority of developing nations as well (Newton 2009). The modern subject is equal in their desire to reap the fruits of success—inequality and distribution based on contributions and skills is just; though it is unfortunate that not everyone can live happily, many believe that it is important to create a social system in which morally sound, normal people can be happy. The sentiments of those people who opposed the English Poor Laws some 200 years ago are shared with Koreans of today. They decry a state system which prioritizes caring for the poor as impoverishing the lives of citizens who are far more morally upright. That is, those who work hard still struggle through life, while those who have far more leisure or lead careless lives waste state money through trickery. The fact that Koreans do not consider themselves happy is deeply connected to their distrust in how fair society is (Jun 2006). Koreans' understanding of fairness is similar to Malthusian utilitarianism—distribution should occur on the basis of skill and contribution; equitable rights should not be granted to

the weak; success in life is tied to status, strength, power, and assets, and in order to attain it one should immerse themselves in competition from the very get-go of their lives. However, one's skills and diligence are not enough to be victorious in this competition. Besides the skills needed for this task, one must accumulate power, trust, and affection through both formal and informal relationships. Secretly, the organizing principle of society changed into a relationship of dominance and subordination in relation to power. The privileges of sex, education, blood relations, region, and family have not disappeared, but have in fact merged with skills to form a personal superior-subordinate relationship. The conspicuous abuse of power in various organizations which has come to light recently could hint that dominant-subordinate power relations are in play all throughout organized life.

As development became the standard of life, the power regulating life became monopolized by a minority and the competition for survival grew fiercer at the will of those in power. The center was solidified into a higher position, but the population unable to live according to the values of the center began to be pushed out en masse. The paradox of developmentalist society and life is that the higher it reaches and the stronger it becomes, the more likely it is that the foundation will crumble. People desire better lives, but young adult unemployment rates continue to rise, middle age grows increasingly instable, and the anxieties and isolation plaguing old age grow only worse. It is an unwanted competition, but out of an anxiety that if they do not win they will be eliminated, many people live as stooges who reproduce the logic of competition. Their trust in one another wanes, and they live by the rules of the jungle, watching only their own backs.

Ultimately the population/life regulating game in which only the strong survive has turned into a regulation of reproduction in which only members who can win have the qualifications to be born. Malthus stressed the balance of production and reproduction as important in human society. He also supposed that a faltering in that balance would occur because of an instinct to reproduce (offspring) beyond the limits of productivity. Thus, he expounded the importance of labor ethics and a model home life for the balance and development of human society. However, we are now witness to an imbalance in productivity and reproduction in the opposite direction. We are still producing as if there is no ceiling in sight. Markets have integrated globally beyond the borders of individual states, and capital continues to generate technologies, land, and labor, which can produce profit. But as a result of a person's worth being evaluated on their labor capacity, skills, and strength and being forced to compete, reproduction has atrophied greatly.

This is the trap of low fertility that we are currently observing. As a result of family becoming a necessity in the competition for admission to reputable schools and good careers, the educational achievements of teenagers are overwhelming influenced by the status of their parents in Korean society. In a school life where grades are paramount, unhappiness and violence become routine for students. The teenagers of Hong Kong and Singapore are similarly thrust into a competition of education from the time that they are children, a competition which leads them to believe that all they amount to is their human capital. The pressure of the competition to get ahead makes the lives of teenagers miserable. Starting a family in a meritocratic society is in itself an act of status, and to many it is a risk which incurs considerable burden and cost. In the end, many either give up on or reject the idea of starting a family. As such, the intermingling of inequality/stratification, gender inequality, and the desire for development have widened the gaps between production and reproduction, desire and reality, and the expectations of gender equality and its reality. The value of fertility has largely dropped off, the costs of raising children remain high, and the exhaustion and anxieties of life are overwhelming. As uncertainty about the future escalates and social recognition of the act of having children deteriorates, reproduction has gone from a subject of burden, to one of repulsion.

Throughout the past few decades, the conflicts in women's lives have grown worse (Kang 2007; Park 2002; Lee 2017; Eun 2018; Lee and Lee 2015). Gender inequality in the labor market, along with the norm of caring for the family falling exclusively to women, has greatly restricted the subjective lives of women. Women's level of education having greatly increased, the labor market remains gendered, with women's labor generally being categorized as marginal and unskilled. Moreover, the norm of caring for the family which greatly affects women's lives forces many to abandon their careers, and exacerbates the dual overload of work and their role in the home. As conflicts pertaining to the family and labor, as well as responses to these, grow gradually stratified by class, gender relations are engendering a mismatch of perception on the levels of values, relationships, and identity. As such, gender relations in Korean society today can be interpreted as conflictual gender differentiation (Kim and Park 2019). The norms of gender roles and the individually sought-after values in life are coming into conflict. Some individuals even accept gender norms, but are unable to attain the opportunities that they had expected from them. Gender relations are gravely engendering contradictions and ruptures in the norms, institutions, lives, and perceptions of individuals. There have been diverse responses to these types

of contradictions and turmoil. Some choose a strategy of mobilizing all the individual and social capital they have and acquiring their perfect life, whether that be a family or work. Since the 2000s, due to their individual and family capital as well as welfare policy, women with higher educational backgrounds, professional careers, or high socio-economic class have been pursuing lives in which work and family are compatible (Kim and Park 2019). In many cases, the young adults who have the upper hand in the widespread competition have received support from their families (Kwon 2017). On the other hand, the youth who have been pushed out of the competition entirely consider marriage and family life somewhat of a luxury.

The series of transformations of the social system which followed the IMF foreign currency crisis were an incredible shock which amplified the already pressing crisis of anxiety in the elderly by multiple factors. Among those who had applied for unemployment or bankruptcy and gathered into groups in the street and the mountains, were the elderly as well. In fact, seniors were the first to occupy that space in the street which people, suffering the aftershock of system reform themselves, flocked to. With many people emerging, the elderly were able to feel a sense of comradery with others. They had already, from long before, been separated from society, but now different outsiders sought them out. Seniors had been treated as outsiders in a society which had been optimistic about growth and abundance, when suddenly those who had learned the emptiness of optimism firsthand had surged en masse. However, this solidarity did not last long. Those who had been met with the epidemic of precarity in the process of correcting the economic system had a far more cynical outlook on the world. An understanding that one could trust no one but their family and themselves swelled. The optimistic belief about growth that anyone who tried hard enough could live a better life had become broken, but through the struggle for survival, people became further sucked into the myth of growth. Anxiety about life made people dependent on goods which displayed not only their safety in the present, but in the future as well. But no matter how much one accumulated resources which would guarantee safety and wealth, the insecurity surrounding life never disappeared, and no matter how many certificates or achievements one packaged their abilities with, the worry that at any moment that assurance would plummet to the ground was ever present. And with that, one after another many people left the streets of the elderly, who in turn became holed up in someplace even more remote. Spaces in which the voices of the elderly could be heard or listened to dwindled. And as they were subjected to the fixation of a society which felt burdened by the

elderly, as they made strides to live lives which would not be parasitic to society, the voices of the elderly came to mimic the voices of the society which had ostracized them in the first place. The discourse of “successful elders” which had been forced on them from the outside had now become recognized as a voice which had been resonating out of the communities of seniors (Park 2009, pp.102-103).

The lives of seniors become marginalized in a society which stresses development and strength. Familial support in old age turned out to be a myth. The conflict inherent in the notion of the standard family, which had been sutured in the name of development, is exacerbating the confusion between the notions of inheritance and care. The widespread preference for sons which had existed up until the 1990s means that the expectations of carrying on the family lineage and the responsibility of caring for one’s elderly parents that were shouldered by children have continued until recently. But the cognitive dissonance and conflict inherent in having devoted one’s life for one’s children only to become broke and unable to expect care in old age from one’s son, are large. In a situation in which one devoted their life to their family only to grow apart from them and have no social system in order for care, nihilism about life and rage about society arises. Furthermore, there is a discriminatory view of the elderly. Negative attitudes surrounding a generation which has internalized authoritarianism, androcentrism, and nationalism, along with prejudices about them as a group which has no value to society, is weak, and dependent on others, combine to produce discrimination and feelings of hatred towards the elderly.

The crisis of old age is thus that they are ostracized from a society which emphasizes development, youth, strength, and productivity, and are unable to receive familial support due to gender conflict and instrumentalized family relations which have been exacerbated by the multifaceted notion of family. To add to this, not only do the elderly face these types of secular deprivations, but more fundamentally, they suffer a spiritual anguish at being unable to find a meaning in aging and death. As the conditions for life are undone, their connections to the world are broken, and their egos shattered, it is difficult for them to receive any authentically healing-focused care (Park 2015).

In this way, the growing number of lives which depart from the logic which considers growth, development, and family standard is exposing numerous conflicts in the lives and identities of individuals, as well as social relations. As a result of setbacks in the desire for development and family mediated by gender stratification, the cognitive dissonance and mutual

conflict between gender, generation, and class have worsened. Those who have diverged from the criterion of normalcy still desire a normal life, but these desires are dashed. Between an involuntary situational logic and social neglect, they endure many conflicts. Additionally, they despair that they are unable to assimilate, and become lost having not been able to separate themselves completely. The position which celebrates nationalism, developmentalism, and familialism, and the position which resists these are in conflict within them. Within the generation which protests the nationalist, authoritarian system, there are many who are still seeking a normal family, and developmentalism. Each individual remembers the signs of having achieved modernization differently and attempts to mythicize the past. Because diverging from the standard is considered a crisis, they attempt to return to the normal.

It seems to me that the people living conflictually within the system of developmentalism and the modern family can be vaguely classified into three groups. The first of these is the group most centrally nestled in the modern system, those who hold the upper hand in the competition for development and success. This group does not attempt to stop the march towards the perfection of human development and believes that a social system which selects the successful is fair. Though their numbers may be few, they have the power to change public sentiment and the system at the center of society. They differentiate the normal group, and the crisis group based on the logics of developmentalism and the modern family.

The second of these groups are those who desired development and the intimacy and support of their families but make up the majority of those unable to attain success, intimacy, care, or support. They desire success, development, and the modern family. It includes the underlying group of conservative sentiment, made up of those who mythicize nationalist, developmentalist, and patriarchal society as golden-era modernity, and have a strong tendency to want to return to such values in the present era. They also, in line with their tone of conjuring the past, supported conservative policy which claimed it would solve the low birthrate, aging population problem by making families wholesome again. However, their conservative population policies have roused considerable resistance from young women and have not been effective.

The third element consists of the remaining groups of people who failed to adjust to this system, and want another world, but are uncertain of what that world would be. Their emotions, desires, the ways and degrees to which their egos have been broken, as well as their methods of coping with the

world are all disordered. Some recognize the serious divorce between their desires and the conditions of reality, and in this sense of deprivation they become angry, and defiant. They recognize their inability to achieve the goals of success--development and the modern family--as a result of the unequal social structure and have joined the ranks of those protesting for the guarantee of their rights (Park 2008). In some cases, there are those who no longer pursue success or achievement as their goal in life, but either rediscover the significance of family, or pursue the life they authentically desire. Additionally, this third group includes many who we consider powerless. Having faced chronic exclusion and discrimination throughout their lives, this group finds it difficult to attain subjectivity as it belongs to the powerful. Though it may be true that their desire to become a strong subject, and their despair regarding failure to do so may not be as intense as the former groups. The deeper wounds felt by this group are the anguish of vulnerability and breaking (Park 2015). They are powerless, invisible, and discriminated against in society, and because of this they live miserable lives and despair. They devoted their lives in their own way, only to go ignored by society and unacknowledged by family, leading to resentment, to finding their lives--useless, poor, unaccomplished—futile, and a fear dying in isolation. Of course, there are still those who, despite this fear, realize that brokenness is not the end, and do not forsake hope.

Population Politics and Policy Dilemmas

Politics of crisis

What types of phenomena a society considers a crisis illustrates what the central values of that society are, as well as how the motivations, resistance, and conflicts internal to such values are in competition. As a demographer, I interpret the drastically low birthrates as sign of crisis on both the levels of society and the individual. If reproduction is halted, the ability to produce also becomes limited, and there is a possibility of facing a crisis of social care between generations. Moreover, I believe that the circumstances which brought about low birthrates were not voluntary choices on the part of individuals, but arose from the contradictions inherent in modernity, thus making low birthrates a sign of social crisis. Still, there are those who question whether low birthrates are in fact a problem. This attitude is prevalent among younger generations. When living itself has become as

difficult as it is now, they cannot be pressured into having children for the sake of future generations, the country, or the national economy. Though we have yet to completely elucidate the complex ties between social structure and these opinions, we can perhaps understand this as an intuitive sense of resistance to a social atmosphere which only stresses reproduction without any consideration for how challenging of a situation reproduction presents. Young people in Korea are baffled and angry that the promotion of starting families is being pushed on them despite an absence of discourse in society guaranteeing safety in their own lives (Jung and Lee 2011). The prognosis of the crisis is divisive in academic circles as well. There is one perspective which sees young people no longer marrying or having children as problematic. But on the other hand, there is another perspective which believes marriage and reproduction are not possible in the current circumstances, and moreover, some believe that lower birthrates may present a possibility of relieving the population pressure resultant of economic difficulty. In this way, the controversy over whether or not low birth rates and an aging population constitutes a crisis, and why that may be, expose the messy coexistence of diverse views and conflicts within the state and civil society regarding population.

The prognosis of our aging society and the lives of the elderly are equally fraught. Some understand the poverty, isolation, and strain on care faced by the elderly as a result of deteriorating social discipline, and believe that we must restore authority to our elders and strengthen legislation on filial piety or care by children as other countries have done.⁴ While neither combatting or agreeing with this view, we can be certain that neglecting the task of systemic reform in order to improve the lives of seniors is among the great blunders of senior welfare policy. While the education, career, and successful marriages of one's children are over-emphasized as the responsibility of parents, we are moving towards a state in which responsibility for senior citizens is falling to the seniors themselves. Though it is a harsh reality that most children cannot become effective providers for their elderly parents, the rights of seniors to make decisions regarding their own life is systematically limited. The revision of the civil code, in which the principles of patrilinear families and conjugal families were combined, poses a considerable rift with diverse relationships of support that exist between both spouses and generations in reality. Some have proposed that we should restructure legislation towards the couple-centered family unit, but this also is quite

⁴ For more about discourse on filial piety laws, see Park(2007).

divorced from the diverse realities of lives in Korea. The work and reforms to the social security system necessary for the stabilization of the economic livelihoods of seniors is far from complete.

It is apparent that though we are tangibly experiencing low birth rates and an aging population as a crisis of life, diagnosing the true nature of the crisis remains fairly complicated. It may be anxiety and resistance to the breakdown of modernity based on the ideologies of development and the modern family. There is a fervent desire to assimilate to standard values despite not being able to attain a stable family nor development. There is also a desire to reflect on the paradoxes internal to the predominant values and seek out an alternative life, but people are cautious in acting too boldly.

Though reflection on the part of civil society is important for pointing out the internal paradoxes of the social structure and individuals' lives as well as enacting agendas of reform, we cannot overlook the effects of policy. The government, which had no clear policy orientations or action plans for population for nearly a decade, since the late 1990s, has been putting forth a long-term plan for the low birthrate, aging population society. Though the ruling party has changed from conservative to liberal, the direction of this plan remains largely the same. There has been an emphasis on inter-departmental cooperation and efforts on the part of the government, as well as financial aid, in order to solve the problems of excessive costs of child-raising, unemployment among young adults, poverty among the elderly, and the broken systems of care (Cheong 2018). Governmental and civil committees have been formed, and they have diagnosed and prescribed plans for these problems. But there are numerous complaints about these policies by civil society. They say they cannot see any improvement in their lives. It may be that this is such a structural problem that in the short term it is difficult to feel the repercussions. But if no tangible effects are felt in ten years' time, it is not a matter of waiting to see its fruition. There exists a more essential policy problem.

Failures of the policy of mythicizing the golden era of high-level economic growth

An important factor in the failure of policy stems from the view itself that there was any crisis. Fundamentally, the policies for dealing with low birthrates and an aging population were policy plans premised on gender differentiation. Policies were essentially gender equality in name only and pork barrel funding for childbirth incentives despite there being a need for

drastic reform to the structures which make the realization of gender equality, actualization of diverse forms of intimacy, the socialization of childcare, and the future itself unstable. By only women being designated as the beneficiaries of work and home compatibility policies, they may face a risk of new forms of discrimination in their gender stratified places of work (Yi and Yi 2015). In recent times, new systems which overcome the policy limitations arising out of the assumption that only women are should be beneficiaries of work-home compatibility by placing men in a position of sharing in the labor and home life balance, such as the parental leave system, have been enacted, but these have their own limits. Maternity leave and parental leave are policies carried out in the place of work, but because their aim is related to the family, they fundamentally bear the characteristics of family policy. They are not policies which resolve the unequal structure or flexibilization of the labor market, both of which have enormous repercussions in a woman's life.

Additionally, a discriminatory view of women still remains to be dealt with. There is no reason that if women were to be recognized as equal to men that they would not marry or have and raise kids. Much like the recent controversy over the repeal of the abortion ban, within civil society itself is a strong, paradoxical attitude which refuses women the right to control their own reproduction yet safeguards the right to life of the unborn. If we are to protect the right to life of fetuses, then it only makes sense to protect women's rights to autonomy, reproduction, and custody. To ignore the latter while championing only the former is to uphold gender inequality.

The policies for dealing with low birthrates and an aging society are grounded in the notion of the standard family, and, as such, systematically do not embrace diverse types of lives. For example, the policy of work-family compatibility is limited to the family, which is considered to be made up of marriage, having children, and raising these children. As such, it is reasonable to say that it systematically does not afford protections for unmarried lives, work-centered lives, NEET lives, nor the lives of those who live alone. If the norms of the gendered division of labor have intensified the gender conflicts surrounding independence and care, then there is a need to reflect on whether work-family compatibility has in fact been operating as an ideology of normality, one which has worked to invalidate the diverse lifestyles of those who are unmarried, without children, or single-parenting.

One policy perspective which was a particular problem under conservative leadership was that the prioritization of national security in order to overcome the low birthrates and aging population, while diagnosing

and intervening in the lives of individuals. They overtly spread an understanding that certain populations were the workforce, the productivity, and the resources for growth, while others were social burdens. Rather than ask how the state could universally provide services to the lives of its citizens, conservatives emphasized a belief that citizens must participate in contributing to national prosperity. We can acknowledge that, at least superficially, they had recognized the criticism that the existing population policy came from a nationalist perspective, and attempted to pay attention to the quality of life of the individual. But while this broad logic was virtuous, the reality of its implementation was not. The manner by which the basic policy for low birthrates and an aging population was delivered was quite warped. Orders would come from the top, but who exactly had authority and who the responsible parties were was not clear in many cases. There were many instances in which events where different committees would collect public opinion were held as a formality. People who participated in these committees with good intentions became disillusioned in the atmosphere of networking and power dynamics that the committees had, and abandoned them.

The state is a power apparatus, but represents the power of the entire citizenry. When the stakes of a privileged class are prioritized, the ability to enact common good is weakened. But whether it be conservatives or liberals in power, their understanding and responsibility of representing the people has been quite weak. Somehow, policies always filled the pockets of the already rich, and exacerbated social inequality. The ideas of reform belonging to the political powers, economic powers, the media, and intellectuals was quite anachronistic, and in looking out for each other's interests, they created a system which expanded their own profits and magnified social division.

The conservative powers attempted to resuscitate the authoritarian system of the past. They considered the public as the subject of enlightenment. As an example of the strange policies which were implemented under Park Geunhye's regime, we can discuss the fertility map incident.⁵ First it is necessary to note that there was a period of silence between the end of the family planning program and the recent return to

⁵ On 29 December 2016, the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs published a post on their Facebook page linking to a site titled "Korea Fertility Map" in which the "number of impregnable women" were indicated, stirring up controversy. In a related article, *Hankyoreh* January 11, 2017 "the 'map of women of childbearing age' emerged." *Hankyoreh* December 29, 2016 "Why criticism of the 'Korea Fertility Map' came pouring in", *Ohmynews* December 29, 2016. "Republic of Korea Fertility Map? "Are women birthing machines?"

population as a subject of policy and politics. This is not unrelated to how as they covered up the reflexive criticism and discussion surrounding family planning, the lack of social and scholarly interest in demographic problems was enough to put a strain on the very existence of scholarship on the subject. The policy basis of population control was maintained as part of the government's 5th economic development plan, and there was continued social disinterest. At that point, the population's abnormal prognosis was underway. And after a decade-long break from policy starting in 1996, the government formed a committee on low birthrates and aging populations. At its start, the committee was not fully able to understand what the heart of the population problem is. Population studies in Korea inherently played a key role in nationalist population governance. Among people belonging to the first generation of the Population Association of Korea, some participated in the process of constructing the policy directions for low birthrate, aging societies. In a situation where adequate reflection on population changes was absent, the spirit of family planning was suddenly summoned, which resulted in the fertility map incident.

Park Geunhye's administration evoked self-assured memories of population governance. This is because it had had the experience of family planning. Additionally, low birthrates were framed as a national problem that had to be overcome. In September of 2016, the National Policy Management Committee ordered local governments to take the lead in overcoming the problem of low birthrates. They directed governments to construct a system that would communicate with people on the ground, and ceaselessly inspect and evaluate practices in order to reach a 1.5 fertility rate by 2020, promising special incentives to governments that were best able to do so. In the president's specific directives, one can sense a similar sense of conviction reminiscent of the era of family planning. The low birthrate was a problem that should be overcome through enlightenment, and in order to scientifically manage how well it was being implemented, the government directed the statistics division to produce very segmented fertility statistics. And they came to produce signifiers which scrutinized whether they had achieved the goal overcoming low fertility birthrates. This took form in the so-called fertility map. In December of 2016, the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs announced the fertility map with pride, as if they had done something great. The Korea Fertility Map, which had been a project for overcoming low birthrates by local governments, came with this phrase attached: "An information service made so that I can look at fertility statistics in my area and check a fertility map all in a one convenient place."

But reactions to this site were different than anticipated. Not long after going up, criticism from individual women as well as women's organizations came pouring in. During internal discussions as well, this map was criticized as purposefully imputing the responsibility of fertility entirely to women, and existing to perpetuate a view of women as the object of enlightenment and reproach, to make women into tools, and to insult women. As the term fertility, which had till then been an academic term, became misused for the state's nationalist, androcentric intentions, it became a term associated with male chauvinism, even leading to certain women's organizations and scholars to strongly request that the word be retired.⁶ In this way, the conservative government diluted the critical analysis of the crises of life and living which engendered the very population problems they purported to be fixing, and attempted to implement a view of population governance that was nation-, male-, and technology-centered. The fertility map incident was an act of politics which showed how unaware of social change professionals, policy makers, and various committees were, which insisted on expertise which prioritized the state and de-politicized social problems, but in fact advocated the ruling class and power elite's understanding while concealing the insecurities of many peoples' lives. The state collectively perpetuated a view of women as birth-giving bodies, and pressured women to give birth. Though various policy thinktanks, committees, legislators, and a majority of the media asserted that low birthrates were a problem, the crisis of public welfare which was the source of this problem was never properly seen as the core topic for policy. In the midst of trying every which way to raise birthrates, a distorted view of women in general was fostered in society.

In a sense, being able to criticize and characterize the establishment's distorted view of women implies a process in which women are reborn as a very active agent of social change, in terms of population, economics, politics, and society and culture as a whole. Through the discourse on low birthrates and an aging population, as well as through the fertility map incident, we can confirm that life, reproduction, and population have become important political topics by which to concentratedly critique the paradoxes found in Korean society's gender inequality, familialism, and social inequality.

⁶ *Donga Ilbo* September 7, 2017. "Ineffective policy towards low birth rates. Getting rid of the term "low fertility""

Breaking and fear

Professor Kim Hongjung tells us that the era of *pasang* (broken image) is a period of elongated disillusionment between the dreams of the past and new dreams which are yet to come. Those who do not face up to reality are still caught up in a dream, while those who are impatient are suturing together a future with clumsy imaginings. However, the strength to suffer through the disillusionment which lies between dreams, and the attitude which searches for hope among the fragments of what has been broken, is what is at the heart of *pasangnyeok* (image-shattering power) (Kim 2016, pp.11-12). These words stuck with me in my mind; the power to suffer through disenchantment, chaos, fear, and rage—is not this power to retain hope when everything around us is breaking the power which can change the world?

There were high expectations for a liberal administration. The government acknowledged the tasks of safeguarding labor, regional balance, gender equality, and education equality. But truly reformist reform did not come to fruition. The topic of social reform continues to not have any clear orientation. Trillions of won have been administered, but the birthrate has not gone up. The signs of the crisis of the lifeworld have continued, but no true reform has been initiated. Educational disparity and unsafe labor carry over into chronic inequality and disparity in life, but no policies to ameliorate this have been implemented. The slow progress of reform could mean that the power of those controlling inequality is substantial. But the failure to reform is not only due to the inequality of power. In the crawling pace of reform, we can find an abounding fear of leaving the framework of development and the standard family.

Peoples' thoughts and habits became uniform on the basis of development, a better life, and strength. Increase and expansion are thought of as natural and reduction is thought of negatively. Cessation, reduction, decline, and diminution are all difficult to accept. However, not being able to adapt to the conditions of the current moment does not necessarily mean eternal demise. When a crisis of survival befalls society, it does not mean that everyone dies. Life can evolve in order to survive. Even if this is an extreme circumstance in which all current people are disappearing, a type of life, more suitable for survival than now, could emerge. Or, through the sacrifices of a minority of people with their eyes open to the current injustices, the current world could be improved for all of humanity.

When viewed from the perspective of growth and the entirety of wealth, Korean society has achieved an astonishing amount. However, by

perceiving the world and the self through the frame of development, the eyes with which we view the world have closed and the insecurities within ourselves have been inflamed. We want to live a new life, but what this new life could be, or how we have to live to escape this suffering are questions we have yet to find answers to. We can no longer accept that a development focused social system could not be possible. There are many theories of population crisis, but discourse on demographic transition that seeks social change to overcome modernity has been stifled.

Many regions in Korea are confronting the phenomena of concomitant low birthrates and an aging population. Regional governments worry about where they will find the power to revitalize rural areas. But the main interest remains on how we can preserve populations, and especially on how we can recover fertility rates. Rural areas, where the problem of disproportionate aging is particularly severe due to continued hemorrhage of population, are sticking to the frames of continued growth. Here the position of laying one's fate in the hands of technology is adopted, and so even if only the elderly are living in a place, machines can manage productivity, welfare, and development.

It takes a village to care for a single senior citizen or a single child. But the problem of low birthrates and an aging population has overly focused on the economics of the problem, and the requirements for the lives of children and seniors have been buried under the rallying cries pertaining to the economy and development. The viewpoint from which we look at the problems of seniors is very idealistic and nonpolitical. In reality, it is a very political issue, but we dread politicization and want to avoid social conflict. In order to resolve the problem of poverty among seniors it is necessary to pursue legislative and institutional reform such as reforming the social security system, the labor market, inheritance, paternal rights, and rights to support, but these are not being discussed seriously. This is partially because notions of social security and family support are significantly divided along lines of generation, gender, and class. On one side there is a perception that filial piety should be legislated, on the other, people argue that conjugal families should become the basis for policy. However, one's twilight years are quite individualized, and experienced in quite pluralized relationships.

The worsening isolation of senior citizens and the uncertainty of being cared for is intimately tied to the crises of the family, regional society, and the community. An uncomfortable lifeworld mass produces people with disabilities. Ignorance and lack of understanding about old age has made it difficult for the elderly to live in a regional environment. They become

unable to learn about the goings-on of society, unable to communicate, and because of their break with society, they are at risk of suffering dementia. An environment which stresses production, youth, ability, and efficiency mass produces the socially maladjusted. But even in old age, vitality is maintained in certain respects and judgement is clear. There are without a doubt differences in the levels of deterioration on an individual basis. Doing certain activities alone within a familiar environment can be possible. However, an unfamiliar environment makes it difficult to be active alone. It is difficult to be active in old age in an environment focused on convenience and rapid commerce

Community care is a topic which arose numerous times throughout a seminar on old age that I participated in this year. Philosophically speaking, it is a very ideal model of care. It runs in a similar vein to the perception of problems in the now 10-year-old long-term care insurance system. This was a system adopted because a hospital-focused medical system could not provide enough care, and as the burden on families grew, so did the socialization of care grow into a supportive catchphrase. Following the adoption of the system, social care facilities and services rapidly expanded. However, as the connection between medical care, public health, and welfare were not strongly established, issues of duplication, blind spots, and costs went unmanaged. We need a service delivery system that is far closer to the desires of the elderly in order to support their basic living. In order to do this, we may well need more financial support. There is still a problem of welfare, which is focused on aiding low income people, thus excluding many people who need its help. Additionally, if one needs to become socially underprivileged in order to receive care from anywhere, then it is apparent that power is being concentrated in a small minority of civil society, and many people are unable to live independently. The basis of universal welfare must be premised on a consensus within civil society, but as civil society becomes stratified and fragmented along the lines of gender, generation, class, and country of origin, our communities become no longer operable. The foundation of universal welfare is not individual, perfectly independent subjects, but mutually dependent ones. And the most important foundation for care is that we are all beings who require care.

Closing thoughts

The demographic transitions experienced by Korean society permit us to

reflect on what is truly meant by a development-oriented life. But maybe only once the crisis of our end is imminent do we humbly reflect on the violence at the heart of the life which was rendered by our very own desires.

The myths of development and the modern family are standing fast, and in an era when many people are abandoning these myths, the division of society and the pain of abandoning these are unfolding in a catastrophic way. In order to change the outlook on life, it seems we must first overcome our fear of breaking. It may be that the road which leads us out of the traps of desire, frustration, and separation within ourselves, is, paradoxically, letting ourselves be broken. There are desires which bolster the values of development: a life focused on ability, youth, anti-aging, and success in old age; competition, strength, new discrimination and ranking on status. We must free ourselves from the developmental orders which are manipulating us through institutions, the lifeworld, and consciousness. While the outlook on productivity, economic efficiency, success, and development remain predominant, we must confront the fact that lives have been gravely damaged. Success, development, and power are not the only important things in life; sharing, humbleness, care, and intimacy can become the solid foundation for life.

We still find ourselves lost in lives of insecurity. Despite this, those with the courage to call into doubt the notion of normality are steadily gathering. Centrifugal force makes lifestyles which have abandoned the logic of development yearn for the center once again, and attempt to assimilate, but among those who have given up on assimilating, a new space of survival is being created. Young women were among the first to stand up and question the notions of normality. A movement which calls into question socially designated gender roles, which advocates for the right to autonomy in reproduction, and calls out the sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the everyday lives of women is quickly gaining momentum. And, though in a more moderate fashion, LGBTQ+ people, disabled people, poor senior citizens, and youth are gathering in areas of poverty, and are creating a new landscape which is difficult to interpret from the center. These examples give us hope by showing us that breaking does not mean ruin.

It is very important to embrace diverse opportunities both socially and institutionally in life, so that people do not become lost in the suffering which accompanies despair at having failed to live up to certain desires which are not easy to attain. We must disassemble the mechanisms of inequality which generate injustice, distrust, and hate. But we must not unilaterally do away with one framework for a way of life and force people into another. It is a

difficult era to stress any one exclusive sense of membership. A monopoly on power and competition severely damage diversity. Within nationalism, ethnonationalism, meritocracy, authoritarianism, inequality, and discrimination, autonomy and diversity are oppressed. An educational, labor, and welfare environment which makes the most of each and every individual's potential must be constructed. When diversity is safeguarded, and inequality is redressed, low birthrates and an aging population will not be a burden. While being provided safeguard in a familiar, sharing, and active relationship, many generations can live together. We must continue to reform the institutions of labor, welfare, and the family as their suitability for increasingly diverse ways of life continues to deteriorate. We must have a plan for systematically embracing diverse lives without differentiating people into the average, normal family, and people in crisis.

(Submitted: November 15, 2019; Accepted: December 4, 2019)

References

- Bae, Eunkeyeong. 2012. (in Korean) *Hundai Hanguk eui Ingan Jaesangsan [Human Reproduction in Contemporary Korea: Women, Motherhood, Family Planning Program]*. Sigan Yeohaeng.
- Calderone, Mari. 1970. *Manual of Family Planning and Contraceptive Practice*. Baltimore: The Williams & Wilkins Co.
- Chang, Kyungsup. 1994. (in Korean) "Hanguk Gajok eui Inyum gwa Siljae [Ideas and Realities of the Korean Family: Multiplicity of Family norms and Internal contradictions]," *Churak gwa Hyunsil [Philosophy and Reality]* 22:51-66.
- Chung, Sungho. 2018. (in Korean) "Jeochulsan Daichaikeui Paradigm Jeonhwaneul wuihan Gwajai [Issues on Paradigm Shift in Policy Responses to Low Fertility]," *Hanguk Inguhak [Korean Journal of Population Studies]* 41(3): 41-63.
- Cho, Eunjoo. 2018. (in Korean) *Ganjokgwa Tongchi [Family and Governance]*. Changbi.
- Cho, Han Hyejeong. 1985. (in Korean) "Hangukeui Sahwai Byundonggwa Gajokjueui [Social Change and Familialism in Korea]." *Hanguk Munwah Illyuhak [Korean Cultural Anthropology]* 17: 81-98.
- Cho, Namhoon. 1988. (in Korean) "Chulsan Jojeol Jungchaikeui Hyunwhanggwa Jeonmang [Current Status and Future Prospects of the Population Control Policy in Korea]." *Hanguk Inguhak [Korea Journal of Population Studies]* 11(1):14-31.
- Coigney, Virginia 1990. *Margret Sanger: Rebel with a Cause*. translated by Ahn Jeongsuk. Hyeongseongsa.

- Eun, Kiso. 2018. (in Korean) “Hanguk Yeoseonguei Gyungjai Hwaldong Chamyowa Gyungeok Danjeol [Korean Womens’ Labor Force Participation and Career Discontinuity]” *Hanguk Inguhak [Korea Journal of Population Studies]* 41(2): 117-150.
- Gong, Sekwon, Seungkwon Kim, Aeje Jo. 1992. (in Korean) “Gajok Gyewhaik Saupuei Gaipyun Banghayngei daihan Sogo [An Overlook of the Directions of Restructuring of the Family Planning Project—with a Focus on the Results of the 1991 Survey].” *Hanguk Inguhak [Korean Journal of Population Studies]* 15(2a):1-14.
- Guilmoto, C. Z. 2009. “The Sex Ratio Transition in Asia.” *Population and Development Review* 38(1): 31-54.
- Harari, Yuval. 2017. *Homo Deus*. translated by Kim Byeongju. KimYoungsa.
- Hong, Moonsik. 1998. (in Korean) “Chulsanyok Ukjai Jungchaikuei Yunghwanggwa Byuncheonei gwanhan Gochal [Change in the Korean Fertility Control Policy and its Effects].” *Hanguk Inguhak [Korea Journal of Population Studies]* 21(2): 182-227.
- Jun, Sungpyo. 2006. (in Korean), “Baibunjeok Jungeui, Gwajungjeok Jungeui mit Ingangwangyejeok Jungeueiui Gwanjumaiseo Bon Hangugindleui Gongpyunseong Insikgwa Pyungdeungeuisik [The Perception of Justice and Sense of Equality Felt by Koreans toward Korean Society].” *Hanguk Sahwaihak [Korean Journal of Sociology]* 40(6): 92-127.
- Jung, Minwoo, and Nayoung Lee. 2011. (in Korean) “Gajokeui Gyungye Seon Chongyeon Sedai [Youth on the Boundary of the Family – Gendered Experiences of In/dependence and Normative Spatio –Temporality].” *Gyungjai wa Sahwai [Economy and Society]* 89: 105-145.
- Kang, Yisoo. 2007. (in Korean) “Sanupwha ihu Yeoseong Nodong Sijangeui Byunhwawa Il-Gajok Gwangei [The Changes of Labor Market and Work Family Articulation after 1960s Industrialization].” *Issues in Feminism* 7(2): 1-35.
- Kim, Eesun and Keongsuk Park. 2019. [in Korean] “Hanguk Yosungeui Saingae [Life Course of Korean Women: Conflictual Gender Differentiation and Enforced Classification]” *Gyungjai wa Sahwai [Economy and Society]* 122: 138-170.
- Kim, Hongju. 2002. (in Korean) “Hanguk Sahwaieui Gundaihwa Gihyeikwa Gajok Jungchi [Modernization Project of Korean Society and Family Politics: on the Basis of the Family Planning Program].” *Hanguk Inguhak [Korean Journal of Population Studies]* 25(1): 101-141.
- Kim, Hongjung. 2016. [in Korean] *Sahweihakjeok Pasangyeok [Sociological Pasangnyeok]*. Munhak Dongne.
- Kim, Hyekyung. 2013. [in Korean] “Bugeyi Gajokjueiuei Silpai? [Failures of Patrilineal Stem Family System? Familialism and Individualization among the Generation of the Economic Crisis of Korea in 1998].” *Hanguk Sahwaihak [Korean Journal of Sociology]* 47(2): 101-141.
- Kim, Taekil. 1988. (in Korean) “Han Inguhakdoeui Hwaigo [One student’s

- Recollections of Evolution of Population Control Policy in Korea]." *Hanguk Inguhak [Korean Journal of Population Studies]* 11(1): 1-14.
- Kwon, Ojae, 2017. [in Korean] "Gyulhoneui Gyecheonhwawa Juntongjeok Seong Jungchaisungeui Gochak [Deepening Divides: the Role of Parental Wealth in Marriage Entry among South Korean]." Seoul National University, Master's Thesis.
- Lee, Jinsook and Seulgi Lee. 2015. [in Korean] "Il Gajok Yanglip Jungchahi Iyongi il Gajok Yangip Inskai Michineun Yunghyangai gwanhan Yungu [A Research on Solutions and Cause relate to Conflict of Constructions for the Garorim Tidal]." *GongGong Sahwai Yungu [Journal of Public Society]* 5(1): 103-138.
- Lee, Sikyoon. 2017. [in Korean] "Gyungyok Danjeol Yosongueui Goyung Guju mit Goyong Anjeonseong Bunseok [The Study of the Employment Structure and the Employment Stability of Women who have Experience Career Interruption]." *Yosone Yungu Nonchong [Journal of Korean Women's Research Institute]* 20: 75-100.
- Lesthaeghe, R. 2010. "The Unfolding Story of the Second Demographic Transition." *Population and Development Review* 36(2): 211-251.
- Livi-Bacci, M. 2012. *SaiGyei Ingueui Yuksa [A Concise History of World Population]*. Translated by Song, Byeonggeon and Eunkyeong Heo. Haenam.
- Malthus, T. R. 1798. *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. London: J. Johnson.
- Newston, L. P. Richerson. 2009. "Why do People Become Modern? A Darwinian Explanation." *Population and Development Review* 35(1): 117-158.
- Nie, Y. and R.J. Wyman. 2005. "The One Child Policy in Shanghai: Acceptance and Internalization." *Population and Development Review* 31(2): 313-336.
- Park, Keongsuk. 2007. (in Korean) "Dodeok, Jungchi, Gyungjaieui Yungwaneiseo Bon Hyodobub Damloneui Euimi [Meaning of the Discourses of the Filial Piety Law in a Moral and Political Economy]." *Gajok gwa Munhwa [Family and Culture]* 19(3): 31-52.
- _____. 2008. (in Korean) "Bingunchungeui Sainghwalgwa Euisik [Life and Consciousness of the Poor –Domination of the Inequality and its Resistance in the Every Daily Life]." *Hanguk Sahwaihak [Korean Journal of Sociology]* 42(1): 96-129.
- _____. 2009. [in Korean] "Nonyon Bokji Jaedowa Insikeui Byunhwa [The Senior Welfare System and Changes in Perceptions: Insecurity and Declaration of Independence of Seniors]." pp. 101-166. in Chung, Jinsung, Jaeyeol Yi, Keongsuk Park, Jaegi Jung, Eunyoung Nam, and Jinho Jang. *Hanguk Sahaieui Trendreul Ilnungda [Reading the Trends of Korean Society—A Decade out from the Foreign Currency Crisis as Seen through a Public Opinion Survey.]* Seoul National University Press.
- _____. 2015. [in Korean] "Imjongi Noineui Gotongai daihan Sahwaihakjeok Gochal [A Sociological Inquiry into Pains in the End of Life]." *Hanguk Sahwaihak [Korean Journal of Sociology]*. 49(2): 125-160.

- _____. 2017. [in Korean] “Seoul Noingwa Nagoya Noineui Saingaisawa Gajok Byunhwa [The Life History of the Elderly and Familial Changes in Seoul and Nagoya: Traces of Formation and Demise of the Modern Family Embedded in Life History].” *Asia Review*. 12(2): 3-48.
- Park, Keongsuk, Younghye Kim, and Hyeonsuk Kim. 2005. [in Korean] “Nam Yo Gylhon Sigi Yunjangeui Juyo Wonin [Main Causes of Delayed Marriage among Korean Men and Women: Contingent Joints of Status Homogamy, Gender Role Division, and Economic Restructuring].” *Hanguk Inguhak [Korea Journal of Population Studies]* 28(2): 33-62.
- Park, Sangtae. 1999. [in Korean] “Ingu Jaingjumei daihan Gachigwaneui Byunhwa [Population and Values: Changes in Values on Population Issues, Republic of Korea, 1955-1996].” *Hanguk Inguhak [Korea Journal of Population Studies]* 22(2): 5-45.
- Park, Soomi. 2002. [in Korean] “Hanguk Yosongdeuleui chut Chuiup jinip Thoijangdei Michineun Saingai Sageoneui Yokdongjeok Yunghwang [The Consequences of Life Events on Korean Women’s First Entry into and Withdrawal from Labor Market].” *Hanguk Sahwaihak [Korean Journal of Sociology]* 36(2):145-174.
- Repetto, R., Seonwoong Kim, Taihwan Kwon, Daeyoung Kim, J.E. Sloboda, and P.J. Donaldson. 1983. [in Korean] “Hangukeui Gajok Gyehai Saupeui Baljeon Gwajung [Development process of Korea’s Family Planning Project.]” 249-291 R. Repetto, Seonwoong Kim, Taihwan Kwon, Daeyoung Kim, J.E. Sloboda, and P.J. Donaldson. *Hangukeui Gyungjai Baljungwa Ingu Jungchai [Korea’s Economic Development and Population Policy]*. 1983. Korea Development Institute.
- Van de Kaa, D. J. 1996. “Anchored Narratives: The Story and Findings of Half a Century of Research into the Determinants of Fertility.” *Population Studies* 50: 389-432.
- _____. 2004. “The True Commonality: In Reflexive Modern Societies Fertility is a Derivative.” *Population Studies* 58(1): 77-81.
- Wang, Hyesuk. 2013. (in Korean) “Gajok Injeong Tujainggwa Bokji Jungchi [Recognition Struggles in Welfare Politics: Focused on the Dependent System of the NHI in S. Korea].” *Hanguk Sahwaihak [Korean Journal of Sociology]* 47(4): 67-106.
- Yang, Hyuna. 1995. [in Korean] “Hanguk Gajok Bubaiseo Ilgun Seigaji Munjai [Three Problems in the Korean Family Act].” Hanguk Sahwaisa Hakhai [Korean Social History Association] ed. *Gajokgwa Bubjaeui SahwaiSa [Social History of the Family and Legislation]*. Munhakgwa Jiseongsa.
- Yang, Jaemo. 2001. [in Korean] *Sarangeui Bitman Jigo [In Love and Debt]*. Kyurain.
- Yi, Dongjin. 2002. [in Korean], “Gajok Idonggwang Gajok Jungchop [Family Change and Family Overlap].” Collected Writings for the Retirement of Professor Kim Kyeongdong, *Jindan gwa Daeungeui Sahwaihak [Sociology of Diagnosis and Response]*. Parkyeongsa

KEONNG-SUK PARK is a professor of sociology at Seoul National University. Her main research areas are demography, gerontology, and social inequality. Address: Department of Sociology, College of Social Sciences, Seoul National University, Gwanak-ro Gwanak-gu Seoul, South Korea [E-mail: pks0505@snu.ac.kr]

