

An Inquiry of the Meaning of Leisure in the Lives of Female Senior Citizens

Hang-Jin Na
Jungwon University, Korea

Abstract

This study was conducted to observe objectively the leisure of female senior citizens' lives and to delve into its meanings. The participant observation method and in-depth interviews were conducted on 13 elder females who participated of their own accord in this study. Data from the observations and interviews were analyzed using the theme analysis method. The results indicated that leisure functioned as a mechanism that the elder could experience perspective transformation by being involved in leisure activities. Leisure was accompanied by the need for continuous learning in order to fully enjoy leisure activities. Leisure activities could form a network for social support relationships. Leisure could give great pleasure of immersion to the aged. This study concluded that the female senior citizens improved their daily lives by getting involved in leisure activities. Leisure was a powerful mechanism for successful aging.

Key words

successful aging, leisure, leisure activities, continuous learning

Introduction

We are in the midst of experiencing big changes in many scenes of lives due to the increasement of life expectancy, overall improvement of the standard of living, the enforcement of a national pension, and the supplementation of medical insurance. And this trend will continue well into the future. These phenomena bring about social interest to marginal groups (senior citizens, women, teenagers) of our society who were isolated from the center of life. But these marginal groups do not get enough benefit from cultural environments (leisure or recreation) to improve the quality of life. This situation provides us important

discussion in terms of both social integration and social justice. Unfair discrimination of leisure could become a hot issue by connecting with the quality of life.

The notion that leisure is appropriate to the privileged class or the wealthy class has been gradually changing. Modern life styles were not divided by just work and leisure but were made of many complicated factors around us (Parker, 1976/1998). This implies important potentialities into the leisure of later life.

However, most elder people excluding some groups who enjoy their leisure are isolated from leisure. The present situation also becomes the cause of social pathology. The leisure lives of elder citizens in Korea are focused on negative and nonproductive activities like watching TV, taking a walk, taking a nap, playing Korean poker in senior centers (C. Y. Cho, 2003; J. S. Huh, 2002; Jeon, 2007; Korean Gallop Institute, 1990; G. Y. Lee, 2002; Na, 2003). The terminology leisure is not familiar to the senior citizens yet. It seems to us that leisure is still closely acquainted with young people or the people who have vested rights. Because the senior citizens in Korea have lived in the culture that put priority to the value of work than the value of leisure, they are lacking of various and meaningful leisure experiences in their lives. And they did not have enough opportunities to enjoy their leisure and do not have enough leisure competency to use their leisure. Additionally they are being excluded from labor and social work that they have valued a lot.

Nevertheless, there is a prospect that senior citizens with economic power, talents and attainments, and good health will grow in the near future (Korean National Statistics of Korea, 2005). It is forecasted that this generation will use leisure as a commodity (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2005). Fortunately this generation has good conditions to make more practical application of leisure than any other generations. Conditions like much time after retirement, many activities to upgrade the quality of life, state of mind to do so etc make later lives to be in accord with leisure. Thus it is very important that older individuals can make full use of leisure meaningfully and of great worth so far. Security for leisure has a powerful effect on the quality of later lives as much as Income Security or guaranteed Medicare Services.

There have been many studies relative to the leisure of later lives. However much of the established inquiries have been oriented on survey

or statistical research. These are mainly concerned with leisure program development (Jeon & Yang, 2009; S. H. Lee, 2002; Son, 2007), the relationship between leisure activities and life satisfaction (Bang, 2009; Park & Cha, 2008), and devices for revitalization of leisure activities (Bae & Suh, 2008; Lee & Song, 2008). Many of them used the survey method in terms of method, but there are very few qualitative research studies using participant observation or in-depth interview like this inquiry (Choi & Oh, 2008; Na, 2006; Park, 2004).

This study was conducted to observe objectively the leisure of female senior citizens who live in a big city and enjoy their leisure lives in the senior welfare center. The method used in this inquiry is a qualitative method using participant observation and in-depth interviews. The inquiry approach in this method is differentiated from other inquiries. In other words, the purposes of this inquiry are to observe objectively the leisure of female senior citizens' lives and to delve into its meanings by ethnographic method. Through this procedure, this researcher eliminates negative prejudices and myths about the leisure of senior citizens. Additionally, this study proposes some implementations so as to improve the quality of life.

Literature Review

Many experts in gerontology have said that the quality of later life is affected by life styles and ways of thinking of one's adolescence, the middle years of one's life or the prime of life. When men grow older and older, they are under bias towards rigidity and cautiousness, attachment to familiar things, a willingness to not open to new ideas and opportunities, so that they cannot easily accept new things (Jassen, 2004; T. H. Kim & Y. S. Kim, 1999; McGuire & Boyd, 1996). However senior citizens can meet their personnel needs and get satisfaction in life and improve psychological sense of stability and happiness in life by participating in various leisure activities (C. Y. Cho, 2003; K. Y. Cho, 2005; Kwak, 2002; MacNeil & Teague, 1992; Na, 2004; Suh & Diener, 1995).

Sexual Factors associated with senior citizen's leisure appear as a great factor in most relevant studies. The differences in sexual role and social

role have an influence on leisure activities that depend on the sexual factor. And labor patterns that depend on the sexual factor have an influence on life pattern throughout life. As a result, female senior citizens spend their leisure time mainly in the home or community but male senior citizens enjoy their leisure in outdoor activities such as hobbies, social intercourse, going to nearby parks etc (K. Y. Cho, 2005; Choi & Oh, 2008; K. H. Lee, 2004; Y. J. Lee & S. H. Chung, 2003; Na, 2006; Tinsley & Teaff, 1983). So this author wants to deduce the meanings of leisure activities of female senior citizens who live in senior welfare centers in this inquiry.

We can confirm in international academic studies that leisure contributes to psychological, social, and psycho-motor aspects for certainty. In psychological aspects, McGuire & Boyd (1996) asserted that senior citizens structuralized their leisure to maximize the satisfaction of life, to enhance self-respect, and to reach self-realization. Jassen (2004) said that senior citizens keep their balance in diversity of activities and meet a variety of needs. Leiter & Leiter (1996) asserted that leisure activities in later lives help senior citizens to improve physical health, to offer opportunities to keep in touch with others, and to improve psychological welfare. In other words, leisure activities in later lives help senior citizens to enhance the morale of life and a feeling of satisfaction, to affirm self worth, to promote the function for autonomous life, to grant confidence, and enjoy happy lives.

Leisure activities in later lives are very helpful to social aspects of senior citizens too. Senior citizens perform new roles and alternative activities like leisure activities. And this makes senior citizens to maintain positive self-idea (ego) and minimize the side effects in later lives such as retirement, death of a life partner, loss of parent's role, and decline of income (McCormick, 1993). Bammel & Bammel (1982/1997) asserted that leisure can contribute to society through bonding, solidarity, integration aspects. Especially, there are many precedential studies about leisure devoted in making and maintaining bonding that was shared in the local community (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2005; Kelly, 1996; McCormick, 1993). The needs of senior citizens in wanting to become members of the community to make social networks characterized significantly the value of leisure as a means of social integration.

Leisure activities in later lives are very helpful to the physical aspects

of senior citizens too. According to National Center for Health Statistics (1990) in America, leisure compensates for lack of exercise of senior citizens. And leisure becomes the base of a healthy life. Because the persons in charge of leisure education recognize the role of leisure in later life, exercise programs are very popular in senior welfare centers at home and abroad. Many gerontologists asserted that exercise helps senior citizens to get good muscles, to lower blood pressure and toxins in blood plasma, to keep cholesterol level low, and to increase sensitivity of insulin (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Mundy, 1998; Teague, 1987). Besides these assertions, there are many suggestions that leisure activities can become a good instrument so as to make later lives healthier.

Given the many findings from research inside and outside the country, it is very important that senior citizens weigh how they activate their leisure and social interactions. Through these processes, senior citizens can archive the opportunity to remove loneliness and a sense of isolation and to renew the meaning of later life. Finally, leisure is one good alternative to improve the quality of later life.

Method

Place and Participants for the Study

The site for this study was *satbael* (the morning star in English) senior welfare center located at Y (anonymous) city of Kyungki Province in Korea. The reasons for selecting this place as a site for this study were as follows: First, many participants including senior citizens and staff of the senior center fully understand the purposes of this inquiry and they could give me a hand in administrative and psychological facets of this inquiry. Second, there were many recommendations from famous scholars. Third, it was very comfortable for this researcher to access the site. The research was begun on November, 2008 and finished on February, 2009. This researcher had visited this senior welfare center in advance on 25th October. During this initial visit the researcher explained the value of this research to the head of the senior welfare center and a person in charge of seniors' leisure activities. The personnel promised they would give as much help as needed and other conveniences to the researcher. During the same month, the researcher was introduced to senior citizens of the

center and got approval from them for this study. Then, the researcher informed the participants that their names would be identified as anonymous and personnel information of participants were omitted and facts that participants did not want to make public would be excluded.

References on participants are summarized in Table 1. Participants were all female and they were selected from those who participated in many leisure activities of this senior center and enjoyed successful aging, had recommendations from the staff of the senior center and wanted to participate in this research. They are 13 in total. The ages range from 62 to 81. The academic background was very varied ranging from the uneducated to a university graduate. Eight participants had spouses and the rest lived alone. Once again, the researcher explained the purposes and method of the study and stressed the importance of participation of their own accord. At this time, they gave their consent to researcher’ promise that data from the interviews and participation will not be used for private ends at one’s pleasure.

Table 1. Traits of Population Studies of Participants

No	Age	Sex	Education	Marriage	Numbers of family	Residence	Previous job	Objective health	Remark
1	62	F	MS	Bereaved	5	Apt.	Snack bar	M	.
2	65	"	BS	Married	2	Apt.	Teacher	H	.
3	72	"	HS	Married	3	Row houses	Self-employed	M	.
4	75	"	ES	Bereaved	2	Row houses	Housewife	L	.
5	72	"	MS	Married	2	Apt.	"	H	.
6	70	"	HS	Married	3	Detached house	"	M	.
7	76	"	ES	Married	1	Row houses	Rice cake store	H	.
8	80	"	No schooling	Bereaved	2	Apt.	Farming	H	.
9	81	"	ES	Bereaved	3	Detached house	Housewife	M	.
10	77	"	No schooling	Bereaved	1	Apt.	"	M	.
11	68	"	ES	Married	3	Row houses	Farming	M	.
12	72	"	HS	Married	5	Detached house	Housewife	H	.
13	71	"	MS	Married	4	Apt.	"	M	.
14	75	M	BS	"	2	"	Principal	.	Lecturer
15	34	F	"	"	3	"	.	.	Staff

Note. 1:

- ES = elementary school
- Ms = middle school
- HS = high school
- BS = bachelor

Note. 2 :

- L = low
- M = medium
- H = high

Data Collecting

This researcher used the ethnographic method which is one of the qualitative methods. This method seemed to be helpful to get in-depth information and understanding about the meaning of leisure of a senior citizen who attends the senior welfare center. One of the best ways to understand certain phenomena is to go in that phenomena and participate for a long time and observe that phenomena and communicate with the insiders of the group about what they think or recognize.

The most remarkable features of the ethnographic method are listed as follows: First, the researcher becomes a part of the research through the experience of seeing, hearing, and feeling in person. Second, the researcher treats phenomena in the raw, holistic and concrete context if possible without breaking up the phenomena into pieces on the purpose of fabricating (Y. H. Cho, 2003). This research method also selects the ways that the researcher interprets and understands the daily speeches and behaviors from the view point of participant to the maximum than the researcher utilizing speculative argument or statistics analysis.

Concrete processes of this research were as follows. First of all, this researcher tried to make a rapport with participants before interviews. Therefore, ways and periods of participant observation were done flexibly in accordance with the situations of participants. As far as possible, participant observations were done at each program that senior citizens attended. Participant observations were done eight times in total the researcher observed and participated at senior citizens' voluntary services too. The researcher also participated at 'the winter camp' that was organized for two days every year and observed 'love sale of work' that was one of the programs' presentation which is conducted at the senior citizens center at the end of the year.

In the mean time, semi-structured in-death interviews were done in public or unofficially for senior citizens and the persons interested at the same time. Questions of semi-structured in-death interviews were comprised of three dimensions that included psychological, physical, and sociological aspects. The researcher divided these three dimensions into three sub categories each (after discussions with related scholars), finally constituting 11 sub categories including questions that motive participants

to attend the senior citizens center and the degree of satisfaction with the operation of the senior center.

Interviewees were 15 persons in total including one staff member of the center, 13 participants, and one lecturer of a program. Interviews conducted in public were done through a prior consultation at the place provided by the center at the end of senior citizen's daily work. Most of these interviews were done in the form of individual interview but group interviews for two or three persons were also done as needed. Each interview usually lasted between one to two hours. Interviews conducted in private were done using the pattern of chat or dialogue within and outside the center. The contents of the interviews were kept in a recorder and were transformed as a next text for analysis.

The researcher at once transferred the contents that were recorded into transcript and also recorded the contents of conversations with the situations at that time. Then, the interview materials became some texts deduced other texts. By making linkages between texts, the researcher thought over the leisure lives of female senior citizens. In this process, the researcher made the points (or themes) obvious by removing unnecessary materials as well as repetitive materials. In addition, brochures, programs, pamphlets, and the homepage of the senior center served as good references for analysis. Also the researcher discussed with co-workers about including reliability to materials in the course of coding materials.

Data Analysis

As in most researches using ethnographic method, this research engaged in the usual process of data collecting, data arrangement, and data analysis as well. In the process of arranging and analyzing the collected data, native tongues of participants including their folk tongues were translated into the standard language except those having peculiar meanings. The contents that were comprised in spoken language were modified into a literary expression by the researcher as far as the original meanings were not damaged.

Collected data were analyzed by the theme analysis method by Patton (2002). This method analyzed the core of interviews to determine what are deserved fundamentally. This research was analyzed by following the

five stages according to this method. First, the researcher numbered every meaningful behavior and words, reading carefully the collected data over and over. Second, overlapped expressions were excluded in reading repeatedly numbered words and sentences. Third, these words and sentences were categorized in the form of lists of generalizations and abstractions. Fourth, meanings and contexts were found in abbreviated materials in the form of lists. And coding was done dividing these materials into sub themes. Fifth, the main theme words were deducted by reviewing the contents that were divided into sub themes and seeking for relationship between sub themes.

Qualitative research has to enhance reliability and validity of analyzed results on materials as much as possible. The researcher also made an effort to cut off researcher's subjectivity and to do bracketing in gathering data, and observing materials. With this in mind, this research was done in two stages. The object of the first stage was to raise reliability. In other words, the researcher listened three times to the recorded data which were put in writing in terms of Patton' analysis method and confirmed whether the recorded data were identical with the contents that the researcher wanted to manifest. By way of preventing possible fallacies, the researcher let participants to see transcribed interview data and asked them to scrutinize transcribed interview data.

The object of the first stage was to raise validity. The researcher did procedures of triangulation that confirmed the contents of ethnographic descriptions including classification of analysis categories into participants and coworker, whether the contents of observation and interviews were typical of data, classification was in right order, and whether mentioned incidents were nothing or an accident. And the researcher again amended the contents of the observation and interviews on their own advice. These procedures were very helpful for the researcher to reduce possible fallacies and to draw objective results. Advice from allied scholars and researchers gave this researcher the opportunity to examine reflectively on matters that were so familiar to the researcher. The researcher faithfully went after the principles of ethnographic description that make familiar acquaintances into unfamiliar ones through these reflective processes of investigation.

Results

Perspective Transformation: From Inter-Individual Relationship to Inner-Individual Relationship

The case of the elderly Youngae Cho showed that passivity and rigidity in personality increased in the life of the elderly. The elderly tried to help family, but they were recognized as a burden not asset. Therefore they coped with their lives on negative lines not aggressively. This frustration made them to confine to their own world and became the cause of feeling less about life. Children's growth, retirement etc give many senior people freedom from important roles that they had served for a long time. This means that they were well supplied with leisure and they were forced to accept unnatural role shift.¹ At this time isolation from social relationship become the cause that increase their depression. Therefore many senior citizens degenerated into unwanted role just as the person who is staying in someone else's house, the one who is not the key member at home, the one who can't feel one's presence at all in the way of the case of the elderly Youngae Cho. And this makes them live a wretched life.

When I was alone at home, I handled a washing machine awkwardly to help my daughter. By the way, there were many English alphabets on the instrument board of a washing machine. And that machine was broke down against my will. My daughter said to me after work "Mommy, remain still at home. Why did you handle that machine without any knowledge of how to operate. Anyway, all machine are broke down when you touch them." Since I heard that kind of words, I usually kept still without doing anything (Youngae Cho, age 65).

But senior citizens got the knack of skills in coping with various situations that gave them stress when they attended the senior citizen center. They undertook this kind of situations more positively, making

¹ Individual role shift is accomplished in two ways. The first way is a role transition which is to gain or lose one's position by getting or abandoning adequate roles. The second way is role change which role expectancy is changing by getting older though personal character does not alternate (Merriam, 1998).

contact with lecturers, and colleagues in the senior center. In other words, senior citizens experienced various changes of their life, participating in many events and leisure services, such as making contact with colleagues in the senior center. This is different from the cases where many senior citizens did not confront the situation of stress but they did passive and mysterious deeds like resignation, abandonment, emotional adjustment etc. As an example, the case of senior citizen Huaja Yi is a good illustration.

Before I attend at senior citizen center, I was as good as a kitchen maid. I prepared meals every mealtime, did the dishes, and washed clothes. But attending at this center, I learned one thing and another with friends. I also served for others and sometimes I made pocket money for myself. You know... So.... I asked myself why I lived like that in old times. First and foremost, I recognize that many people were in similar agony I undertook. And they live in similar circumstances like me, chattering with friends (Huaja Yi, age 72).

As in the case above, human communication starts with the facts that there are the others who are conscious of same feelings in the world. The core is to feel inter-subjectivity. Senior citizens liked to chime in with others with laughing loudly while chatting with others. They sometimes responded in positive ways like this “How did you do by chance,” “How comes it?,” “You did good job.” These warm hearted chiming in others seemed to be very useful in understanding each other. Praises and admirations functioned as certified checks to make harmonious human-relationship.

When a professor gave us special lecture about ‘married life of old age.’ The guy emphasized mutual respect, and do best as I could to husband. um.... But my case was not that. I do not even like to be with him. So, I asked my friend. Because I was wondering. Is it easy to follow professor’s advices? Then my friend gave me a tip. That was.... The point was that my husband supported me for a long time that I had to recognize his services (Jungsook Yi, age 75).

Senior citizens recognized their surroundings in a different way in communicating with other senior citizens and with other age brackets.

For example, senior citizens experienced perspective transformation² like the case of Jungsook Yi above. During this process senior citizens did reflective thinking about distorted structure of life and made new structure of meaning.

Before I attend at senior citizen center, I broke out in a rash all over my body. And... when I touched my husband's clothes, I just feel like suffering indigestion especially when he was at home. um.... When we were together, we always had a quarrel with each other. ALWYAS..... It was... it was really a tedious work. I was sick and tired of him. Because he always poking into my business and telling me what to do after retirement. This things makes me really tired of him... really..... He even did not have any interest in housework in his free times. But I am trying to understand him nowadays, he sometimes seems to be miserable. After all, he have lived enthusiastically to support a large family...(Chunhee Shim, age 62).

The above mentioned cases like Chunhee Shim confirmed the transfer of a fixed idea, a bias of the elderly' life to new ones. These experiences also provided the elderly the opportunities to reflect on their old lives, to revitalize self-confidence in life, to demand correction they had agreed to unquestioningly before. This means the transformation from inter-individual relationship to inner-individual relationship too. Finally, this showed that the elder people reached a new symbolic world through leisure activities or recreation.

But these processes were not universally applicable because most of the elderly were in discord with surroundings including themselves in resetting relationships. Personality can not change easily but if we prescribe personality differently, a new aspect appears. Isolated personality does not change, but personality changes easily if social contexts differ. Therefore, the researcher could confirm that personality was Gestalt of context.

² Perspective means one's viewpoint or a way of looking that is concerned with oneself or human relationship, existence. And transformation means new way of understanding ourselves and our relationship which were critically recognized factors that seem to be prejudice (Mezirow, 2000).

Meta Learning for Leisure: Need for Learning for Having Fun

Senior citizens of this center had high interest in acquiring the know-hows of enjoying leisure activities for better enjoyment of leisure. They did not only learn from textbooks and reference books when they attended, but they also extended their range of learning in studying religious books, foreign language books, and acquiring the skills to play with others harmoniously. Extending their range of learning showed us that they experienced leisure paradox to play well and entertainingly. For this reason, leisure life of this senior welfare center had many implications for us.

If someone wants to live here wisely they should have attitude of studying hard. (pointing at another senior citizen) um.. Nowadays she gave us a lesson about the instrument ocarina. At first, she hadn't known how to play the ocarina. But... but she tried hard to play it, so now she teaches other people. um.. I am trying.. trying hard to learn Japanese because.... I want to talk with Japanese people. I really... um.. really want to help other people to buy goods on Japan's excursion of next year (Youngja Kim, age 72).

But learning for leisure was conducted similar to the school-based way because formalized school education has many possibilities to reproduce the pathology of education expansively that conflict with learning for leisure such as freedom, creativity, spontaneity etc (Han, 2009). As the case stands, learning for the elderly people has to lay great emphasis on cultivating accomplishment, positive attitude, discernment for remaking their leisure creatively in the mood of freedom. Because our senior citizens are not only well trained for the utilization of leisure, but there are also many cases that they do not make precisely practical application of leisure.

Now many people including the elderly have work-oriented ways of thinking that set up the relationship between work and leisure with private reasons or other. They seemed to have become tacitly familiar with the myth of 'early bird' that was summarized with just industry and sincerity. And that myth seemed to be an adequate ideology of industrial society. Therefore the purpose of leisure in the 21st century is to learn skills and know-hows for enjoying leisure and to escape from a

situation of workaholic and to upgrade the quality of life. Because a great part of life is leisure especially for the elderly, learning for the enjoyment of leisure has to be the sources of their satisfaction and pleasure.

In the case of the elderly who learned ‘sports dance,’ the researcher confirm the fact that learning how to play for enjoying recreation gave the elderly much pleasure and satisfaction. ‘Sports dance’ is a program that was popular in any senior welfare center. An auditorium was not cold even though it was midwinter. It is because of the fever that the elder immersed in the dance. It usually took at least two years for one person to enjoy ‘sports dance.’ Some of the elderly reached a standard level, but most of them remained in the beginner’s level. As Sungja Yi mentioned below, they immersed in dance even in midwinter, even though their shirt was soaking wet with sweat because they experienced the increase in their levels day by day. Learning can make them not be the object but the subject in relationship with others. If the elderly occasionally share this pleasure, the pleasure seems to be doubled.

It usually took about two years to learn sport dance.... satisfactory. But I spent about six months for this. um. Actually I did not have any chance for dance. Even though this is first time for dance, I am really happy. Many people says that ‘sports dance’ is very good for the elder people. Because it doesn’t need to force the elder’s pace but it gives us lots of movement. What is the best for me is that I give a lesson that I learned previously to my friends. And they give another lessons to me. um. As we learn we can dance nicely, can’t we? Hahaha. Then some old man will ask me for a dance (Sungja Yi, age 70).

Some senior citizens on and off gave the pleasure of learning to other senior citizens as a lecturer. The case of Youngja Kim is an example. She is now 81 years old, she experienced mysterious and fine sound of the ocarina 10 years ago when she attended another senior welfare center. After that, she was fascinated with that instrument. So she learned for a long time how to play the ocarina at an institute and special community for the ocarina. Now her level is so high that she takes an active part in the community as an advisor. And she lives a very busy life as a lecturer of the ocarina for her present and other senior welfare centers. These formations from leisure demander to leisure supplier like

her often functioned to other senior citizens as a peer pressure that caused the motive for learning. As such, many senior citizens did reciprocal actions and they again establish their identity as a life-long learner protecting themselves from the stress that is induced in the process of a journey of life.

The reason that senior citizens can learn meta-learning in the senior welfare center is that there are their unique learning features. First, the atmosphere of welfare center was full of freedom and autonomy not regulations and restrictions of institutional schools. For example, though a woman was absent from the center, there was not any restrictions for that. Second, everybody could select events and programs in accordance with one's ability and tastes. Third, there was no burden for the result of learning. The process of learning was preferred to the results. There were no academic scores. No one was compared to others. All they have to do was to enjoy learning. Fourth, they could learn practical programs that make the best use of something in their real life like word program, Internet application, yoga, chorus etc. Finally, senior citizens can be said to carry into practice those precepts that learning is a real pleasure in life in the analects of confucius.

Magnification of Social Support System: Confirmation as a "Leisureite" through Networks

Senior citizens of this senior citizen center exchanged necessary information with friends who participated in deeds of volunteership and friendship. They increased problem-solving abilities in the harmonious relationship of others. They changed undesirable attitudes and reinforced support from peer group and increased communication skills between individuals. Here the case of Youngjoo Yi is illustrated below. She was one of the women who lived a busy life in the senior center. She was the president of the committee for volunteership and played the clarinet at the Silver Choir. She liked to encourage other senior citizens to participate in volunteering activities, and liked to be an example for that.

um... I asked the elder who stayed at home all day long to attend at our senior center. um.. Once she came here, she will meet many

people... as friends.. um.. I told her she could make many friends in here. And I also told her she should be get together with people even though she is happy or not. Because she said the whole heart to friends, So she did not get at least a sickness caused by pent-up anger (Youngjoo Yi, age 76).

One of characteristics of adult learners including senior citizens is that they have many experiences in life and they can use those experiences as important materials in life. The most important thing of all is to confirm the networks that produce and reproduce their desirable experiences. The fact that senior citizens attend senior welfare centers means that they become members of a new culture. In other words, it means that they were admitted into a new life of leisure.

As was often the official principles for operation with every organization, there were also unofficial-principles, rules, and meetings at senior centers. There was an official self-government body and also unofficial bodies in the form of a mutual-aid society. These bodies used to function as a mechanism for making more social support than official bodies. In the midst of these bodies, there was a magnolia (mutual-aid society) that had very active meetings. Most of the people at those meetings were born in 1940 and they took the leading role in many gatherings of the senior welfare center. The words of the president of this mutual-aid society expressed well that they utilize leisure as a mechanism to strengthen social support systems. Social contact through leisure activities functioned as an important factor to upgrade and reinforce the quality of the life of the senior citizens.

There had been woman in here who had led an indigent life. She had attended ardently, but she had disappeared for quite a time. um.. No one did not take care of her at home. NO ONE.... She had lived in herself. And she was badly off. Attending at senior welfare center is extravagant for her. So the members of magnolia (mutual-aid society) um.. decided to help her. We visited her home twice a week, helped domestic chores for her. Because we organized magnolia (mutual-aid society) into groups, each members could go to her once in two months. um... Because 'service for taking care of senior citizens' is in operation nowadays, we do not do that any more.. any more (Yeonsoon Kim, age 80).

As the above example illustrates, senior citizens interacted with other friends of this center. This protected senior citizens from the stresses that were caused from the journey of life. And this helped senior citizens to confirm themselves to be leisurites (individuals who enjoys leisure) again. As in the case above, networks as a leisure mechanism are important to all in terms of forming alternative relationships. Networks carry out educational functions for participants to share information, to increase problem-solving ability, to amend one's attitude, to reinforce supports of peer group, to develop communication skills etc (Krutz, 2007). Finally, leisure or recreation is one of the important mechanisms that harmonize the idea of expressing oneself with the idea of expressing community life.

Confirmation of Homo Ludens: Organic Combination Recreation with Amusement

Senior citizens of this center liked to entertain themselves using their bodies because they knew the importance of health. But these endeavors could not be seen only at the programs using their bodies heavily. The members who participated in calligraphy seemed to have nothing to do with physical health. But they were also interested in health. The case below helps one understand this situation in calligraphy time of a participation diary of 14th, December, 2008:

Um.. It is time to take a restorative. To lose property is to lose a little bit (Seukho Kim, age 75).

(At this time, one senior citizen stepped forward...)

To lose honor is to lose much. To lose health is to lose all.

(Everybody laughed and she said to me like this)

When we are not willing to do physical exercise, teacher always say like this. So everybody say like this all together and laughed loudly (Kyungsil Yi, age 81).

It is said that many senior citizens do not like to move their bodies. It is said to be a couch syndrome where senior citizens sit on a couch and watch TV all day long. Because they did not utilize their bodies and stay motionless at home, they experienced a vicious circle that they had been sickly for the rest of life. But researchers could find these facts.

Senior citizens who attended a senior welfare center did not experience a “couch syndrome” and stopped function loss of later life. And they used leisure as a mechanism to keep their health.

The members of calligraphy class usually wrote characters for three hours. As a result this researcher could not find any negative activities of leisure like speaking ill of politicians. As in the case above, senior citizens squatted themselves down and immersed in writing characters for so long a time that they were compelled to take a rest by the teacher. They easily felt fatigue according to youth but they took a rest and improved physical strength by physical training.

One of the important things that could not be passed over here is that leisure has to consist of pleasant and interesting recreation. Huizinga said that Human culture was the continuity of culture, the essence of human beings was *Homo Ludens* (Huizinga, 1955/1999). As he mentioned, senior citizens made the spectrum of life broaden by participating in recreation. Recreation is never a waste of time, but is purposeful, meaningful, and creative activities in one’s own way. Most official programs of the center were closed at 1 pm. The weather in December was very cold. But the words that the senior citizen Hando Park mentioned wearing a mask in severely cold weather demonstrated Huizinga’s assertion.

The temperature dropped about 3 degrees below today. Ah yeah! You know what? The gate ball is really fun. Even though it is cold in outside but It’s Ok to play gate ball for one hour or two hours. Especially, coffee for a break it tastes perfectly good. I really love it! And there will hold national conference for gate ball next April (Chunhee Shim, age 62).

Gate ball team (of our senior welfare center) always have won a prize. When we win a prize at tournament, everybody praises for us. I was thinking that... if we kill time at any place, does anyone will welcome us? I say no. um.. But this game (the gate ball) is very exiting, and fun, we can win a prize and get praise from other people (Hando Park, age 77).

From these people, we can find out features of senior edutainment generation who seek and learn amusement for themselves. It is difficult for us to find a feeling of uneasiness and a sense of inferiority that is

a turn over of a contemporary or young people from them. Leisure or recreation of senior citizens just functions as a mechanism that makes the life of senior citizens meaningful and make the life of senior citizens extend farther. If a characteristic of pleasant amusement of all characteristics in leisure activities should be omitted, the researcher could verify that any leisure activities can not elicit interests from participants even though they have good moral obligation or intention. In conclusion, senior citizens were born again as leisureites, leisure prosumer³, the OPAL beyond Homo Faber participating in various leisure activities.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study has a limit that it can not explain the meaning and characteristics of leisure of all senior citizens of the whole country because this study was conducted in a specific senior welfare center located at Kyungki Province in Korea. Nonetheless, the researcher made an observation about conditions and situations that were related with embodiment of the value of leisure where leisure services operate actively. And this researcher made a diagnosis of the meaning of leisure by conducting interviews with inner participants. On the basis of this, the researcher had tried to grope for directions or courses that leisure of senior citizens has to go forth.

Senior citizens had been making meaning systems with their friends by participating in a variety of leisure activities. First, leisure activities were a mechanism that senior citizens recognized newly themselves and their relationships and the situations around them. Many senior citizens felt frustrated on account of unnatural role shift and were often isolated from social relationships. But senior citizens shared inter-subjectivity with other senior citizens who had similar emotions with them at this senior welfare center. In this context of relationship, they did reflective thinking of distorted structure of life and made new meaning structures. This means the recognition of their being transformed from inter-individual relationship to inner-individual relationship.

³ As A. Toffler defined a producer and a consumer as a prosumer, this researcher wants to define those who produce and consume leisure as a leisure prosumer.

Second, leisure was in line with learning because senior citizens had to study how to play for better pleasure. It was needed for senior citizens to study meta learning for leisure for becoming the subject not the object of leisure in leisure activities. They shared the results of learning with close friends beyond their own narrow learning. As they pursued learning ceaselessly and shared the results with friends, the researcher could confirm that senior citizens could become not only users of leisure but also providers of leisure.

Third, leisure activities provided senior citizens with networks that reinforced the social support system. In this network of leisure, senior citizens amended their undesirable attitudes, gained support from peer group, increased the skills of communication, and reinforced the empowerment for life. Especially, many mutual aid societies native to Korea provided senior citizens with socio-emotional support such as at unofficial meetings which were utilized as good social support systems to raise the quality of life.

Fourth, leisure activities functioned as a mechanism that put functional loss of later life quite off and could maintain good health. Senior citizens also broadened their life spectrum by participating in recreation. Recreation was not the consumption of energy but a series of creative activities that had its own meanings and purposes. Therefore, if a characteristic of pleasant amusement of all characteristics in leisure activities should be omitted, the researcher could verify that any leisure activities could not elicit interests from participants.

But the researcher found the following controversial points. First of all, immersion into only pleasant recreation may be distorting the image of senior citizens to negative perspective. This can be apt to being the cause of conflict between generations. Second, leisure activities that the welfare center provided could not satisfy a variety of individual differences of senior citizens who participated. Elder groups have the most marked characteristics than others. Each senior citizen has his/her own expectancy to leisure. Some of them used to recognize attending a senior welfare center as a means of killing time or making pocket money.

The researcher suggests alternatives. First, authorities that provide leisure services have to have close and organic links with private organizations such as enterprises, religious bodies, and social bodies. This will be an alternative that one who is undertaking business relevant to

leisure activities can overcome difficulties in one's business. As a general rule, it is a common phenomenon that there is a short age of budget or human power. Second, programs that overcome individual differences of senior citizens have to be developed diversely. Senior citizens' participation in programs relevant to leisure activities have to be linked with natural communication with friends and meaningful social activities. Finally, these alternatives will be in operation in the long-term vision of local self-governments and the central government. These organizations have to show interest in minority groups of the society and should not be so stingy in budgetary allocation and execution of the budget for these groups. Leisure guarantee for minority groups of society should come into effect on the basis of trust.

In conclusion, the researcher found out that a variety of leisure activities that were served in senior welfare centers were a great help to successful aging of senior citizens. The research also confirmed that leisure activities provided by senior welfare centers could be one of good alternatives to a sense of isolation that senior citizens underwent at home or in society.

References

- Bae, G. H., & Seo, M. H. (2008). Nohwuaae darun noinui yeoka hwaldong hwalsunghwarur yuihan geohoikae kwanhan yeonku [A Study on plans for revitalization of leisure activities of the elder according to aging]. *Journal of Korean Care Welfare*, 3(1), 23-56.
- Baltes, P., & Baltes, M. (1990). *Successful aging: Perspective from the behavioral sciences*. Cambridge, England, Cambridge University., Press.
- Bammel, G., & Bammel, L. (1997). *Yeogawa inganbaengdong* [Leisure and human behaviors] (H. K. Ha, Trans.). Seoul: Baeksan Press. (Original work published 1982)
- Bang, S. H. (2009). Nongchon geoju noinui samgua yeoga manjogdoae kwanhan yeonku [A Study on the degree of life satisfaction and leisure activities of the elder who live in rural community]. *Social Welfare Development Research*, 59, 57-80.
- Cho, C. Y. (2003). Noinui yeoka hwaldonggua sahoi chamyoeae kwanhan yeonku [A study on leisure activities and social involvement of the senior citizen]. *Journal of Welfare for the Aged*, 22, 7-34.
- Cho, K. Y. (2005). Yeosung noinui geonkang, sahoigui, sahoijiwongua yeoga hwuadongae kwanhan yeonku [A Study on Relations between Health Status, Social Supports, and Leisure Activities of Elderly Women]. *Journal of Welfare for the Aged*, 27, 203-229.
- Cho, Y. H. (2003). *Jiljuk yeonku: Banggwa Sare I* [Qualitative Research: Methods & Cases]. Seoul: kyoyookbook.
- Choi, H. K., & Oh, Y. J. (2008). Busan dosi kongwon namja noinui yeogawa kajokkwuangeae kwuanhan tamsekyuk yeonku [An Exploratory Study on Leisure and Family Relationships of Male Elders in a City Park of Busan]. *Journal of Welfare for the Aged*. 42, 349-378.
- Han, J. S. (2009). *Samui haksuk* [Learning of Life]. Seoul, Hakjisa.
- Huh, J. M. (2003). *Noinyul yuihan kuosuwa silchunyul yuihan bangbub yiron* [Theories of instruction for the elder people and methodology for practice]. Seoul, Yongsuhwon.
- Huh, J. S. (2002). Dosinoinui yeoka hwaldong keoljungyeoindul [Determinants of Leisure Activities among Urban Elderly Persons]. *The korean gerontological society*, 22(2), 227-247.
- Hooyman, N. R., & Kiyak, H. A. (2005). *Social Gerontology: A Multidisciplinary Perspective* (7th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Huizinga, J. (1999). *Homo Ludens* (Y. S. Kim, Trans.). Seoul: Kachibooks. (Original

- work published 1955)
- Jassen, A. M. (2004). The effects of Leisure Education on Quality of Life in Older Adults. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 38(3), 275-288.
- Jeon, Y. S. (2007). *Noin yeoka program hyoguawa saluijilae kwanhan yeonku* [A study of senior citizen's leisure programs effects on recognition and the quality of life]. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Seoul Women's University, Korea.
- Jeon, Y. S., & Yang, H. T. (2009). Noinbubui yeoka insikkua tongsangjuk yeoka hwauldongdongul yuihan kyoyuk program hyokuaea kwanhan yeonku [The Study on Effect of a Education Program for the Couple of Old People to Get Leisure Awareness and Develop the Common Leisure Activity]. *Journal of Welfare for the Aged*, 43, 287-302.
- Kelly, J. R. (1996). *Leisure* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kim, T. H., & Kim, Y. S. (1999). Noinui sarmui jil kaesunsaek kwanhan yeonku (II [A Study on Improvement of the Quality of Life for the Aged (II)]. *Journal of the Korean Gerontological Society*, 19(1), 61-81.
- Korean Gallup Institute (1990). *Hankukinui sarmkua yeosik* [Life and Conscious of Korean people: The second international comparison].
- Korean National Office of Statistics (2005). *Nyunkan inku bokoseo* [Annual Reports on Population].
- Krutz, C. E., & Ronald, L. (2007). *Network security fundamentals*. SA: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Kwak, H. M. (2002). Noinui munhwua bokji jubkunkwua yeoka saenghwalae kwanhan yeonku [A Study on the Cultural Welfare Approach and Leisure Life of The Aged]. *Journal of Welfare for the Aged*, 28, 27-49.
- Lee, G. Y. (2002). Hnakuk noinui sahoi hwualdong: nonyunui yeoka hwualdongkwa jawonbongsarul jungsimyuro [Social activities of Korean senior people: focused on leisure activities and volunteership in later life]. *Andragogy Today*, 5(2), 57-69.
- Lee, K. H. (2004). *Noinbokjisenterae chamyeo noinui kyoyuk yokuwa sahyoiwhaldong yoku* [Educational needs and needs in social affairs of the elderly who participated in senior welfare center]. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ewha Women's University, Korea.
- Lee, S. H. (2002). Noinyul wihan program baldalgua hyokwua bunsuk [Development of program for the elder and effect analysis]. *Journal of the Korean Gerontological Society*, 21(2), 85-98.
- Lee, S. H., Song, K. Y., & Kim, J. H. (2008). Noinui yeokahwaldong chamyeo yichiwa yeokahwaldong hwalsunghwarulwihan tamsaek [An inquiry on the status of participation in leisure activities of the elder and on a plan for

- revitalization of leisure activities of the elder]. *Journal of Contents*, 8(3), 234-243.
- Lee, Y. J., & Chung, S. H. (2003). Noinui yeoka sikanjichulae yeonghyangyul Kichinun yoinae kwanhan yeonku [An analysis on influencing factor of time expenditure for leisure of the senior citizens]. *Journal of Consumer Studies*, 14(4), 1-19
- Leitner, M. J., & Leitner, S. F. (1996). *Leisure in later life*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.
- MacNeil, R. D., & Teague, M. L. (1992). *Leisure and aging: Vitality in later life (2nd ed.)*. Dubuque, IA: Brown and Benchmark.
- McCormick, B. (1993). *Same place, different worlds: Leisure styles and community life of older residents of rural retirement and village communities*. Doctoral dissertation, Clemson University, South Carolina.
- McGuire, F. A., Boyd, R. K., & Tedrick, R. T. (1996). *Leisure and aging*. NY: Sagamore Publishing.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Educations*. NY: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as Transformation*. SA: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Mundy, J. (1998). *Leisure Education*. NY: Sagamore Publishing.
- Na, H. J. (2003). Seouljiyeok noinui yeokainsikae kwanhan yeonku [A Study on the Perception of Leisure of the elderly in Seoul Area]. *Journal of Welfare for the Aged*, 22, 35-54.
- Na, H. J. (2004). Saluijilhaesangeulwihan nonyunui yeokai yeokhalae kwanhan yeonku [A Study on the role of leisure of the Elderly for upgrading of the quality of life]. *Journal of the Korean Gerontological Society*, 24(1), 53-70.
- Na, H. J. (2006). Noinhaksuibui yeomiae kwanhan yeonku [An ethnographic study on the meaning of senior citizen's learning]. *Anthropology of Education*, 9(1), 1-28.
- National Center for health Statistics. (1990). *Current estimates from the National Health Interview Survey: U.S 1989. Vital and health statistics*. Washington D.C.: DHHS.
- Park, J. G., & Cha, S. D. (2008). Noinui gaeinjasanaetarun yeokamanjokdoae kwanhan bunsuk [Analysis of the Satisfaction in Leisure depending on the Individual Property of the aged]. *Korean Physical Education Association for Girls and Women*, 22(3), 95-104.
- Park, S. H. (2004). Noinkyoyukkuajungae kwanhan chamyekwanchalkwa focus interview [Participant observation and focus interview on curriculum on senior citizens]. *Journal of Welfare for the Aged*, 23, 107-126.
- Parker, S. (1998). *Hyundaesaboiwa Yeoga* [Modern society and Leisure] (Y. T. Lee

- & Ch. K. Lee, Trans.). Seoul: Ilsin press. (Original work published 1976)
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Son, J. M. (2007). Nonui yeokarul wihan tukbyul yiventuae kwanhan yeonku [A study on special event for leisure of senior citizens]. *A Collection of Korea Tourism College*, 6, 223-239.
- Suh, E., Diener, E., & Fujita, F. (1995). Events and subjective well-being: only recent events matter. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 27, 77-82.
- Teague, M. L. (1987). Leisure competency: A goal for aging Americans in the 1980s. In N. Osgood (Ed.), *Life after work: Retirement, Leisure, recreation and the elderly* (pp. 315-338). NY: Praeger.
- Tinsley, H. E. A., & Teaff, J. D. (1983). *The psychological benefits leisure activities for the elderly: A manual and final report of an investigation*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University development of Psychology.

Biographical Note: **Hang-Jin Na** received his Ph.D from Chungang University in 2002. He is an assistant professor of Social Welfare Department at Jungwon University, where he teaches an introduction to social welfare, education for older individuals, and sociology of education. His research interests include leisure and education for senior citizens, welfare of the aged, life-long education for elder citizens, and the multi-cultural education of female citizens. He can be reached at Geron2009@jwu.ac.kr.