

Class notes

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Eun, K. S., Park, K. S., & Yoon, G. (2000). Korea: Demographic trends, sociocultural contexts, and public policy. In V. L. Bengtson, K. S. Eun, K. D. Kim, & G. C. Myers (Eds.), *Aging in east and west: Families, states, and the elderly* (pp121-137). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

This chapter, the last 40 years, explains aging issues distinctive to the Korean community, based on the rapidly increasing elderly population, socio-cultural family contexts, and government's policy on aging, all related to the economic growth of the country, in conjunction with the introduction of Western cultural values.

For the present, we will review three main points. First, population of ages 65 or over will increase from 7% to 14%. By 2020, 1 in 8 Koreans will be age 65 or over. Second, the mixture of traditional Korean culture and new Western culture ideas will produce problems between the elderly and the young. Third, Korean's government provides two welfare programs. One is for income maintenance, the other for health care. The IMP five different categories; HCP has three.

Introduction of new medical technologies and economic growth result in Korea resulted in the rapid growth population of people over 65. The projected question is how to support the ever increasing older age group? Present Korean culture (Hyo or filial piety), says that the oldest son in each family must take care of the parents, although he has children of his own. This is Korean familism. Industrialization and modernization has already enticed many young people to migrate into urban area, from rural area where they had lived with parents. For the young, subsistence in rural or farming areas is not adequate for comfortable economic living. Conversely, senior adults want to remain in their rural hometowns and their small farms. Adaptation of Western culture into Korean becomes individualism attenuated, or a fading away of traditional Hyo. Many young people maintain the concept of Hyo, but to a lesser degree follow it. The growing new Hyo tradition is to visit the family homestead at certain times of the year. This lifestyle is resulting in many elderly people living separately, even sometime at great distance from their offspring.

It is my conclusion that this chapter well explained aging issues in Korea. Many things have changed over the last 40 years in my homeland. Speedy economic growth and the adaptation of Western cultures have brought both good and bad climates into Korean society. The people could live in opulent wealth, but at the same time have new cultural values to deal with. It will require a few generations for the present unbalanced mixture of Korean and Western cultures to cease

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producing cultural shock.

When the authors of this chapter explained government policies on aging, they had to give more and better suggestions than old programs had, because many old programs work does not work for the majority of elder people.