CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem and theme

When I was an assistant pastor at Incheon Second Presbyterian Church in Incheon, Korea, in 2000, there was a 73 year old man in my church who was a retired middle-school principal.[1] One day, this man did not attend the Sunday morning service because of a severe cold. I paid him a visit and was shocked because his accommodation was in such a deplorable state. His room was very cold because he did not have sufficient money to provide proper heating for himself.

The old man told me his life-story. He had three sons and a daughter. When they were grown up, all of his children got married and left him and his wife alone. This man and his wife were then living on retirement grants, and their second son borrowed money from them to fund his business. Unfortunately, his business soon went bankrupt. After the son's financial failure, the circumstances of the man and his wife began deteriorating. Furthermore, the man's wife died from stomach cancer in 1998. This caused him terrible sorrow and pain. Even though he had four adult children, they gave him very little emotional and financial support and did not care about him at all. He had suffered severe loneliness and felt especially betrayed by his adult children for their shabby treatment of him. None of his children visited often nor cared for him. He missed his wife intensely. A few days after my visit to the old man, I heard the shocking news that he had committed suicide. Because there was no written will, people did not know the exact reason that he had killed himself, but I could imagine the motive for his suicide. This experience caused me to develop a decisive interest in the problem of loneliness among the elderly in terms of parent care.

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[1] For the purposes of this study, "the elderly" is a terms used to describe those aged 65 and over.

In the past four decades, there have been enormous changes, including rapid industrialisation, for the fast-increasing population of the aged in Korea. In just 19 years, the proportion of persons over the age of 65 is expected to double from 7 percent to 14 percent (Peterson 2000:57).[2] In addition, because of modernisation, Korea has experienced huge migration from rural areas to urban areas among the younger generations, and it has also fallen under the influence of Western culture. Such changes in demographic trends and social contexts have resulted in several problems for the elderly. Many scholars (Lee 1997:85; Park 1997:44; Choi & Chang 2002:27-32; Cho 1998:52-59) divide the problems of the Korean elderly into "four troubles": poverty, health, loss of social role, and socio-psychological alienation.

In Korea, a very important issue in discussions of the problems of the aging population pertains to the family support system. On the basis of patriarchy, Korean families have formerly not only shown unconditional respect and obedience towards the elderly, but have also supported them economically, socially, and psychologically, living under the same roof with them according to traditional custom (Kim 2000:6). Under this social system, there was little possibility that the elderly experienced problems of the type described above because family and society felt strongly that parents were to be respected and supported by their children. In contrast to the Western ideal of independent living and the reluctance to be a burden to one's children, Korean elderly have lived with their offspring and been cared for by their adult children in accordance with East Asian culture (Williams & Nussabum 2001:264-265). In such a family system, the elderly maintained the image of being the head of the family. As a result, they could solve the problems concerning poverty, loss of social role, and psychological loneliness that might have occurred in later life through family.

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[2] As of 1 July 2000, the population of those over the age of 65 in Korea stands at 3.37 million, and accounts for 7.1 percent of the total population (Park 2003:30,31). The proportion of 7 percent is the standard for an aging society. This statistic is expected to increase to 14 per cent of the total population, which is the criterion for an aged society, within 19 years. Such a rate of change from aging society to aged society is very rapid, compared to 115 years in France, 71 years in the U.S., and 47 years in England (Peterson 2000:57; Kim *et al* 2003:20-21).

In recent decades, the advent of industrialisation and urbanisation has eroded the willingness of Koreans, especially the young generation, to care for their elderly parents. The adult children have disengaged themselves from the responsibility of supporting their parents through the establishment of nuclear families, and have moved towards the emphasis of an individualistic lifestyle. The problem is that the elderly were unable to accumulate funds for themselves because they needed to take complete care of their family, including their own parents. Moreover, the elderly thought that there was no need to save money for their later life because they believed that their adult children would support them in the same way that they had supported their parents and grandparents. While the elderly still expect to get full support from their adult children as did the former generation, the younger generation does not want the responsibility of caring for their elderly parents (Yoon *et al* 2000:129-131). This gives rise to conflict between the elderly, who want to be cared for by their children, and the younger generation, who want to avoid caring for their parents.

Nowadays, many elderly people do not have jobs and obtain little financial support from their adult children. Thus, their living standards fall below the poverty level. Government also has no suitable funding for the elderly and there is little probability of getting sufficient money for such a purpose (Bengtson & Putney 2000:273). The elderly who did not prepare for their later life suffer economically and emotionally due to the disregard of their adult children. They are seriously concerned about their current situation and the future. At the same time, the Korean elderly are not only gravely worried that their adult children may consider them to be useless burdens, but also seem to feel betrayed by their society and family, especially their children.

In addition to this, in the Korean family over past decades, relationships between the different generations in the family have been unproductive. It appears that the biggest problem with sectoral relationships has been the miscommunication across the intergenerational gap in views regarding the

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issues between the older generations and the younger generations.

The basic and central solution for solving conflicts within families is dialogue. In a "closed" family, there is poor dialogue in which neither generation communicates directly with the other. In contrast, a healthy family has "direct, loving, and constructive" dialogue (Larson 1986:28). In this way, the Korean family has been severely affected by the lack of communication paths or discussion between aged parents and their children in the traditional one-way communication system based on hierarchical structure.

It is for this reason that the elderly are currently struggling enormously with a loneliness crisis arising from miscommunication with their children: "I am losing all: health, money, strength, and children." It is thus necessary to explore the situations of the Korean society regarding family support of the elderly and listen to the elderly's voices regarding problems and conflict with their adult children. Then, we must ask the question: what does God's story say about the mutual relationship with open dialogue between the aging parents and the adult children?

Following the result of these explorations, the formulation of communicability for open dialogue between the generations will be explored. I believe that the Church Round Table process, as communicability, holds the potential to improve understanding of two parties' different views and improve the intergenerational relationships. The Church Round Table has been extracted from the Round Table in literature, which enables the development, regulation, and facilitation of open dialogue processes in intergenerational conflict.

1.2 Positioning: Narrative practical theology

Since practical theology has been studied in the mode of an unfathomable revolution for about 200 years, it is no longer the so-called *applied* discipline,

which is constituted and operated by classical disciplines of systematic theology, biblical theology, church history, and ethics (Fowler 1999:75). Rather, practical theology constructs and spells out theological understanding.

Practical theology is a praxis-based discipline. The word *praxis* means "action." However, it is a special form of action. Whereas practice entails the simple "non-reflective performance" in a network of relations, praxis implies reflection because its focus is on achieving a particular end of such action (Swinton 2000:10-11). According to Browning (1983:13), "the difference between practice and praxis is that in the latter the theory has been made self-conscious and reflected upon critically."

When practical theology is engaged in praxis, it reflects on intentional action strategies, which are aimed at transforming social contexts. Practical theology claims to point towards a concrete contextual concept. "It is always local, concrete, and specific," with real stories and real lives (Müller 2004:20). From such contexts of praxis, practical theological method starts. Practical theology begins and ends in praxis and all praxis is theory-laden. It develops reflections out of the context of ongoing practices in which communities of faith engage. It arises out of practices and returns to practices, which enables the modification of the adequacy and faithfulness of the practice that it initiates (Fowler 1999:84). This is to say, it epitomises a practice-theory-practice model that brings about a complete practical cast to the entire theological enterprise.

This model clearly breaks the classic *theory-to-practice* approach of humanistic learning, such as Barth's schema of theology, which begins at biblical discipline, and then moves to systematic theology, before moving to application (Browning 1991:5, 39). Without moving from practice to theory, it is impossible to practise theology. Firstly, the practical theologian needs to develop an initial understanding of a particular practice. Then, he/she must reflect critically on the theory in the praxis throughout the hermeneutical conversation. This critical conversation then transforms the first practice into a new second practice.

Gerkin (1986:54) refers to practical theology as narrative practical theology. He understands narrative practical theology as an ongoing hermeneutical process within the immediate storied context of ministry. Müller (1996:5) agrees with Gerkin, writing:

Practical theology is an ongoing, systematically structured hermeneutical process that endeavours to enlighten and renew human acts that relates to the narrative of the Christian faith community.

Seen hermeneutically, there are two narrative structures in narrative practical theology: the story of the human activity, and God's story. Firstly, a narrative in human activity is a unit portraying some meaning, in an endeavour to provide a frame for an experience lived (Epston 1998:11). These stories, which we tell about ourselves, are not merely ways to describe our lives, but ways to form and give meaning to our lives (Müller 1999:8). The story of human activity attempts to make sense of the world and give structure to reality. "Humans are in some sense rooted in, or find their deepest structural framework in, a narrative or story of some kind" (Gerkin 1986:26). Therefore, knowing people's identity, past, situation, and future, is to live in and through a story (Willow & Swinton 2000:15).

As a researcher, I position myself within the narrative paradigm. The narrative paradigm provides us with a central role which helps us to understand people and to communicate with them through stories (Morgan 2000:5). Thus, in order to understand the lives, thoughts, and feelings of the Korean elderly, we need to know the stories of the Korean elderly regarding their situation and problems. In the narrative structure, I shall examine the stories of five elderly Korean people for concerns, conflict, and problems in parent care. With this approach, the "problem becomes a separate entity and thus external to the person or relationship that was ascribed to the problem" (White & Epston 1990:38).

Secondly, the narrative practical theological approach deals not only with human experiences in the world, but also with God's revelation in order to portray God's stories to people (Peterson 1997:41). Christian stories shape the character and lives of Christian communities and individuals (Browning 1991:44-45). Without a story, the Bible would not have the meanings it has. But the Bible consists of "a series of clusters of stories," such as the origins of people, the history of the Christian community, and God's revelation (Gerkin 1986:26, 49). Thus, the identity of the Christian should be rooted in the Christian story, whose significant theme is God's activity (Polling 1988:88). In this process, God's story functions as the practice of the normative story. According to the discernment of God's story, "practical theological reflection is in an interpretive process which takes place in the midst of unfolding situations and seeks to understand and shape those situations" (Browning 1991:51; Osmer 1990:227).

Narrative practical theology is a hermeneutical event that deals with God's encounter and the context of human experience (Louw 1998:96-97). In the light of this framework, Browning (1991:50) describes an important point about hermeneutics as follows:

> A hermeneutical dialogue with classic texts is not just a solitary conversation between one interpreter and his or her texts. In the situation of a congregation, it should be a community effort involving several people and their respective horizons in a dialogue with the classic texts.

This process implicates a dialogical relationship as communal understanding of hermeneutics "between the issues and problems involved in the particular human situation at hand and the core metaphorical meanings of the Christian story." In this dialogue within a narrative practical theology, both stories become open to continuous re-evaluation and re-interpretation, thus the research never ends, but has an open ending as a new story (Müller *et al* 2001: 90; Gerkin 1986:60; 1991:19).

1.3 Research methodology

1.3.1 The four movements advocated by Don Browning

In *Fundamental Practical Theology,* Browning defines practical theology as a critical reflection on the dialogue between the Christian story and the story of contemporary culture, and demonstrates the method of practical theology by making use of four movements (Browning 1991:36). He distinguishes a fundamental practical theology from a traditional practical theology, which was a separate field of theology.

According to Browning (1991:7), the whole theology needs to be oriented toward praxis, through the theory of fundamental practical theology. He points out that the whole theology has to be practical fundamentally. He defines fundamental practical theology in following ways:

> I will be claming that Christian theology should be seen as practical through and through at its very heart. Historical, systematic, and practical theology (in the more specific sense of the term) should be seen as subspecialities of the larger and more encompassing discipline called fundamental practical theology. Many will think this claim to be imperialistic. I think that it is the natural outcome of the rebirth of practical philosophy and its implication for theology (Browning 1991:7-8).

Browning contributed to the search for the model of the relationship between theology and practice in this book. He attempts to move practical theology beyond "the one-way application of theology to practice." In order to achieve this, he suggests a method of practical thinking that moves from "practice to

historical theology, systematic theology and ethics, and then back to strategic theology" (Wimberly 1992:110).

Browning employs descriptive, historical, systematic, and strategic movements to validate contemporary ministerial practices in the book. These four movements follow not only the dialogue as narrative orientation, but also the practice-theory-practice model, so that it can be related to the positioning of narrative practical theology (Browning 1991:39, 81). These movements will form the basis of this study.

These four categories from fundamental practical theology can be explained as follows: Firstly, a *descriptive movement* provides "a thick description of situation." In order to describe contemporary culture and real life stories, this descriptive theology needs the help of the human or social sciences: sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy of education, administrative sciences, communications, drama, literature, and visual and plastic arts (Browning 1991:94; Fowler 1983:153). Non-Christian texts and sources of history and sociology would be used in order to obtain information regarding, and a description of, the intergenerational conflict surrounding family support of the Korean elderly (Yuen 2002:10). This movement will indicate a "description of lived experience," which will be presented in Chapter 2 (Poling & Miller 1985:70).

Secondly, a *historical movement* is the interpretation of the situation from the first movement in the light of normative Christian classic sources (Browning 1991:49). After describing concrete social situations and practices, it is necessary to reflect upon the analysed result with biblical text and the historical tradition of the church, as well as thoughts of contemporary Christian thinkers with which the church validates its practice. This movement will be examined and discussed in chapter 3.

Thirdly, a systematic movement is for fusing the horizons between the implicit in

contemporary practices and the implied in the practices of normative Christian sources (Browning 1991:51). The goal of this movement is to develop the "criteria for testing the practical validity claims of the Christian faith" (Loder 1993:330).

Finally, the last step of a fundamental practical theology is a strategic practical movement, which enables a return to the proximate situation that deals with "the development of guidelines and specific plans for a particular community" (Browning 1991:58; Poling & Miller 1985:97). This last movement is a recurrent phase to the practice of theology, that is, applied theology, and is composed of religious education, pastoral care, preaching, liturgy, and social ministries (Browning 1991:8). Chapter 4 will combine the final two movements: systematic and strategic.

1.3.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is focused on finding meaning and quality. This tradition is aimed at interpreting and describing (Willig 2001:9). While quantitative research is based on observations that are converted into distinct units, which are then compared to other units through statistical analysis, qualitative research "generally examines people's words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways, to more clearly represent the situation as experienced by the participants" (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:2). This means, as Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) point out, "that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." Since qualitative research is committed to the interpretive understanding of human experience that people attach to everyday life, I believe it fits in with a narrative practical theology as my positioning and my study for the loneliness of the Korean elderly (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:4).

I will be using conversational interviews to allow interaction with my participants,

which makes the interviewee an active participant in shaping the conversation with the researcher. In this model, the interviewee stands as a conversational partner, in contrast to interviewing from a positivist model, which denies "the significance of cultural distinctions," and is thus not useful for hearing the personal voice (Rubin & Rubin 1995:7-12, 32).

In an attempt to accomplish these purposes for qualitative research, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* by Rubin & Rubin (1995) is employed in this thesis. It will also give reference to the above four movements and be used to better hear and understand the loneliness crisis of the elderly in the realm of parent care in Korea.

1.4 Delimitations

Firstly, this study's scope is confined to the Korean society. The exploration of family support of the elderly will cover the period from traditionally hierarchical family structure (the end of fourteen century) to the present time. Specifically, this study will deal with the intergenerational conflict in the Korean situation.

Secondly, this study is limited to helping the Christian community in Korea. Although there are many non-Christian families who are also struggling with intergenerational conflict regarding family support of the elderly, the main task of this thesis is to help the Christian family to build reconciliation through open dialogue.

Thirdly, the means of open dialogue between the aging parents and the adult children is confined to an examination and implementation of the Church Round Table's philosophy as communicability for the problem of the intergenerational conflict.

1.5 Research outline

This study is structured into six chapters. Chapter 1, as the introduction of this study, will contain the research problem/ theme, positioning, methodology, delimitations, and research outline.

Chapter 2 will deal with the stories of the loneliness crisis of the elderly in family support of the elderly of Korea, and will engage in descriptive theology according to Browning's method of four movements. It will examine the historical and cultural background, as well as the social situation and changes regarding the elderly with family. In addition, Chapter 2 will research the voices of the Korean elderly to identify their problems and concerns through interviews.

In Chapter 3, after observing the context of the loneliness crisis of the elderly in parent care and through the interviews conducted, the interpretation of the Christian story will be constructed. The chapter looks at historical theology, and the teaching of the Bible and contemporary Christian thinkers will be epitomised as a normative Christian perception of the stories of the elderly in family support. In addition, it will explore historical interpretations of the conflict of intergenerational relationship in the Korean society

Having examined the experience and context of loneliness among the elderly in Chapter 2 and 3, Chapter 4 will review the fusion of horizons between understanding the implicit contemporary practices of the loneliness crisis of the elderly, and the interpretation implied in its practices of the normative Christian resources according to systematic theology. In order to arrive at the fusion of these two horizons, the concept of the Church Round Table will be introduced and examined as communicability for intergenerational conflict. In exploring the Church Round Table, several types of literary theories and theorists will be examined and taken into account.

Chapter 5 is based on a strategic approach, which will make suggestions for constructing praxis for open dialogue within the intergenerational conflict. This will be explored according to James Fowler's six stages of faith (1978, 1981) and will include three case studies which will provide practical strategies for open dialogue to arrive reconciliation in the context the Korean family and church.

The final Chapter will sum up the findings of this study and reflect upon the conclusions reached. Recommendations for further research will be made.

CHAPTER 2
FAMILY SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERLY IN KOREA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical history and present context of family support for the elderly in Korea, where the cultural forces of traditional filial responsibility and individualism have created conflicts between elderly parents and adult children.

In this chapter I will review the traditional elderly, families, and family support in Korea. Then I will discuss several factors, such as social, demographic, and cultural changes, that have influenced the family support system. Thirdly, the changing image and status of the Korean elderly will be considered with particular focus on modernisation theory and ageism. Fourthly, I will deal with the change of family support, intergenerational conflicts, and the loneliness of the elderly. Finally, empirical interpretations, based on qualitative interviewing, that are relevant to this study will be discussed.

2.2 The traditional elderly, families, and family support

2.2.1 The elderly in history

2.2.1.1 Japanese colonial period (1910-1945)

Before 1876, Korea was a closed society that had the nickname "The Hermit Kingdom" because the experience of many invasions from China and Japan

resulted in a policy of international isolation. In 1876 Korea was forcefully pulled into the modern era because of the request for a commercial treaty with Japan (Pilat 1994:33-35). This was the prelude to the more threatening Japanese involvement with Korea that culminated in the annexation of Korea in 1910.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Korea had to adapt to the forced colonial rule of Japan. The Japanese colonial rule of 1910-1945 in Korea was the most humiliating era in the entire history of Korea. During this period, Japan attempted to lay the groundwork for institutional control of Korea, devastating every aspect of Korean life (Kim 1995:91). The integration of currency was accomplished, transport and communications were controlled by the Japanese, and all land-holdings became the property of the Japanese government (Simons 1995:126). Furthermore, since Japan's invasion of China in 1937, the Korean industry under the control of the Japanese Empire was forced to support the military program for the Japanese army's advance into the continent, which meant that the Korean people had to struggle to provide war materials and foods (Kim 1995:100-104).

The Japanese tried to erase not only Korea's natural resources, but also Korean culture by forcing Koreans to adopt Japanese names and participate in Japanese rituals, and by prohibiting the Korean language from being taught in schools. Korean-language publications, including newspapers, were subjected to thorough inspection under the Japanese censors, and in the end they were compelled to close. The use of the Korean language was now regarded as a rebellious activity (Simons 1995:126-131). In addition, Korean women and girls were abducted to serve as sex slaves for the Japanese forces. About 200,000 women were brought to the battlegrounds and then required to have sexual relationships with a dozen or more Japanese soldiers each day. Such sexual exploitation continued from 1932 until 1945, ending with Japan's final defeat in World War II (Simons 1995:150-151). The Korean people experienced a helpless captive state for about four decades without any hope of freeing themselves from colonial oppression. Those who were brutalised and ravaged

totally by the Japanese are today's current old generation.

Korea finally attained independence in August of 1945; however, she still had difficulties with self-government. She was in turmoil for the four years (1945-1949) that foreign powers had been forcefully in control. The foreign powers that intervened did so only to the extent that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union wanted the other to control Korea. The Soviet Union wanted a Communist government in place, while the United States insisted on a democratic, capitalist system. Thus, the Soviet Union occupied the country north of the 38th parallel, while American troops remained south of it. The Korean problem of a separated government was not an indigenous problem, but rather an international problem resulting from a struggle between the two external powers, the United States and the Soviet Union (Lowe 2000:10-16).

2.2.1.2 The Korean War (1950-1952)

In June 1950, South Korea was attacked by the armed forces of North Korea. It was the beginning of the Korean War, which lasted from 1950 to 1952 and resulted in the partitioning of the peninsula and which grew out of the ideological conflict between North and South Korea. In South Korea, the war left some 230,000 wounded, 300,000 permanently handicapped, and 100,000 orphaned, as well as one million tuberculosis cases. Exact records for North Korean casualties are not available, but they would probably be similar to those of South Korea (Kim 1988:3).

War resulted in the devastation of all industry over the entire peninsula. The worth of destroyed buildings and capital goods was nearly the same as the total 1953 Gross National Product (GNP). Economic and export growth were clearly disappointing, in addition to the chaotic state of the manufacturing sector (Moreira 1995:32-33). Every Korean person struggled in severely destitute situations resulting from the war. Furthermore, an estimated five million people were separated from their families during the course of the war (Kim 1988:3-4).

The problem of the separation of families has remained a critical issue up until the present day in Korea. Those who live in South Korea and North Korea respectively do not even communicate freely with one another.

By July 1953, a truce agreement between South Korea and North Korea had been concluded and Korea has remained the only divided nation in the world for more than 50 years, while the two Koreas are still at war (Olk 2004:5). Moreover, in the Korean peninsula today, there is always the possibility of nuclear warfare from North Korea, which poses a serious threat to global security (Omestad 2004:133).

2.2.1.3 Economic growth: one of the four great dragons in East Asia

As recently as 1960 Korea was a typical low-income developing country with a resource-poor and underdeveloped labour force, as well as dreary poverty. In 1961, the *per capita* gross product of Korea was US$ 82 and Korea was considered one of the poorest nations in the world (Kim & Park 2003:171, 177). There was massive assistance from the United States. In the periods 1956-60 and 1961-65 respectively, US military assistance to Korea amounted to US$ 1,275.7 million and US$ 974 million. Korea was the third largest US aid-receiving country in the world at that time, after Vietnam and Israel (Song 1990:5).

Moreover, the continued conflict with North Korea and the heavy military involvement made it difficult to develop long-term, stabilising economic polices. It was not until the Park Chung-hee regime took over, in line with "the First Five Year Plan for Economic Development," in 1962 that economic development was given top priority. The basic philosophy of President Park was "nation building through export promotion" (Chung 2003:892; Cole & Lyman 1971:193). Government undertook an ambitious economic development plan and foreign investment and loans began to pour into Korea. Since then, the Korean economy has been dramatically transformed such that the *per capita* GNP

increased to US$ 1,640 by 1981, and US$ 10,000 by 1997, which was followed by Korea joining the elite circle of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Kim & Park 2003:171-172).[3]

At the beginning of the 1970s, Japan was recognised as the first country in Asia to experience rapid economic development. However, by the late 1970s, the focus of global economic growth had changed to Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs), the four great dragons of East Asia, namely the states of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea (Li 2001:20). In the past four decades, Korea has accomplished truly impressive economic growth; as a result, she has been one of most rapidly industrialising and modernising countries in the world.

The noteworthy economic experience of Korea is closely related to the educational aspirations and investments of Korean people (Kim & Park 2003:172). People believed that investment in education was the best way to guarantee not only individual improvement, but also economic growth. A system of compulsory primary school education was introduced in 1945 and it contributed to the relatively high level of educational attainment in Korea. As a result, the literacy rate had increased from 22 percent in 1945 to 90 percent by the early 1960s, and it is currently over 97 percent, one of the highest in the world. By 2000, this high level of education had reached 71.8 percent in the population over the age of 25, who had either a senior high school diploma or a college degree (Park   2003:89, 94; Kim & Park 2003:17).

Such investment in education and attained educational excellence resulted in the advancement of human resource conditions that became the basic and instrumental source of the rapid expansion of labour-intensive manufactured goods (Park 2003:89). In Korea, education has been one of the biggest benefits of achieving economic development.

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[3] In 1998, Korea experienced a severe economic crisis and its economy shrank more than 30% under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) jurisdiction. However, from 1999, Korea's economy gradually began to recover and in early 2002, it recovered its pre-1997 crisis level (Chung 2003:891).

2.2.1.4 The elderly in the modern era of Korea

Korea has faced an incredible change from the worst circumstances after the wars, to joining the OECD; and has arisen "out of ashes like a modern-day phoenix" (Cho 1998:23). Park (2003:89) explains the reasons for this development:

> After a long period of colonial exploitation (1910-1945) and further conflict throughout the Korean War (1950-1953), both the aspirations and eagerness of the Korean people to improve their living conditions were very strong in the 1960s and 1970s. Koreans were willing to dedicate themselves fully to hard work. The abundant supply of labor, combined with the relatively high educational background and strong motivation of the work, not only provided very favorable initial conditions for the Korean economy to take off, but also has continued to be the primary source of growth in the Korean economy thereafter.

The success of Korea after "the era of extreme suffering" is based on the Korean people's faith in Korea's future and a fierce zeal to reassert Korean development. There are people involved in the story of success: the elderly who were eager to work hard for long hours every day during rapid industrialisation. The elderly are the true pioneers of modern times in Korea. Without their enthusiasm for work and education for their children, it might have been impossible to expect the present economic development of Korea.

When they were young, the elderly experienced the bitterness of colonial rule, war, and social turmoil of the last century, and they sacrificed themselves for their families, placing particular emphasis on education for their children (Yoon *et al* 2000:129).

2.2.2 The traditional Korean family and family support

2.2.2.1 Familism

2.2.2.1.1 Korean familism

There is an old Korean saying: "A happy family life leads to successful social achievement" (*ga-wha-man-sa-sung*). It represents the family as a pillar of society (Yang 2003:121). Traditional Korean society is characterised by familism: family and familial solidarity assume a position of ascendance over individual rights and interests. Cho (2000:340) defines familism as "the value system that strongly assigns first priority to the family. Individual interest was to be sacrificed for family interest, and the family was favored and emphasized over other groups." Familism, with its emphasis on the collective characteristic, contrasts with Western individualism, which favours independence and self-sufficiency (Sung 2000:45-46).

Familism is based on collectivism values and filial responsibilities as a means of reaffirming family ties rather than individualist families (Pyke 1999:661). It is grounded in the belief that adult children have a moral obligation to take care of parents as a debt because they were raised by their parents. Despite the advancing industrialisation of Korea, extended family patterns remain more traditional and familistic than most Western industrialised societies (Yoon *et al* 2000:126).

The greatest goal of the traditional Korean family was the prosperity of the present family and the continued existence of the family through an endless sequence of parent-child relationships from the progenitor to the future descendants. These goals naturally led to the emphasis on the family as a group. In this sense, an individual was recognised only as a member of a family. In other words, without family the individual could not exist in the Korean

community (Choi & Kim 2003:37-38). An individual's status in the society was largely related to the status of his/her family in society, whether noble or common, scholars or peasants. Family status depended on the number of ancestors who had taken high government positions.

2.2.2.1.2 Factors of familism constitution

There are three factors that have developed traits of familism in Korea. The first factor was Confucianism, which was adopted in Korea about 2,000 years ago. Initially, the influence of Confucian philosophy was limited to political and academic areas. Confucianism was chosen as the truly national ethic during the period of the Yi dynasty (1392-1910), influencing all aspects of individual and social life, including politics and scholarship (Kim & Park 2003:176). With well-defined family ethics as its centre, Confucianism emphasised the importance of family and family relationships and hence it has characterised Korea as a "family state" (Yoon *et al* 2000:122; Cho 1998:201). According to this view, the family is regarded as the prototype for all relationships and society is seen as an extension of the family.

The second factor in developing familism was the agricultural-economic structure of traditional Korean society, which necessitated the collective labour of all family members. Without "family solidarity and lineage," it was impossible to sustain an agriculturally-based society because the family was the basic unit for production and consumption. To be able to afford to survive, it was necessary to emphasise the family that can supply and produce all objects required for them to make a living (Lee 1998:251).

The third factor was the historical experience of the Korean people. Owing to the geographical situation of Korea, Koreans had suffered countless invasions and harassment from other countries, such as China and Japan, during the last 3,000 years. They had to struggle to defend themselves and to resist submission to the invading nations. In times of foreign invasions, Koreans

received little protection from their governments, and even in times of peace they were often oppressed by the central government and exploited by the local officials. These historical experiences led Koreans to look upon family as the only means of security (Cho 1998:201-202). Most people believed that there was nothing but family that a person could trust. In this historical process, exclusive family-centeredness dominated Korean loyalty, over government or public organisation.

2.2.2.2 Paternalistic nature of Korean society

2.2.2.2.1 Patriarchal families

In the traditional Korean family, the "patriarch" represented his family as the family head. It was a patrilineal society, which meant that the family was defined and maintained throughout the male line (Gupta *et al* 2002:7). In this structure, the father was responsible for the behaviour of his family members and had the final authority in making important family decisions, such as selecting a marriage partner or establishing the branch-home of sons. When necessary, he not only ordered something to be done to other family members, but also punished them himself. In traditional agrarian societies, the elderly could possess and direct productive property in a farm. In such societies, the elderly could ensure their independence and security, and retained firm control over their children, especially sons, until their later life (Hutter 1998:436).

In the agriculturally-based traditional family system, the role of the Korean elderly was important as the unit of production. Regardless of age, it was possible for the elderly to work to obtain a small gross product in the society. Furthermore, the elderly could teach and instruct the young on the proper methods and techniques for agriculture from the experience and wisdom that they had garnered throughout their lives (Park 2003:85-56). Therefore, the Korean elderly had superior authority in the family, and their children showed unconditional obedience to their decisions (Hutter 1998:431; Williams &

Nussbaum 2001:266). Lee (1998:252) defines the three specific roles of the patriarch as the household head as: 1) representing the family in society, 2) supervising family members, and 3) controlling family property.

In the structure of patrilineage, the eldest son could ascend to a higher social status as the patriarch of the family than other younger brothers and sisters. The younger sons or daughters left the parents' house after marriage to establish their branch families. The eldest son and his wife, however, had to live with his elderly parents to take care of their parents and grandparents.

2.2.2.2.2 The status and role of women in patriarchy

Whereas traditional Korean men were described as being extremely strong, under the patrilineal family the assessment of women's status was much lower and they held no public positions. For example, there are two Korean sayings, "men are the heavens, women are the earth"[4] and "A woman must follow three men in her lifetime: her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and finally her eldest son in old age," that indicate that women were discriminated against in society, especially by men (Cho 1998:187, 190). In patriarchy, a woman was taught from childhood the following values and rules: 1) she should not expect more than what she deserves, 2) she should stay at home and concentrate on serving male folk, and 3) A daughter-in-law should not even lend or borrow a household item without the permission of her parents-in-law.

There were four important roles for women in the traditional Korean family. The first and foremost role of a woman was to give birth to as many sons as possible. No matter how good a daughter-in-law and wife she might be, she could not have recognition from families and society until she gave birth to a son. Bearing a son was most the important and the greatest pressure on

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[4] This saying describes women as the earth that must follow men. Men are the heavens, high and destined to lead. Heaven is strong with the principle of "one" while the earth is low and soft with the principle of "many" (Cho 1998:190).

Korean women (Gupta *et al* 2002:19). The woman's second role was to serve her parents-in-law well. She had to learn about their habits, personalities, and preferences. This meant that it was required of her to spend much time and energy to care for them, both emotionally and psychologically. The third role of a woman was that of housewife: to be responsible for "inside" work in the house, while the "outside" was in charge of the male as family head (Lee 1998:252). The last role of a woman was to worship the ancestors as house gods. Performing ritual service that honoured the ancestors was considered the most important work that they had.

2.2.2.3 Filial piety ideology

2.2.2.3.1 Filial piety

The most distinctive characteristic of the traditional Korean family was the hierarchical structure among the family members. In this rigid hierarchical system, the relationships between each family member were matters of much greater concern than emotional closeness. Among many family relationships, the father-son relationship was dominant in the traditional family system in that fathers were the main providers. Fathers valued their sons as an indispensable labour force and the only source of security in their later lives. Therefore, the father-son relationship was enormously important in the agricultural economic structure (Choi 2000:32-33).[5]

Within an agrarian economic society, the significance of the nature of a father-son relationship has taken the form of filial piety in the social order of the Korean society. The son, especially the eldest son of a family, is expected to live with his parents and grandparents to support them financially and emotionally until their death. Old age support, according to the value of filial piety, has brought about exclusive kinship systems for son-preference in Korea. Many

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[5] In this case, the father-daughter relationship was not important because women's labour was regarded as being merely trivial domestic work compared to that of men.

Korean aged have lived with their adult children, especially their sons, because they have received full support from their sons. The support for the elderly would seem to be one of the most important reasons for the tendency of Korean people to prefer sons over daughters (Gupta *et al* 2002:15).[6]

Browning and Miller-Malemore (1999:95-96) describe the Confucian moral regarding filial piety in Korean family as: "Children were trained to honor their parents, especially their fathers, and elder sons were expected to serve and care for their parents in their old age." Therefore, when parents can no longer take care of themselves, it is an indispensable requirement in the ethics of filial piety that the elderly should be supported by their adult children (Sung 2001:70; 2000:45). Park and Kim (1992:399) make the point about the family's moral responsibility to care for the elderly: "growing old represents signs of grace, respect and piety, and age is the first consideration when Koreans communicate with each other."

Within this tradition, if the aged did not receive support and help from their children, problems would occur. They might feel frustrated and struggle because filial piety is not a choice, but a moral duty according to the Confucian tradition of Korean society.[7] In addition, if adult children did not practise their obligation of filial piety as expected, they might be labelled by society as a very shameful person. Therefore, in case of insincere fulfilment of filial responsibility, it might happen that severe tensions arise between parents and children (Hong & Liu 2000:177-178).

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[6] Higher son preference in Korea created a severe imbalance of sex ratio at birth, which has a higher male to female ratio than the normal biological range of around 110 boys for every 100 girls born in 2000 (Lee & Kim 2003:41).
[7] Filial piety is the cornerstone of social effort in Korea, and East Asian nations have shared its ideals for many generations. Filial piety is called "Hyo" in Korean, "Hsiao" in Chinese, and "Ko" in Japanese (Sung 2000:46). Elliott and Campbell (1993:133) report a similar attitude for filial piety among the three East Asian countries – Korea, China, and Japan: "Expectations regarding family care of the elderly" in Korean and Chinese cultures strongly resemble those found in Japan, "as all three of these East Asian cultures have been much influenced by Confucian ethical conceptions of filial piety."

2.2.2.3.2 The morale of filial piety

Filial piety has to be imbued with respect and warmth. Among the categories of filial piety, respect is the most important. Material goods, such as finance, and care-giving alone do not suffice for family support. Even more, it calls for the attitude of true reverence and concern for the elderly that distinguishes filial piety from the humanitarian caring for one's pets (Ng 2002:300). There is the excerpt taken from the Analects that relates to Confucius' teachings about the attitude of filial piety: "Tzu-yu asked about filial piety. Confucius said, 'Filial piety nowadays means to be able to support one's parents. But we support even dogs and horses. If there is no feeling of reverence, wherein lies the difference?'" (Chan 1963:23).

Confucius envisions harmonious relations among all members of society, and the hallmark of these moral relations is filial piety. Thus, a respectful attitude is demanded towards all old people, even those who do not belong to one's own family. In a society where filial piety was practised, the elderly were revered and obeyed, not alienated. In a 19th century translation of the classic, *The Teaching of Filial Piety*, Mencius stresses, "As I care for my own parents, I care for other elderly persons as well" (Lang 1946:10-11). Hence, filial piety is not confined to within a particular family system, but extends to the neighbourhood and society.

2.2.2.3.3 Family support for aging parents

In Korea, family support for the elderly has age-old cultural roots. In the traditional Korean family, several generations lived together under the male head of the family, who enjoyed absolute authority and commanded obedience and respect from his children. In this culture, the eldest male was always the head of the family, even if he no longer had economic ability and was very old. For the part of children, they were expected to live with their parents and grandparents. To live with elderly parents was the most basic requirement in the

practice of filial piety (Lee *et al* 2000:273).

Sung (2000:45) identified family support based on filial piety for the elderly in the following statements:

Filial piety is reflected in the practice of family-centered care and support for parents. Family support is characterized by cohesive ties between family members, family responsibility, interdependence between the members, family harmony, the individual as a unit of the family, and the pooling of individual members' resources to promote the well-being of parents and the family.

Family support can be, on the one hand, the objective types of tasks needed on a daily basis like meal preparation, household help, shopping, and financial help. This is to say, instrumental/material support. On the other hand, it is also emotional/effective support based on advice, comfort, and duty (Qureshi & Walker 1990:245; Johnson 1988:172-173). Based on the traditional support of the family, Korean adult children had endeavoured to care for and fully support their parents and grandparents, showing respect to them.

2.3 Limitations of the family support system

For the Korean elderly person, family is the predominant mode of support. The traditional family support system in Korea was characterised by familism, patrilineage, and filial piety as the guiding moral principle for intergenerational relationships. As a unique aspect of the traditional Korean family, filial piety emphasised children's obedience to the wishes of parents and total devotion to their welfare. This cultural value was rooted in Confucianism, which was the dominating state ideology in Korea's history, and thus the practice of filial piety had been strongly supported by the society and the people. However, in the last

four decades, Korea has undergone dramatic social restructuring that has influenced the family support system. There are a number of factors that account for the decline in family support of the elderly in Korea.

In this section, I shall examine various influences occurring today, which have limited an adult child's capacity and willingness to support the elderly in three areas: 1) industrialisation and urbanisation, 2) demographic transition of an aging population, and 3) the advent of Western culture.

2.3.1 Social trend: rapid industrialisation and urbanisation

2.3.1.1 Migration to urban areas

As mentioned earlier (2.2.1.3), in Korea, industrialisation has proceeded very rapidly since 1962, after the experience of colonial exploitation, the devastation of the war, and absolute poverty with social disorder. In addition, Korea has one of the fastest growing urbanised populations in the world, with an annual urban growth rate of 4.7 percent. In 1960 the rate of urban population growth was 56 percent, by 1980 it had jumped to 67 percent, and by 1994 it had increased to 80 percent of the total population.[8] The capital, Seoul, has a population of over 10 million and is one of the largest cities in the world (Inoue 1998:39).

The rapidly increasing rate of industrialisation has led to massive migration of the younger generation from rural to urban areas. Heavy industries and new industrial centres were established in urban areas, which caused the young generation to be widely dispersed from their elderly parents. The percentage of workers in agricultural employment has dropped sharply from 63 percent of total employment in 1963 to 11 percent in 2000. In the meantime, the proportion of workers in non-farming employment increased at an average rate of 5.4 percent

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[8] Compared with United States, in which the percentage of urban population in 1994 was 76%.

per year (Park 2003:85). This means that many young people have departed their hometowns in rural areas to find new jobs in urban areas. Even if adult children remain with the same employer, they might frequently be forced to move to other industrial areas for various reasons. In such cases, aging parents tend to prefer to remain in their own homes rather than move to an unknown place with the children's family. In addition, many young men and women have migrated to other places, mostly urban areas, in order to obtain the opportunity of higher education, leaving their elderly parents behind (Kim 1999:104-105).

As a result of the exodus of younger people for the purpose of career or education, there are now very few families in rural areas who do not have a departed member. Indeed, there are almost no families in which adult children live with their parents. The migration has made it difficult to live together and provide family support to the elderly parents (Yoon *et al* 2000:13). Thus, the swift industrialisation and urbanisation of Korea has resulted in a geographic mobility that is not compatible with extended family relationships.

2.3.1.2 Increased population of woman in the labour force

Another great change that industrialisation and urbanisation has brought about is increased participation of women in the labour force. In comparison to women in previous times, women today have an equal right to acquire the opportunity of education and employment to men. The status of woman has been growing and there is an increasing number of women competing for job opportunities (Lee *et al* 2000:274). A rising number of workingwomen is likely to affect the family support for elderly people. Ogawa (1990:643) asserts that while increased participation of woman in the labour market gives an advantage towards economic development, it might allow the psychological and emotional well-being of the elderly to deteriorate because of declining family care for elderly parents.

In Korea, because of economic development, the number of workingwomen is

increasing. In addition, the attitudes of children of the younger Korean parents are associated with woman's employment. Korean parents have full responsibility for their children, not merely for their education, but for their marriage or overall success in the future. They even compete with each other to provide "better education, better care, and more material support" to their children, and for this reason, many younger mothers are eager to seek jobs (Kwon 2003:30-31).

Many married women who were once the most valuable caretakers of dependent older parents are now working in outside employment for various reasons. The proportion of the married working women increased from 36.9 percent in 1970 to 47.9 percent in 2000 (Choi & Chang 2002:24). Larger proportions of women in the work field of Korea mean that there are fewer potential caregivers at home to care for elderly parents.

2.3.2 Demographic trend: demographic transition of population aging

2.3.2.1 Declining mortality and fertility

Korea has undergone dramatic social change in terms of family support in the last four decades. One of the causes of the change is rapid demographic transition. Korea has experienced a decline in fertility and mortality since the 1960s; as a result, there has been a rise in the proportion of older people to younger ones (Park 2003:26-33). Such changes in the age structure of society have influenced the situation of parent care.

Aging is a combined product of the demographic processes of mortality and fertility. The mortality rate in Korea decreased from 35 per 1,000 in 1910, to 5.0 per 1,000 in 1990 because of the development of medical technologies and

industrialisation (see Table 1) (Yoon *et al* 2000:123-124; Kim 1999:22). With a lessening in mortality since the 1960s, the fertility change was initiated and remained until the implementation of a program to control fertility by government. Owing to the powerful practice of government's fertility program, the total fertility rate was greatly reduced from 6.0 percent in 1960 to 1.6 percent in 1990. In 2002, the fertility rate was recorded as 1.17 percent, one of the lowest levels in the world (Yoon *et al* 2000:124; Park *et al* 2003:169).

Table 1. Crude Death Rate and Average Life Span for Korea 1910-2001
(Choi & Chang 2002:15; Park *et al* 2003:23)

Year	Crude death rate (%)	Average life span	
		Male	Female
1910	35	-----	-----
1960	16	51.1	53.7
1980	8	62.3	70.5
1990	5	67.7	75.9
2001	----	72.8	80.0

The decline of the mortality and fertility rates contributed to an increased average life span. As shown in Table 1, the average life span rose from 51.1 years for males and 53.7 years for females in 1960 to 72.8 for males 80.0 years for females in 2001 (Choi & Chang 2002:15).

2.3.2.2 Increasing population aging

Coupled with declining mortality and high fertility rates, the average life span has substantially increased the proportion of older persons. According to Table 2, while most developed countries underwent the demographic transition for aging population slowly, it is happening at a much faster pace in the developing world, like Korea. In France and America it took 115 years and 71 years, respectively, for the population aged 65 and over to double from 7 to 14

percent. As the table reveals, it is estimated that this same change would take only 19 years for Korea. Korea is thus experiencing the fastest growth for percentage of older population in the world.

Table 2.   Selected Demographic Characteristics of Some Nations (Park *et al* 2003:20, 229)

Country	Years reached			Years required	
	7%	14%	20%	7%→14%	14%→20%
France	1864	1979	2020	115	41
America	1942	2013	2028	71	15
England	1929	1976	2021	47	45
Japan	1970	1994	2006	24	15
Korea	2000	2019	2026	19	7

The problem is that there is a growing concern as to who will take care of those older people. Such a striking increase of the elderly population in recent decades means that there will be increasingly large numbers of older persons that may need assistance (Kinsella 1995:50). In addition, the number of adult children to provide support for the aged is becoming relatively smaller than in previous time periods because of lower fertility rates. As a result, looking after the elderly might cause a burden to the family, especially to adult children. Most Korean elderly have been taken care of in intergenerationally extended households. However, in recent years, the availability of kin to support them is said to be declining.

2.3.3 Cultural trend: the advent of Western culture

2.3.3.1 The advent of individualism

There is a fundamental underlying difference in relationship patterns between Eastern and Western cultures. While Western society is characteristic of

individual assumption, in Asian cultures, the basic structure of the personality of relationships generally de-emphasises individualism and emphasises social relationships between individuals (Kim & Choi 2003:32-35). Following Asian nature, Koreans have placed a high value on relation-oriented dimensions for an interdependent view. They are eager to spend huge amounts time and energy to maintain good relationships with each other in their community (Lim & Choi 1996:122).

The organisation of the United States military regime in the Korean peninsula has, remarkably, caused Korea to start to accept Western culture (Yoon *et al* 2000:121). Once Koreans recovered the power of their nation after the defeat of Japan in Second World War, they came into contact with the United States of America in 1945, exposing them to Western culture.

The philosophical tendency of the West is based on Liberalism – that the primary unit of social life is the individual, whose rights are supreme (Kim 1999:23). Sung (2000:45-46) characterised the Western value of individualism as "self-determination, independence, autonomy, respect for the dignity of an individual, the success and well-being of an individual, and strong emphasis on the nuclear family." The introduction of Western culture, especially individualism and rationalism, has caused traditional filial piety in Korea, which was founded on unconditional respect for and full support of the elderly parents, to decline. From the influence of individualism, some Koreans have become more egocentric, especially with regards to the elderly.

In addition, recent trends indicate that some elderly think that they are responsible for their own financial well-being (Yoon *et al* 2000:126). On the part of some of the elderly, the emerging value seems to be self-sufficiency rather than family dependency (Yoon *et al* 2000:131). Increasing living standards, convenient equipment for housekeeping, and the availability of full-time or part-time helpers have apparently brought about a growing tendency for some elderly to want to live independently in their own leisure and privacy.

2.3.3.2 Declining Confucian ethics

Regarding the relationships between elderly parents and adult children, Korean society has faced the transition from hierarchical relationships to comparatively reciprocal relationships, which came from the weakening of a patriarchal family system that was influenced by Confucianism (Bengtson & Putney 2000:275-276).

Cho (1998:105) challenges the effects of Confucianism in Korean society that have brought about the basis of filial piety in the following way:

> In the early phase of recent modernization, Confucianism was criticized as an obstruction and hindrance to change. Confucianism emphasizes the vertical structure of relationships, particularly, emphasis on the obedience of younger to the elderly, and was considered authoritarian. It was opposed to the horizontal structure of a democratic society that highlights individual freedom and equality in Western society, based on democratic ideology.

In the Confucian family ideology, the most fundamental element is "the inequality of interpersonal relations," which emphasises "unequal decision-making authority" among generations (Yang 2003:122). This justifies the fact that filial piety is to respect and obey the elderly with unconditional submission. In this tradition, children were not allowed to question the will or decisions of their parents whether that decision was right or not, but only to obey to them.

However, in recent years, such authoritarian-dependency relationships between generations have shown the limitations for the expressions of filial piety. Today adult children tend to be reluctant towards such rigid family obligations based on authoritarian and patriarchal relationships (Sung 2001:72). They believe that the aspect of filial piety, which has as its emphasis the obedience and service to

their parents, has tended to rob the father-son relationship of emotional intimacy and spontaneity. Korean families no longer follow the hierarchical ideology of Confucianism regarding family support for the elderly (Yang 2003:146).

2.4 The change of the image and status of the elderly

In a few decades, the image and status of the elderly in Korea appears to have deviated increasingly from the traditional ideal of respecting them because of the transition of the societal context. In this section, I shall examine the changed image and status of Korean elderly in light of the perspectives of modernisation theory and ageism.

2.4.1 Modernisation theory

2.4.1.1 The declining image and status of the elderly

Modernisation theorists often assume that industrialisation and urbanisation deprive the elderly of many important roles in family and society. According to Cogwill and Holmes (1972:13), one of the key assumptions of modernisation theory with regard to aging is that "the role and status of the aged varies systematically with the degree of modernization of society and that modernization tends to decrease the relative status of the aged and to undermine their security within the social system."[9] According to this view, the

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[9] Osmer and Schweitzer (1997:233) define modernisation as having the following five characteristics: 1) large-scale industrialisation, including the shift from a local, rural economy to a national economy organised around the corporation; 2) widespread confidence in the power of science as a source of technological innovation and as a model of rationality; 3) movement of the population from rural settings to cities; 4) the continuing differentiation of modern institutions, especially the separation of state education from that offered by religious communities; and 5) the growth of the professions, viewed as based on a specialised body of scientific knowledge formulated and transmitted in specialised programs of higher education, with special emphasis on the emergence of the teaching profession.

elderly, who had power as owners and organisers in an agricultural-economic structure, have become devalued and can be seen as useless in modern society.

More industrialised and urbanised circumstances from the largely rural and agricultural society of the past gave people valuable advantages in their quality of life. However, in a world of modernisation the elderly can be left behind as historical remnants (Williams & Nussbaum 2001:266). While in an agrarian society the elderly could organise assets, the advent of an industrial economy deprived the elderly of the opportunity to possess and manage them. The knowledge and experiences that the elderly had built up throughout their lives in an agricultural society were less needed; as a result, the status of the elderly has been eroded in contemporary family and society (Hutter 1998:51, 436).

2.4.1.2 Modernisation and Korean elderly

The declining image and status of the elderly in Korean society corresponds to the weakened authority of the eldest male. In the traditional patrilineal society, the eldest male exercised his more-or-less absolute authority in all areas of family life, such as education, marriage, and work. The eldest male and his wife lived with their adult children in a common household on land that the family may have owned for many generations. While the family unit shared both the work and the resources of the land, the family patriarch had final authority on all family economic and social matters (Choi 1995:80-81).

However, Korea's rapid modernisation in recent decades has been gradually turning the majority of the elderly from managers of their independent household farms into mere dependent receivers. This has meant the loss of one sphere of authority and of their self-confidence, resulting in the weakening of their status. Simultaneously, children were becoming more independent and self-assertive in these areas because they could earn their living without waiting to inherit the land of the family (Mason *et al* 1998:4).

In the traditional patrilineal family system, the Korean elderly, who had superior authorship as family heads, were losing their status and role in modern family as the younger generation were better educated and earned more money than them. Today the increasing favouring of the nuclear family has seriously diminished the Korean elderly's role in organising and instructing family members. The transition of the social role of the elderly from "patriarch" to "outsider" in the family would be inconceivable to them. These changes caused the traditional extended family unit to decline from a point where three generations once lived together (Hutter 1998:51). As a result, Korean families become less concerned about the elderly, providing less support, visiting them less often, and showing less respect and obedience towards them.

2.4.2 Ageism

2.4.2.1 An understanding of ageism

'Ageism' is a relatively new term coined by the gerontologist Robert Butler to describe the prejudice against the elderly in America in the 1960s. Butler (1995:35) in *The Encyclopedia of Aging* defines ageism as follows:

Ageism is defined as a process of systematic stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this for skin color and gender. Older people are categorized as senile, rigid in thought and manner, and old-fashioned in morality and skills… Ageism allows the younger generation to see older people as different from themselves; thus they suddenly cease to identify with their elders as human beings and thereby reduce their own sense of fear and dread of aging.

According to this perspective, the elderly are generally regarded as being at the

subtype level because the aging process leads to deterioration in judgment, adaptability to new circumstances, and physical strength when compared to the younger generation. For example, this could produce discrimination towards older workers based on the perception that aging reduces efficiency in the workplace (Breitung 1995:132). Modernisation has led the younger generation to seek jobs in the outside labour market, leaving the household. The expanded industrial economy has created new jobs occupied by younger people. Higher education also provides further opportunities for the young. However, at the same time, it has made a comparison of attitudes between the old generation and the young generation for the jobs. Thus, people became more negative towards older people (Hutter 1998:436).

Kite and Wagner (2002:131) group ageist attitudes into following three categories, each of which can have a positive or negative part: 1) feelings due to a person's age, 2) stereotypes about what someone is like just because the person is "of a certain age," and 3) differential treatment because of a person's advanced age.

Ageism makes it easier for many people to ignore the elderly. It allows younger people to exercise power over the elderly through strength, ability, and wealth that they keep in societal resources (Osgood 1993:169-170). In our society, the elderly tend to be described as performing poorly, old-fashioned, and inefficient, whereas youth is the standard held to have the highest value.

2.4.2.2 Ageism and the Korean elderly

Ageism can be equally applied to Korea. A number of negative images are now associated with the elderly, revealing the existence of prejudice. A survey of 396 students at a university in Korea carried out by Mo (2002:17-21) revealed the stereotypes of the elderly in a society, especially among young generations. The subjects were shown a list of 'True,' 'False,' and 'Not Sure' statements. They had to identify those they believed to be true, those they believed to be false,

and those that they were not sure of. In this survey, 55 percent believed that old age necessarily leads to senility,[10] 61.4 percent believed that the elderly cannot work as effectively as young persons,[11] and 61.6 percent believed that 10 percent of the Korean population is already at least 65 of age.[12] However, these last three assumptions are all incorrect. The prevalence of negative images of the elderly such as these, allows people to portray the elderly as an unproductive burden on society. It may also reveal a false image of the elderly.

In addition, investigation from a newspaper, 'Ohmynews' by Kim (2003:21-28) exposed the negative description of the image of the elderly. In 93.5 percent of the articles written concerning the elderly from February 2000 to September 2002 in this newspaper, the image portrayed was negative. The portrayal of the elderly in the newspaper was that they are lonely, senile, and poor, and they were characterised as feeling depreciated, ill-treated, and relatively miserable. In mass media, such as a newspaper, the treatment of this negative image of the elderly has devalued and demeaned the image of the elderly in Korean society.

The spread of ageism and the association of terms with negative connotations with the elderly is a relatively modern phenomenon, which contrasts with the depiction of traditional Korean elderly, in which the elderly should be respected. At present, many Korean elderly are considered to be reliant and poor persons with outdated ideas in society. This negative image of the elderly can result in not only a decrease in respect toward them from younger generations, but also in lower self-esteem of the elderly themselves. In agrarian societies, those who have decided and commanded most resources with authority in the home and in society are in psychological distress in light of negative perceptions of the elderly.

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[10] For this question, 37.3% gave the correct answer and 7.7% responded that they did not know.
[11] For this question, 32.7% gave the correct answer and 5.9% responded that they did not know.
[12] For this question, 11.0% gave the correct answer and 27.4% responded that they did not know. In 2000, population aging of the total population had reached 7%.

2.5 The change of family support, intergenerational conflicts, and loneliness of the elderly

2.5.1 The change of family support

2.5.1.1 The elderly in changes of living arrangements

Living arrangements, which are an important dimension of family relations, influence the daily lives of the elderly (Won & Lee 1995:315). In the modern family, changes of attitude toward filial piety have brought about a change in the actual living arrangements of the elderly. With the eroding of the practice of filial piety, co-residing is no longer a duty of adult children. Co-residence, which was a common type of living arrangement for the elderly in the past, has changed and three types of living arrangements are prevalent in Korea today.

In the first type of arrangement, the elderly live with their adult children, especially a son.[13] Whereas, in the traditional family system, it was generally the eldest son who lived with his parents, in today's family it does not have to be the eldest son. Any son who can financially afford it or whose wife is willing to live with the parents in her home can fulfil the filial responsibility. However, the traditional element still remains to some extent in that the eldest son is usually most conscious of the welfare of his elderly parents, even when he does not live with them.

Living with adult children is regarded as the most effective method for family

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[13] In a patriarchal family system like that in Korea, daughters, as the saying goes, were like "spilled water." Once spilled out into the world, nothing comes back. After marriage, daughters enter another family and must serve a new family. However, in contemporary Korean society, the status of women has been raised and daughters can support their elderly parents to some degree. Nevertheless, there are very few elderly who live with their daughters (0.7%) because of the son preference of the elderly. Many elderly still want to live with the eldest son (46.0%) or other sons (9.6%) according to a survey by Chung (1998:251).

support because children make possible every kind of care. In recent years, however, the prevalence of this type of living arrangement has rapidly declined. According to Table 3, the percentage of Korean aged 65 and over who lived with their adult children decreased from 78.1 percent in 1975 to 30.8 percent in 2000. This indicates the process of social change concerning family support that Korean society has experienced in the last four decades (Mo 1999:99; Choi & Chang 2002:17).

Table 3.   Change in Living Arrangement of the Korean Elderly (Unit:%) (Mo 1999:99; Choi & Chang 2002:17; Cho 1998:41)

Year	Living with adult children	Living with single children	Living alone	Aged couple	Other
1975	78.1	6.8	7.0		8.0
1981	69.1	11.1	19.8		----
1990	44.0	29.4	10.6	13.2	2.8
2000	30.8	23.9	16.2	28.7	0.4

The second type of living arrangement is that where adult children and the parents live separate from one another. This tendency is on the rise in Korean society. While the number of the elderly who live with their adult children has decreased, the number of elderly living separate from their adult children has increased from 7.0 percent in 1975 to 44.9 percent in 2000 (Table 3). This type of living arrangement is becoming the most popular option for Korean elderly.

In the last type of living arrangement, adult children live apart from their parents for some time after marriage and then live with their elderly parents later in life when the parents cannot care for themselves. This type of living arrangement is becoming very common. It seems to be a compromise between the demands of filial piety and its practical difficulties in an extended family.

2.5.1.2 Declining family support

In East Asian NICs – Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Korea – "three generation residence" and full support by adult children have been viewed as a "cultural asset" in elderly care. In *Improving Health of Older People: A World View,* Macfadyen (1990:617) states that "it is likely that Asian countries such as Singapore, the Republic of Korea, and China will parallel Japan's policies on aging, since they have comparable traditions and family support systems." In the same book, Ogawa (1990:628) asserts that the "Japanese model" of taking care of the elderly under the same roof may be a great example of a welfare policy in "combining the best of traditional and modern approaches" to provide support for the elderly.

In Korea, such investigation of Asian family traditions, where three generations live together in the same house, appears to have been possible until the 1980s because, as shown in Table 3, the majority of the elderly (69 percent) were still living with their adult children in 1981 (Mo 1999:99). However, Korean attitudes toward co-residence are changing. According to the same report, the rate of intergenerational co-residence dropped continually to 44.0 percent in 1990 and 30.8 percent in 2000. Therefore, the World Health Organization (WHO) report for the Asian cultural preference where children give extensive support to the elderly seems to have cast doubt on the efficiency of the practice of co-residence in Korea today.

For the elderly, the type of living arrangement is a very significant dimension of their lives because it is closely related to their own support. Co-residence with adult children seems to be the best way to support the elderly because it is possible to provide most types of support, for instance, financial, emotional, and instrumental support towards them throughout co-residence (Kim 1999:114).

Needless to say, we need to be careful not to assume that the decline of co-residence means that the family support has become weak. The adult children may live apart from their parents for various social or economic reasons. If, in

such situations, adult children can still provide economic, emotional, and physical care to their elderly parents, family support for them can be considered to exist (Hong & Byun 1998:180-181).

However, at the same time, it is true that the elderly who live apart from their adult children are neglected by their children. The elderly who live alone or with their spouses generally receive limited support from their children (Kim 1999:114). Dispersion is likely to cause less contact, less interaction, and less support to parents from adult children. For example, frequency of contact is an important indicator of care for elderly parents (Hong & Byun 1998:181). A survey conducted by Mo in 2002 revealed that more than one-third (36.9 percent) of the adult children visit their parents only once every 6 months or once a year (Mo 1999:110-111). Considering the fact that Korea is a small nation, this figure for frequency of contact is quite low.

An increased number of Korean elderly, especially those who are living apart from their children, suffer from poverty, health, loss of social roles, and socio-psychological alienation in comparison to persons who are living with their adult children (Kim 1999:116). Furthermore, some elderly who are living alone suffer from serious financial difficulties because of their children's indifference. The changed traditional notion of filial responsibility has resulted in growing numbers of the elderly being without income (Shin & Shaw 2003:333).

In the past, there were fewer problems for the elderly because, while they lived under the same roof as their children, most elderly received financial and emotional support from their children. In Korea, family support is positively related to co-residence. While, in a Western ideal, the elderly are independent and reluctant to be a burden on their children, in the Korean community, they prefer to live with their children because they still place great value on filial responsibility (Hu & Chou 2000:227). Thus, the decline of co-residence with elderly parents is one clear indication of weakening parent care in Korean society.

2.5.2 Limitations of other support systems

If adult children cannot fulfil the supportive role towards their elderly parents, then it is important to explore the current financial resources of the elderly and the role of other support programs. However, the economic situation of the elderly is one of deprivation and other support systems are extremely limited.

2.5.2.1 Financial resources of the elderly

In traditional agrarian societies, the elderly were able to maintain economic productivity for a greater portion of their lifetimes. With industrialisation, retirement as an institution became a widespread reality. The elderly persons in Korea are forced to retire from their occupations at a stipulated age (Park *et al* 2003:81-85). The institution of mandatory retirement has made a significant impact on the economic well-being of the elderly. Whereas economic growth during the last four decades has fostered a greater potential of the aged for independence from adult children, many employees still have not made preparations for old age.

In the past, when the elderly population depended on the family support system, they had no financial problems in their later lives whether they were economically stable or not. However, today it is difficult to expect a family support system that fully cares for the elderly under the same roof (Choi & Chang 2002:31). As a result, the elderly without support from their children are suffering with serious financial problems (Kim & Choi 2003:116).

The development of the ideologies of individualism and the absence of the traditional practice of filial piety has resulted in the growth of the nuclear family. In the increased nuclear family, some of the elderly population who did not prepare for their welfare are living with economic problems due to the

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disinterest of their adult children and society.

2.5.2.2 Social welfare program for the elderly

Historically, the Korean government has developed a welfare policy for the elderly based on the principle of "family first, then the government" (Kim 1999:120). The social welfare program is not adequately developed and has relied on the family care system for the elderly, so that the current older generations cannot live with only the benefit of the social welfare system (Yoon *et al* 2000:132; Bengtson & Putney 2000:273).

Until the 1970s there were pensions that were only available to employees of the state: civil servants, the military personnel, and public school teachers who had worked for more than 20 years in each working area. The proportion of people aged 55 and over receiving the benefit of these contributory old-age pensions is only 3.4 per cent (Kim & Park 2003:164).

In the private sector, the Korean pension program was enacted in 1973. Yet it was not implemented by government until 1988, some 15 years later (Kim & Park 2003:181). However, even after it was implemented, the National Pension program (a public program) has two disadvantages for the elderly. Firstly, many people working in the informal and agricultural sectors are not included in this pension program. Secondly, it is only possible to receive a pension when one has paid contributions for at least for 20 years. Therefore, many elderly, who have not worked in formal sectors and have not paid for 20 years, are not currently eligible for benefits of the pension program. Only very few (less than 5 percent) of the elderly receive a state pension (Yoon *et al* 2000:132-133; Bengtson & Putney 2000:277).

2.5.3 Intergenerational conflicts in family support

2.5.3.1 Values of elderly parents regarding family support

When the percentage of Korean elderly who live alone or with their spouse increases, the question may arise about family support: "in the actual living arrangement, does the Korean elderly who live with their spouse or alone really not to want to live with their adult children?"

Table 4. Current and Preferred Living Arrangement by the Elderly (Unit:%)
(Mo 2002:100)

Preferred arrangement	Living with the adult children	Living with couple or alone	Living with single Children	Others
Current practice	41.6	42.8	10.7	4.9
Ideal	76.3	18.3	0.3	5.1

Table 4 presents the results of a survey carried out by Mo (2002:98-102) and might seem to provide the answer to the question. In the study, 41.6 percent of respondents currently live with their adult children. However, 76.3 percent of respondents actually want to live with their adult children. The reason that many of the 42.8 percent's participants who lived independently responded that they wanted to live with their children and yet did not was because of unavoidable circumstances, such as the departure of adult children to seek higher education or employment.

Following the survey, many elderly parents today still anticipate receiving support from their children, under the same roof if possible, or should they face difficult situations, such as the death of spouse or severe illness. The traditional Eastern Asian culture of filial piety whereby the adult children show respect and care for their elderly parents has lost its value (Park 2003:62). While the elderly parents in Western society usually do not expect support from their adult children in their later life, the elderly in Korea tend to expect to obtain care from their children (Mabry *et al* 2004:97).

On the part of some elderly, the notion of co-residence is still upheld. More elderly parents than the younger generation indicate stronger social norms, favouring joint living arrangements. The notion of the elderly living with children gives a somewhat nostalgic image of a happy and well-cared for life in which the old people are surrounded by their caring offspring. However, this living arrangement seems not to have been extended out of genuine concern and affection.

Considering that Korean culture pursues a Western culture based on individualism, it might be expected for the elderly to alone live independently without any financial or emotional support from their adult children. However, currently, some older generations expect to depend on their adult children in their later life, so they have hardly prepared for their well-being.

2.5.3.2 Values of adult children regarding family support

Filial piety has been the built-in cultural norm that favours secure support and an honoured status for the elderly. As the important values in modern society change to freedom and independence from the traditional norm regarding filial responsibility, adult children are unwilling to sacrifice their own needs to support their elderly parents. Recent evidence indicates that only 20.5 percent of adult children believe that the children are primarily responsible for the emotional and financial well being of elderly parents, as compared to 83.8 percent of elderly parents (Chung 1998:251, 383).

As a result of the large generational differences produced by the drastic social changes following the Korean War, Korean younger generations are more functionally, economically, socially, and psychologically independent than older generations. At the same time, swift transitions such as industrialisation and demographic change of population aging made it difficult for adult children to care for their parents (Bengtson & Putney 2000:276).

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A growing number of adult children will be less able to provide support for their elderly parents than their parents did in the past. With rapid changes in social circumstances for family support, the younger generations' tendency for individualistic pursuit might play the most important part in the decline of family support for the aged.

2.5.3.3 Intergenerational conflicts regarding family support

Mabry, Giarrusso, and Bengtson (2004:96) elucidate the process of intergenerational family conflict in the following statements: "intergenerational ambivalence connotes contradictions in relationships both at the psychological level, where people experience contradictory feelings, motivations, and thought; and at the sociological level, where social norms, roles, and statuses come into conflict in intergenerational family relations." According to this view, traditional filial piety for supporting the elderly tends to bring about conflict with younger generations in their pursuit of the convenience of individual life in the rapid social change for family support (Yoon *et al* 2000:129).

While the younger generation had learned resources and methods of life from their parents through previous generations, today they have a tendency to move into a new cultural pattern and reverse prior mechanisms of socialisation (Bengtsen 1989:31). Following the traditional East Asian ethos, norms of filial piety in Korea, which were more clearly articulated, tend to be individually negotiated for the happiness of individual members among younger generations (Hong & Byun 1998:189).

In the face of rapid social change, some Korean younger generations feel that they cannot meet the expectations of some of the elderly with regard to traditional filial responsibility. Younger persons do not attempt to understand their parent's psychological distress towards their children in view of the absence of traditional family support (Park 2003:62-63). This gives rise to

conflict between the elderly, who did not prepare for such social change, and the younger generation, who have lived in such times of change.

2.5.4 Intergenerational conflicts and loneliness of the elderly

2.5.4.1 An understanding of loneliness

Loneliness is involved in the experience of having contact with family or friends. Loneliness can be illustrated as persons having trouble communicating with family members or companions (Segrin 1998:227-228). It is associated with numerous problems in social and personal relationships in the life of humans.

Deutsch (1998:116) identifies loneliness as an "essentially social category that is experienced as a keenly felt, unwanted disengagement from others." According to his definition, loneliness is an emotional separation that results from the loss or lack of a sustaining social bond. Loneliness arises when there is an eagerly felt sense that "one ought not to be alone in this particular situation."

There are several causes contributing to loneliness, and these can be separated into two dimensions, namely precipitating and maintaining factors. Precipitating factors frequently involve changes in one's social life, such as the death of an intimate someone, leaving home, divorce or separation, and breaking up with a lover or friends. The other aspect, maintaining factors, can prolong or continue loneliness. Factors such as bashfulness, having no sense of social skills, and a low self-esteem could contribute to loneliness (Cultrona 1982:294-297).

Loneliness affects every aspect of life and can eat away our vitality and erode our desires and dreams. It brings about a sense of emptiness and futility that

nothing seems to dispel. Whatever the cause, its experience is painful in the extreme.

2.5.4.2 Loneliness and old age

Loneliness is not an experience that is limited exclusively to the elderly. Loneliness can arise in present society for people of all ages, from infancy to late adulthood. In a sense, throughout the whole human experience, loneliness occurs in combination with various circumstances and conditions (Gibson 2000:xiii). Simultaneously, however, loneliness is a problem which can become a genuine crisis for older persons because they experience many losses, such as physical loss, alienation from family or friends, and a loss of social role (Payne & McFadden 1994:13).

Loneliness of the elderly seems to be an especially Western trend. In South East Asia, according to filial piety based on the Confucian moral, the average Asians genuinely believed that old age marked the beginning of a higher and more respected status. It brings about the attitude of respect for the elderly and the elderly were cared for emotionally and financially by their families until death. In such a context, loneliness was a hardly known circumstance for the elderly in Korea and other Asian nations (Levete 1993:1).

However, due to rapid social changes, the status of the elderly and the extended family system in Korea declined in recent decades, so that some elderly began to experience loneliness because of not obtaining respect and support from their children. They indulged themselves in undermining their self-respect and self-regard.

2.5.4.3 The loneliness of Korean elderly in intergenerational conflicts

Yoon, Eun, and Park (2000:128) articulate the competing cultural dilemmas of Korean society about individualism and familism for family support in the

following statements:

> Korea is currently an amalgamation of Western and traditional Korean cultures. Norms and values governing family relationships in Korean society today consist of both the traditional and the modern. The notion of filial piety has lost much of its power in promoting the exchange and support between parents and their children.

Within such a trend, the expectations of some Korean elderly who want to have three generations living together and obtain their children's support in old age changed to disappointment and frustration due to disregard by their adult children. Today some Korean elderly are marginalised and isolated from their adult children and society.

For the elderly, such rapid change was an unpredicted and terrible situation. As a result, they were likely to experience feelings of dislocation, effective isolation, and loneliness with regard to their children and society. Loneliness of the elderly may arise when they keenly feel a lacking of social, intimate relations in their later life (Mullins *et al* 1989:253). Some Korean elderly are not satisfactorily prepared in this aspect of their lives concerning family support. The Korean elderly who want more interpersonal respect and support from their children do not receive as much as they desire, and thus they run the risk of loneliness.

Unexpected change of the family support system has resulted in the loneliness of the elderly. Some elderly believed that their children would live together with them with support, respect, and love. At least, for some of them, they were the ones who ought not to be alone in the Korean family system. However, practically, they are recognising that their children cannot afford to provide family support for them, even if they intended to do so. It is a dreadful experience for those who have eagerly sacrificed for their children their whole lives and could not imagine such change. Alienation from adult children who are not practising filial duty causes the elderly to feel that their lives are no longer

worthwhile. Such a sense of uselessness and alienation contributes to their emotional loneliness (Jeong 2001:256). There are isolated, rejected, or unhappy feelings for some Korean elderly in the depths of loneliness.

2.6 Voices of the elderly: the empirical interpretation for their image, family support, and loneliness.

This empirical research with the elderly focuses on gaining a better understanding of my literature research on the subject of the loneliness of the elderly and the intergenerational conflict for family support between them and their adult children. It concerns the circumstances and thoughts about their image, family support, and loneliness from their perspective. Although the participants in these conversations cannot claim to be representative of the general population, there are certain advantages in conducting in-depth interviews with a small group.

2.6.1 The selection process

The stories presented are based on an original, in-depth interview of a small sample of five elderly individuals, who ranged in age from 68 to 77. Table 5 shows the detailed profile of the elderly as conversational partners. They all have different backgrounds and ideas in their lives and were selected from people who were attending Incheon Second Presbyterian Church in Incheon, Korea.

Table 5.   Profiles of Conversational Partners

Code	Sex	Age	Martial status	Living arrangement	Children (No)	Educati-on
E1	Male	72	Married	Living	3	High

				with spouse		school
E2	Male	68	Married	Living with spouse	4	Element-ary
E3	Female	77	Widowed	Living with children	3	College
E4	Female	73	Married	Living with spouse	4	High school
E5	Male	75	Widowed	Living alone	3	Element-ary

In order to select the co-researchers, first of all, I asked Gun Young Lee, who is the senior pastor of the church, to introduce me to ten elderly persons who have the adult children. I met with the elderly a total of ten times. Upon meeting them, I introduced my process of interviewing and the project, and showed them a consent form. Where applicants did not know or understand certain words used in the form, I explained the meaning to them. Some of the elderly who had been involved in conflict with their adult children regarding co-residence did not want to participate in the interview process, so that I attempted to persuade them to participate at the interview. The pastor helped me from the beginning of this interviewing process. He endeavoured to make intimate communication between the elderly and me during the meeting.

Participants had various experiences, family trees, contexts, and thoughts in their lives, so I would be able to hear diverse voices from them. In this process, several criteria were used for the selection of five conversational partners out of ten persons. It did not matter whether the adult children lived with their elderly parents or not. The criteria for selecting participants were, firstly, that there was no age boundary. The only limitation for age was that they were at least 65 because my research field was for loneliness of Korean elderly regarding intergenerational conflict. Secondly, however, I considered the gender of the participants and chose three males and two females to make up the five elderly.

Thirdly, all the participants are Christian because my thesis is based on reflection on family support problems from a Christian-pastoral perspective. Lastly, most participants suffered from alienation from their adult children or had an expectation that their children would care for them, with the exception of one participant who did not want to live with her children and was satisfied with life. The reason that I selected her was to hear different stories and voices about the intergenerational conflicts in family support.

2.6.2 Interviewing the co-researchers

2.6.2.1 Interview process

The interviews with the five elderly took place during a two month period, with each meeting lasting two hours, from November to December 2004 in Incheon, Korea. At first, it was difficult for them to discuss the stories of intergenerational conflicts in family support with their children. Because although the elderly had struggled with family conflicts through their lives, they had a tendency to be reluctant to talk about the experience because they believed that it was a great shame that elderly parents do not receive filial responsibility from their children (Yang & Risenblatt 2000:365). However, as I continued the interview process, the participants opened their hearts and showed me great co-operation, providing me with more detailed stories. In addition, during the limited time of two months, I could freely meet with them several times without any restrictions on deciding on interview times because they were sincere and were not active participants in the labour market at the time of the interviews.

The interviews with the conversation partners occurred in several places. First of all, according to their wishes, I decided on a meeting schedule and a place, such as a park, a quiet office, or their homes. When I conducted an interview, I felt that I became a part of the life of the elderly throughout their stories. Their stories reminded me of my parents. When I, as an adult child, heard the stories

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about the history, family, current feelings towards their adult children, and several occurrences from them, the stories did not only belong to them alone, but also to me. I could feel, understand, and experience their lives through their stories. Thus, I was convinced that I became part of the elderly.

I tried to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of my co-researchers. No one has been identified by name in my thesis. The names in this study were signified by 'E,' the first letter of 'Elderly,' and a number, such as E1 or E2, owing to the convenience of research processing. After completing the research and writing the thesis, all materials such as written documents and audiotapes were appropriately disposed of.

2.6.2.2 Unstructured conversational interviews

I made use of conversational interviews, which are unstructured and emphasise that the interviews are conversations, allowing the interviewer to discover the world of the interviewee, in order to have interaction with my participants. In this model, the interviewee stands for a conversational partner, in comparison to interviewing from a positivist model, which denies the significance of cultural distinction, so that there is little room for individual voice (Rubin & Rubin 1995:7-12, 32).

Another reason that I employed unstructured conversational interviews was because its aim is to describe a guided conversation, to turn to the 'flexible strategy of discovery' and bring forward information that the researcher had not planned to ask for (Mishler 1985:27-28). In this process, not only answers to the contents of the questioning in the form of unstructured conversation are advanced, but also answers to those questions that emerge after hearing the response of the co-researcher to the planned questions. I believe that the use of unstructured interviews allowed me to share much more detailed and open-ended conversations with the interviewees, and to explore more subtle issues that may not be readily captured by the tightly structured questions typically

used in larger samples.

2.6.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

In order to obtain more particular information, I also made use of semi-structured questions in my interviews with the elderly. In this format, the interviewer can direct the conversational agenda by introducing certain topics. For example, the interviewer might ask the following question of a graduate student, "What happened when you discussed your thesis with your advisor?" or "Are you prepared to do qualitative research?" (Rubin & Rubin 1995:5).

In terms of the interviews with the elderly, I questioned each in a similar way about the loneliness of the elderly and their conflict with their children. First of all, I approached at the topic with unstructured questions to listen the elderlys' own stories, emotions, and current thoughts. Then I moved on to semi-structured questions in order to draw out specific themes, for instance, I questioned them regarding their views on the following topics: 1) the image and status of the elderly; 2) family support for the elderly; and 3) conflict of the elderly regarding family support by adult children and their own loneliness.

For the use of semi-structured conversational interview, Gillham (2000:65) mentions two points in the process on which the interviewer should be clear:

(1) What are the key issues are in the research investigation; and
(2) What will *best* be answered in a face-to-face interview?

2.6.2.4 Recording

I used audio recording in interviews to preserve the stories of the elderly, and after the interviews I transcribed the content of the recordings. When I had a meeting with my co-researchers, I recorded their speaking in simple and important points. My co-researchers were the elderly, so sometimes I did not

understand their manner of speaking. It was thus required that I record the stories to minimise disruption during the meetings while still retaining the stories themselves.

Considering the characteristics of my co-researchers, I utilised videotape, with their permission, in case some of their non-verbal conversation was missed. From time to time, they expressed non-verbal conversation, such as a pause or lamentation in their face and behaviour. When I watched the video after the interview, I could not miss the hidden thinking and emotion in their stories.

2.6.3 Hearing the stories

The data gathered from the conversations with the elderly can be categorised into three primary areas:

1. *The image and status of the elderly*: Participants were asked to think about and rate their beliefs regarding others' perception of the current image and status of the elderly, especially those of the young generation.

2. *Family support for the elderly*: Data collected in this area is important in relating intergenerational conflicts that the elderly confront with their children. Co-researchers were asked open-ended questions as to their situations and thoughts on family support for the elderly.

3. *Conflict of the elderly for family support by adult children and their loneliness*: Participants were asked about the conflicts with their adult children with relation to family support. Respondents were also asked about the loneliness of the elderly followed by conflict with their children.

1. Image and status of the elderly

E1 speaks about his experience of having been ignored by the younger generation, and he complains that people are no longer respectful of the elderly:

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We have a right to be respected. I see this lack of respect all the time now in the streets. The other day, some youngsters were riding by on a motorcycle, and they shouted at me, "Get aside, old fool!" If I were younger, I would have kicked them in the butt. Today, there is little honour, no respect for the elderly. I am not saying this because I want to be served; I am saying it because it is part of the basic ethics of a human beings. We must stand up for ourselves.

E2 also talks about his experiences and how badly he was insulted by the younger generation while he was looking for a job. He expresses his grief over the change of social recognition towards the elderly:

After my retirement, I looked everywhere for a new job. In terms of health, I was still confident even though I was a retiree. But there weren't many openings. Once I went to an apartment complex to apply for a job as a security guard. While I was being interviewed by the security manager, some women barged into the office. They told the manager angrily, with their sleeves rolled up and their hands on their hips. "Don't you remember? We couldn't catch a thief right under our noses because the old security guard couldn't catch up with the young thief. How on earth can this old guy do his job properly?" Then one woman turned and said to me "Why don't you stay at home? That suits you. You are over the hill." I've never had such a humiliating experience. After that, I haven't thought of getting a job. People say courtesy has disappeared in this world, but the times have changed too much. It's hard to swallow.

E3 talks about the change of the young generation's recognition towards the elderly, at the same time she admits that the times have also changed:

When we were children, we didn't interfere in an adult's affairs or talk back to them. We obeyed them unconditionally. Nowadays young people make their voices heard. They don't listen to the elderly. It's merciful that young

people don't totally ignore the elderly. There is a huge gap between the two sides. The young are really free spirits. What are we supposed to do? The elderly might try to accommodate young people. It doesn't work when older people tell young people what to do. It's hopeless. The times has changed like this…

E4 grieves at the image of weak old people. Simultaneously, she relates her hope for the positive image of the elderly:

The young generation thinks we are so weak and sick, so we are regarded as being in need. The mass media thinks the same thing. They are telling we are useless and just killing time in the parks. Nobody takes care of us, neither our children nor our society. Nowadays people think the elderly are waiting for the last moment of their days, without any hope. But we are not just sitting around doing nothing. We also have things to think about and hopes for our future. We'd like to get some credit for giving our hands to the society and homes as we used to do in our youth.

E5 reminisces about the superior image of the elderly in the past. He also grieves that the elderly became useless figures in Korean society and homes in the present day, identifying with E4:

In those old days, there were things the elderly could do. They engaged in farming, and taught young people what to do. The old people had authority over the young in town. They were the heads of their families. Nobody could rebel against the elderly. Everybody obeyed and followed them, but now everything has changed. The elderly have nothing to do. I don't think I could do any big favour for my children and grandchildren, but above all things they don't need me. I don't expect any reverence from them. Who could ever image this kind of age…? For what reason?

2. Family support for the elderly

E1 is estranged from his children, and he is experiencing emotional emptiness and financial difficulty. However, he longs to live with his children and grandchildren:

> Children are only your children when they are in your arms. Once they become grown-ups, they don't care whether their parents die of hunger or freeze to death. I live off a small pension from the government and I sell gums in the street. I'm not sure I can survive this winter, because I don't have any money for heating. In spite of that I still miss my children. I desperately want to see my grandchildren. I expect them every moment to drop by or call me on a big holiday such as New Year's Day or Choosuk.[14] I wish I could live with them even if it's only for a short time.

At present, E2 lives independently; however, he wants to live with his children in his later years:

> I don't even think about asking my children for any favours. Nevertheless, they don't get in touch with us. My wife and I are very sorry and saddened by it. We only think of our children, we can't do anything about it, though. I just blame the times…that have changed. We're wondering whether we could ever live together with our children in later life. We think their urban lifestyle is so hectic that we can't keep up with them. We've lived in the country most of our lives. We are worried about it tremendously.

E3 has the satisfaction of living with her children. At the same time, she expresses her thanks to her son and daughter-in-law because she recognises the rarity of this way of supporting parents because of the rapid change of the times:

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[14] Choosuk, sometimes called the "Korean Thanksgiving Day," is a harvest moon festival when most family members return to their hometowns to pay respect to their ancestors and prepare traditional offerings.

I've lived with my eldest son's family, who else can I live with? I see my grandchildren's cute tricks. On Sundays, my other son's family comes to see me. Though it's a bit of a hustle and bustle, that's fine, isn't it? I'd say it's a lie, there's no inconvenience when people live together. At first there were some conflicts, but everything is much better now. Everybody in the family has to make an effort. My son and daughter-in-law treat me with respect. They are really nice, not like the young people of today. I'm just thankful for that.

Exceptionally, E4 prefers living by herself to living with her children:

I have three daughters who are all married. For the time being, my husband and I live on our own. My eldest daughter lives nearby and comes and goes often. As for me, I prefer living by myself to living with my daughter's family. I think living with them causes inconveniences to everyone. Even if I survive my husband or I get sick, I'm not going to live with them. I don't want to be dependent on my children or show my ugliness to them either. In case I have some difficulties when I live on my own, so I'm going to go to a nursing home.

E5 is temporarily living alone because of his son's financial difficulty. However, he talks about the hope of living with his children. He says: "As long as possible, I'd like to live with my children, except that there's no alternative. Living alone is too hard on me, both mentally and financially." And he goes on to say:

Who wants to go to a nursing home when they have children? It's all up to how the children make up their minds. I believe that children must support their parents when they are old. We gave birth to them and raised them. Even if parents and children hate each other, no one should cut off their family line. Children must obey their parents and have them close no matter how great the children may be. That's filial duty, isn't it? Now I live

by myself, but my son will bring me to his home to care for me as soon as… his living situation improves. Who on earth can sit back and watch when their parents are in difficult situations? The children should take care of their parents, shouldn't they?

3. Conflicts of the elderly for family support and their loneliness

E1 had expected to get support from his children, but they did not live up to his expectations:

There have been lots of ups and downs in my life. My wife and I were purposeful. The only aim we had was to support our three children. Even though it was terribly hard work… it was our priceless joy. We trusted and believed that our children would care for us in our later life. However, it was just what we thought. Then life became worse. Nobody cared for us. Now, we don't believe in or trust anybody. We get a small… old-age pension that is impossible to live on... At last we are getting older. I have stopped thinking about a social life. I am not the same as I was before. This is a tragedy for us. I worry about my future, as this is a very hard situation.

I couldn't bear the thought that I was suddenly abandoned by my children and lived a useless existence. It was hard to take that I was ashamed of my wretched life. I have to do whatever I can do to buy food, but I don't have many options. Early in the morning I leave home after breakfast, and pass the time in the park and come home after dark. These days I sigh first when I open my eyes in bed. What shall I do today? This is not a life! I wish I could die instantly. Taking my life is not in my hands, though. I lament my miserable life even in my dreams.

E2 lives with his wife in a small town, and he is in conflict with his children because of lack of interaction:

Living in the country, just two of us, is really lonely. What consolation is there for us in our declining years? Just seeing our children and grandchildren would make all the difference in the world. But my wife and I rarely have a chance to see them. My children are too busy. My son and daughter-in-law are a two-income couple. They seem to come home very late, and their children are also all tied up with their schools and after school programs. We just guess that's why they can't come to visit us often or phone us either. They come just on Choosuk each year, and they are always behind in their work, so they leave quickly. What a life!

E3 experienced some conflict with her daughter-in-law at the beginning of her son's marriage, but now she has a good relationship with her daughter-in-law and they have come to understand each other. She also stays in touch with her other children. She is very satisfied with her life:

There were a number of conflicts between my daughter-in-law and me when my son got married. We started to live together, and, as a mother-in-law, I thought I had something to teach my daughter-in-law. However, she seemed to regard any advice or help from me as too much interference. The conflict went on for a while. At that time my husband was alive, so I thought I'd rather not live with them. As time went on, my daughter-in-law and I started meeting halfway. We passed the crisis. Now I'm glad that we're getting on well.

I've felt lonely sometimes since my husband passed away, but I enjoy living with my son's family. Also, I keep in touch with my other children… and they come to visit me every week. I see my school friends sometimes. All they talk about is that life is hard and they feel lonely, but I'm really fine with my life. I take care of my grandchildren and do some house chores, because my daughter-in-law goes to work. Even though I'm tired I like the way of life. Sometimes, I go along when my son's family goes on vacation.

E4 insists that living apart from her children is better, which differs from the opinions of the other four elderly:

I don't expect anything from my children. I think I did… my duty since I gave birth to them and raised them. Now my children are grown-ups. I need to do something for myself. I'm sure there's no problem when parents and children respect each other and their way of life.

'Loneliness.' I don't feel it now. My husband and I have lived by ourselves since our children's weddings. We travel sometimes. I also go to the welfare centre for the elderly in my neighbourhood to learn Paduk[15] for fun and enjoy other hobbies as well. It pays off, you know. When I reached middle age I started saving money for a rainy day. From time to time we see our children and grandchildren. Things can't be better than now. I'm relaxed and happy.

E5 thinks his children are inconsiderate because he has been placed in the situation of being alone:

Actually I had no choice but to live alone. My son's business had gone bankrupt, and he wanted to move to another city where the cost of living is lower. What could I say when he said he would come back with some money? I hope he organises things well, so he can take me there soon. In the last year, he has called me several times, but he hasn't asked me to come. Although I try to understand his difficulties, I can't help but feel… rejected. My other children do… the same… None of them has asked me to live with them, even though they are quite well-off. I've led a hard life to raise them, but they don't care about me now. I think that my sons treated me unfairly. I kept wondering when the day would come when I could live with my son's family again. I became weak. I hate the whole world. I am

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[15] Paduk is a Korean checkers game.

lonely and pathetic and unsure about my future. This situation is dragging me down day by day.

2.6.4 Interpreting data

This section serves to interpret the data expressed by the stories of the participants in order to examine some of the thoughts about the image and the problems of the elderly in family support. The following are the thematic interpretations of sentiments from the elderly:

1. The image and status of the elderly is declining in contemporary society.

All of the conversational partners allude to a declining image and status of the elderly. The parties concerned lay bare their puzzlement and difficulties with regard to the drastically changing image of the elderly as well as the rapidly changing Korean society. Most of them feel that such changes are unacceptable and dreadful. Especially, E1 and E2 relate their experiences of having been insulted by younger persons. They lament that they were not supposed to be treated like that. As is shown by my research into the change to a negative evaluation of the elderly from people in chapter 2.4.1, most conversational partners see that the unexpected decline of the elderly's status has been prominent in recent years.

As E4 and E5 reminisce about the authority of the elderly in earlier times and mourn the change of their role from provider to dependent, most participants do not attempt to adapt themselves to their position. This goes particularly for E3, who admits that the change of status of the elderly was an inevitable phenomenon, and she suggests that the elderly themselves might be eager to adjust society's changed image of themselves. It might not be easy thinking and behaving as the elderly who have lived in a hierarchical social structure with difficult times throughout the century, such as the last years of Japanese

colonial rule and Korean War. I particularly value the sentiment of E3 because it might be seen as a more mature attitude, which will reflect and enhance the image and status of the elderly in society.

2. Expectation for family support is still available to some Korean elderly.

Four of the five conversational partners are living with a spouse or alone. Only E3 is living with her eldest son and daughter-in-law. Although, at present, E1, E2, and E5 are living apart from their children, they anticipate living together with them in their later years. E1 is feeling distressed because of being disregarded by his children and E2, who lives with his spouse in the country, worries about living with his children later due to the adjustment of a hectic lifestyle in the city. In spite of the difficulty of intergenerational relationships and the concerns about living arrangements, both of them are expecting to live with their adult children at a later stage. In addition, E5, who is temporarily living apart from his children, has a strong desire to live with his children as soon as possible.

There is reluctance in Korea among some of the elderly to go to nursing homes and stay there for the rest of their lives, whereas in Western culture, staying at a nursing home is a generally acceptable option (Kim 1999:390-391). It is simply that the elderly prefer living with their children rather than spending their old age in any other place because they take getting financial and emotional support for granted as long as their children are there. In other words, the expectation of living with one's children signifies that the elderly parents want to extract filial responsibility from their adult children.

However, unlike other participants, E4 who is living apart from her children, articulates the desire to live independently in her later years. She also has a positive attitude towards nursing homes, just like E3. In the future, it is assumed that the preference among the elderly for independent living will increase gradually, as their financial situation improves, and that they will pursue privacy

and free time.

This sentiment is closely related to the conflicts between elderly parents and their adult children in family support, because those who anticipate receiving family support have the potential to cause conflict in the case that their adult children do not support them. For example, in this section E4, who spoke about an independent lifestyle, has little conflict with her children in the next conversation. In addition, she feels less loneliness than the other participants, who maintain a dependent attitude towards their children. This means that if the elderly does not anticipate obtaining support from their children, there is potential for solving many of the problems and conflicts between parents and children which occur in the family support system in Korea. However, as mentioned above, this is also not an easy option for the elderly. It is difficult for the elderly to admit to a declining image of themselves.

3. Conflicts of the elderly in family support and their loneliness are not easy to manage

Of the five conversational partners, three participants, namely E1, E2, and E5, are struggling with intergenerational relationships in family support and feelings of loneliness. E1 felt betrayed in conflicts with his children and is stressed about being lonely; he also experiences financial difficulty and the disregard of his children. E2 is almost out of touch with his children and grandchildren. This makes him and his wife miss them very much. He hopes to live with his children's family later, although the intergenerational relationships are not good and the idea of living together imposes a burden on him due to the difficulty of urban life. In my opinion, it would be unadvisable for him to live with his adult children later because there is a poor relationship between the generations. However, he strongly believes that his children will suggest living together soon. This shows that, in some areas, there is still an intense desire on the part of the elderly to get support from one's children in their later life. E5 is also experiencing severe loneliness after separating from his son's family.

Unlike these three participants, E4 agrees that parents and children might lead independent ways of life, apart from each other. She also solves her conflicts in this regard. As she has an independent way of life, she has prepared for her well-being from middle age. She does not feel loneliness even though she does not live with her children.

Conflicts in terms of family support in Korea originate from the traditional culture of filial duty which emphasizes the responsibility of family support from children. On the part of the elderly parents, they feel conflict when their children do not practice the filial responsibility that they expect. In terms of parental support, the elderly in Korea feel the difficulty of emotional separation, which is far from the pattern of the traditional supporting system. Some elderly in Korea like E1, E2, and E5, express their loneliness, which stems from the idea that they should have been cared for emotionally or financially by their children. For them, alienation from their children could definitely be a hard experience to handle.

2.7 Summary

In traditional Korean society the family, especially the adult children, has been the major provider of economic and emotional assistance to the elderly. However, during the last four decades, a number of remarkable changes have occurred in the socio-economic and cultural spheres, namely rapid industrialisation, demographic change of the elderly, and the advent of Western culture. These changes have impinged on the family support system and have resulted in intergenerational conflicts in Korea.

Intergenerational family conflicts show that elderly parents and their adult children tend to disagree on a certain values, which may create friction among them (Mabry *et al* 2004:95-96). In Korea, the biggest issue in terms of

intergenerational conflicts between aged parents and their adult children result from differences of values regarding the family support system. These conflicts among generations have caused the elderly, who had not organised their welfare for their post-retirement life because they had suffered absolute poverty in order to fully support their families over the past decades, to experience only alienation from their adult children. These findings regarding the intergenerational conflicts of the Korean elderly in family support proved to be quite relevant throughout the qualitative interviewing with the elderly.

In Korea, one of the biggest reason for intergenerational conflict in family support for the elderly between the elderly and their children is the problem of communication (Kim 1989:34). More specifically speaking, there is an increasingly huge difference of perspective between the expectations of each generation and the reality in family support. On the part of some elderly parents, their desire and request to be respected and cared for is a natural expectation, according to traditional custom. On the part of some adult children, such filial piety pressure, based on an authoritarian style, is unacceptable according to their reasonable thinking, which based on Western culture. Unfortunately, the two generations rarely communicate with one another in contemporary Korean society.

In this process, such dysfunctional communication styles need "open dialogue" between the elderly parents and children. Open dialogue allows for both elderly parents and adult children to enter the conversation in their own way. In open dialogue, an important rule is that both parties have the right to comment (Seikkula & Olson 2003:410). Since open dialogue is "a less structured and more spontaneous kind of discussion," it facilitates free talking and listening and allows both groups to understand each other (Guilfoyle 2003:332).

Of course, it is not easy to bring about conversation, understanding, and reconciliation in the conflicts between Korean elderly parents and adult children through open dialogue. However, I believe, open dialogue is recommended to

reflect Korean elderly parents' authoritarian communication style as being demanding, admonishing, and criticising, and to generate new opportunities to reproduce the children's understanding of their parents' experiences and thinking in their life.