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Helping Others: Looking at Culture, Language, and Time

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"Helping others", "Lending a hand", "Being there for me." There are many ways to refer to providing social support for others and ourselves. There are also many ways that we as humans consider help to *be* help. In each community and each country prosocial behavior is defined and enacted differently. This translates into different attitudes, customs and thought processes around helping others that are mediated by any number of factors such as age, gender, and relationship. In arguably every instance of prosocial behavior there is the concept of reciprocity that enters the mind. When receiving help from another do we then become obligated to the helper? In supporting others do we bind them to us in expectation of a favor to be repaid? In every culture the question will arguably vary along the extremes of yes and no. The messy part comes when cultures mingle and different ideas and standards surrounding social support collide.

The intermixing of cultural values can be a smooth blend or a clash of values and beliefs. In my life this is quite poignant in my relationship with my grandmother, or *halmoni* as I call her. My *halmoni* is from South Korea, and despite moving to the United States decades ago, she still holds onto many of the customs that she learned growing up. Herein lies the point of contention. In South Korea with the influence of Confucianism, there is a very strong social hierarchy that is centered around the family. As such, the concept of filial piety rules the lives of Koreans from birth till death, and even beyond. The social order follows gender, age, and relationship as the foundational determiners of how to interact with others. Old men garner the most deference, especially those to whom you are related, followed by older women, and then those in positions of authority over you. This entails deep loyalty and respect for your elders as some of the most

basic principles of Korean society. From the four short months I spent in Seoul I saw how deeply ingrained these values are and how strictly they are adhered to. Having the status of grandmother as she does in relation to me, my *halmoni* expects the same deference be paid to her even though we live close to seven thousand miles from South Korea. In practice this looked like her being the first to hold most of my siblings, even before my mother. Other examples include addressing me and my siblings in conversation in birth order, (or in accordance with who was in her favor). This is very different from the American ideas of treating everyone equally and straightforwardly that permeated my life outside of my relationship with her. The clear disconnect between her expectations and what I knew to be normal and right were so jarring that it often left me and my siblings confused. Whenever she would remind me to not be jealous of my older brother who, as my triplet is only a few minutes older than I, I would be left wondering why? What difference was there between us that she knew about that I did not? Why should I be jealous of someone who lived the same life as I and had all of the same experiences and things?

It would take me years to realize that there was no difference, at least not one salient in my reality. I eventually realized that me and my Halmoni live in two different worlds. Hers revolved around adherence to her whims and unwavering respect. Mine entailed a two way street, one of mutual respect and understanding. This led to a certain level of tainting in regards to our relationship and interactions. Growing up, the end of story time where we all went outside to play became a game of who could get away the fastest. If you were too slow you would be delegated to the task of helping grandma up off the floor; putting all of our six-year old muscles to work trying to haul her up.

As time went on and I learned more about the ins and outs of my grandma's daily life and habits, I again became confused, this time by the contrast in how she was with me as her

grandson, and then how she behaved in her daily life. There was a time where we were working in our backyard garden as my grandma was an avid gardener herself. I remember being struck by how quickly and deftly she pulled weeds and the tenacity at which she worked. I wondered how could a woman who needed the help of a small child to rise up off the floor be capable of working on her hands and knees in the summer sun like this?

I also learned that this woman who required so much of those around her, was capable of doing the same. On this particular occasion we were walking through the local mall and happened to pass by an older Asian woman who was selling oranges and other fruits. Upon seeing her, my grandma went to her without a word and gave the older woman a handful of folded bills. I was struck by how quickly she executed this generous act, refusing a single fruit even as the vendor began to chase her. My *halmoni* just walked away faster and waved her hand behind her as if to signal her to take it as a gift. It was a pivotal moment where I saw for the first time my grandmother act in a selfless and generous way to another individual rather than the strong-willed figurehead I knew her to be, and it fascinated me.

It is these and many other questions and instances regarding my *halmoni's* culture and behavior that bring me to the current query. With experience working between cultures and expectations I find myself wondering how does culture, age and language impact the way we extend ourselves to others? How does that change over time, and how can I see that in my own culture? If I feel obligated to do things for my halmoni due to culture and age, How does this play out for people in different dynamics and cultural backgrounds?

Though I begin with references to my own life and experiences, it is generally true that cultures across the world tend to be either individualistic in their values and social organization or more community oriented. As such many of the feelings and experiences I detail above may

resonate with others and reflect other intercultural conflicts. With that in mind I present the following studies. In an effort to demonstrate some of the factors noted to influence the way prosocial behavior is displayed, I raise different facets of social interactions such as identity, motive, power that determine how individuals engage with others. Many studies have been done into some of the psychological and sociological aspects of social support and its governing rules. These will be discussed and serve as the foundation for a further discussion about the implications of age and language change on prosocial behavior.

The aforementioned arenas of psychology and sociology have a large body of existing studies on this topic, but there is a notable lack of research from a longitudinal perspective, and from the vantage point of language use. For that reason, I hope to present the following data and draw temporal connections between generations and bring language use to the forefront of the discussion. Shifts in attitudes, beliefs, and feelings around supporting others will be the main focus, and serve as the units of comparison alongside change to see how younger and older people may differ when it comes to helping others as shown in interviews and a survey. A thematic breakdown of applicable research will be made in order to open the dialogue concerning prosocial behavior and all of the various social aspects that impact it. In this manner the forces of age and language use can be added into the mix in a novel way. This will also include a specific focus on prosocial behavior in South Korea which will also allow for an analysis of how these forces may act within a specific cultural context.

Motivators of Prosocial Behavior

To begin, it is important to first understand how we as humans learn to help others. From a developmental perspective it has been noted that motivators of prosocial behavior have a deep

history in the human species. Reproductive fitness may be directly or indirectly impacted by socially supportive acts. Creating social cohesion through doing things for the benefit of others also causes interdependence and individuals begin to have stakes in the welfare of others. Specifically, "genetically based prosocial tendencies and motivations, which facilitated such cooperation, provide distinct reproductive fitness advantages" (Davidov, Maayan, et al. 2016). This is likely due to the fact that prosociality became introduced as a desireable trait for sexual selection in our early ancestors.

Surrounded by these behaviors children become encultured and develop the innate empathic concern that we as humans carry. It has been found that as young as 12 months, babies begin to feel and express empathic concern for others.This sensation and subsequent actions are mediated both by genes and how responsive parents and caregivers are to children's distress. Interestingly, "parent's responsiveness to children's distress and their ability to instill in children a sense of confidence in parental support and protection seem particularly important in facilitating children's ability to respond with concern and compassion to the distress of others." (Davidov, Maayan, et al. 2016). This model of responsiveness teaches children to be invested in the needs of others. Praise and encouragement for helpful actions are common in early childhood and these also serve as motivators for prosocial behavior.

Another important motivator is social norms. Individuals may be differently impacted by this force depending on how closely the values and norms of society align with their personal desires. For example, individuals may act against the self interest of themselves or others for the greater benefit of others. Studies have found that five-year olds "can behave paternalistically and override the other's desire" (Davidov, Maayan, et al. 2016), when recognizing that what someone else wants may not be good for them. Socialization influences the internalization of these norms

as well, with children treated with more responsiveness from caregivers being more likely to internalize social norms and have a stronger desire to act accordingly. Therefore children or older individuals who have a weaker drive to meet social standards or norms will more likely pursue their own goals even at the expense of others.

Moving from behavior to language, in looking at the thoughts of Noam Chomsky, a notable linguist we see the following, "Language learning is not really something that the child does; it is something that happens to the child placed in the appropriate environment." (Ahearn, pg 71, 2017). In practice we can see this through the self-determination theory. Within this socio-cultural environment individuals internalize social norms to varying degrees. Inner values and external forces motivate individuals differently in terms of engaging in and talking about prosocial behavior. This is informed by several things. Behaving inline with social norms is known to be a means of gaining the approval of others, reinforcing self image, and generally improving well-being. This is also communicated in how we talk about the things others have done for us or that we have done for others and thus behavior and language work hand in hand in managing social relations. Drawing from my own experience, my *halmoni* speaks a certain way when requesting me or my siblings do something for her. Often she will remind us of the importance of listening to our elders and how in the future we will want our own children to obey us so we should cooperate with her now. In this way my grandma uses hypothetical social relations by extrapolating the social order familiar to her in a way that is applicable to me and my siblings to incite obedience. Although this reasoning made little sense at the time, understanding it as a value and norm of my *halmoni's* culture and how she views our relationship helps me to interact with her moving forward in a way that maintains the relationship positively.

This is further determined in part by personal beliefs about reciprocity. Research shows that "doing a favor for the partner just because one believes it will be reciprocated yields negative outcomes for personal and relational functioning." (Oarga, Cristina, et al. 2015), otherwise the effects of helping others for the helper can be determined by their feelings concerning reciprocity. Also, the act of helping another is more enriching for the helper than being helped in turn when individuals have a lower belief in reciprocity. Conversely, research by Weinstein and Ryan has also found that "helping in a context that allowed a high degree of personal choice was associated with greater positive effects of well-being than helping in a context that did not allow any choice." (Oarga, Cristina, et al. 2015). Similarly Providing informal help is "positively and marginally significantly associated with life satisfaction" (Oarga, Cristina, et al. 2015). This was found in a cross cultural analysis where helping is normative in that context the positive effect on life satisfaction was still positive but not as high as in countries where helping others is not normative and the helper had a lower belief in reciprocity.

Perceived responsibility of the helper towards helping another also informs the actions that we make in social situations. "moral emotions" such as guilt, shame, and regret are raised in cases where an individual feels higher levels of responsibility towards the other. In instances where one fails to help someone, "shame is elicited and strengthens the motivation to restore a more positive self-image and self-evaluation as well as to repair the social relationships to those people affected by the failure." (Tscharaktschiew. Nadine, Udo, Rudolph. 2016). This is also true when the help recipient is perceived to have lower responsibility. This increases sympathy or empathy of the observer in the context of personal causation and outcome; meaning that those in situations not found to be their fault or their responsibility are more likely to receive help from others because their perceived deservingness is therefore higher.

Power Dynamics, Agency, and Identity

As an inherently social act, prosocial behavior does not take place in a vacuum. There are historical conflicts, and alliances between groups, complex relations that shape the ways in which people interact with one another. Approaching the matter through an etic/emic perspective we can see the ways in which help is distributed can be variable. Research by (Mitchell M. Lorenz, et al. 2015) with Americans and Jamaicans reveals that when faced with an outgroup in need of assistance, assistance was more likely to be extended when the helper group was presented with a value goal-oriented message rather than a power based message. Also in an outgroup vs ingroup context when faced with a value-oriented message assistance in the form of hours donated were more likely to be given rather than financial aid. Similarly financial support was more likely to be given in light of a "power-oriented message" to an ingroup context compared to a value-oriented message. What is meant by power vs value is messages meant to increase the capabilities or influence of a group vs those that further their values and goals. Rallying around an idea or a goal are highly unifying acts that exemplify collective action and how it can further or hinder identity; and by extension the ways in which identity may act as a motivator for prosocial behavior and different methods of such actions.

Connecting language back to behavior looking at performativity in relation to language, J.L Austin notes that phrases both do something by virtue of being stated, carry consequences of being voiced, and intrinsically state or communicate something. This mimics the structure of assisting or not assisting another person, just as Judith Butler posits that social /linguistic practices "effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal." (Ahearn, pg 185.

2017). Such expressions and acts provide insight into how social groups are made, challenged, and reinforced.Such examples like jokes, political speeches, or children's stories transmit popular ideas and values in society, as can the ways in which we provide social support for others.
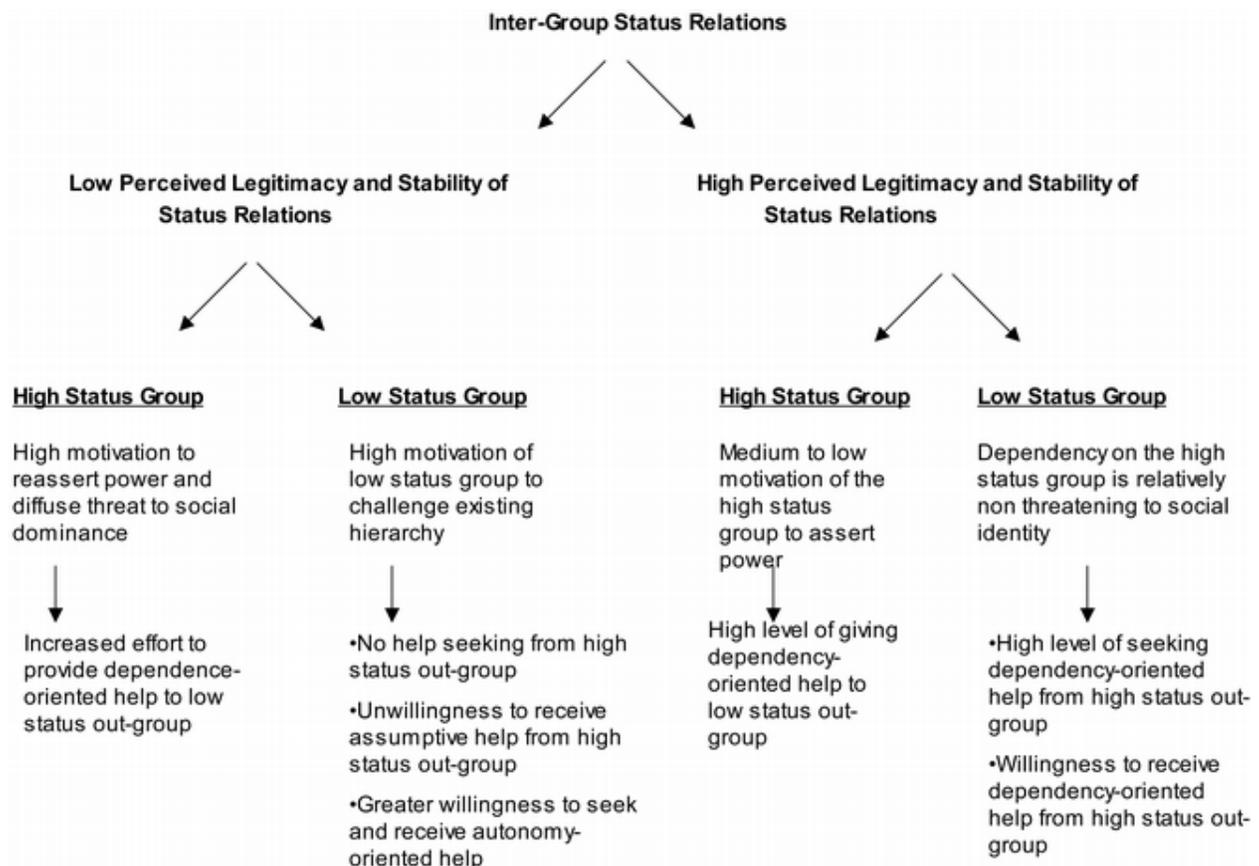

Figure 1. *Intergroup helping relations* as affected by perceived legitimacy and **stability** of power **relations** between groups. From "Inter-group **helping relations** as power **relations**: Maintaining or challenging **social** dominance between groups through **helping**," by A. **Nadler**, 2002, **Journal** of **Social** Issues, 58, 487–502. Copyright 2002 by Blackwell Publishing. Reprinted with permission

The above image is a visual representation of how power can be seen in social behavior through the ways in which individuals and groups interact with each other or don't. Here it is evident that members of low status groups are highly unresponsive to help from high status groups when "status relations are perceived as unstable and help is dependency based." (Nadler, Arie, Samer, Halabi. 2006). This can be interpreted as an exertion of power by the high status group. In order to maintain the status quo and their dominant social position Dominant groups may offer dependency base assistance to those below them in order to reinforce their standing. Likewise Lower status groups may refuse such help, "viewing the generosity of its counterpart as a manipulative effort to retain social advantages." (Nadler, Arie, Samer, Halabi. 2006).

An ethnographic example of this behavior is the work that Mauss did in observance of the Potlatch tradition of the indigenous people of the Pacific NorthWest. In this tradition goods and resources are traded among people and groups according to status with those of higher status expected to give the most. Here Mauss notices the patterns and rules surrounding the ceremonial trading of goods and products among these peoples. He concludes that there is more than economic purpose to this event and traces it back to different things. He states,

> These phenomena are at once legal, economic, aesthetic, morphological, and so on. They are legal in that they concern individual and collective rights, organized and diffuse morality; They may be entirely obligatory or subject simply to praise or disapproval.They are at once political and domestic, being of interest both to classes and to the clans and families… They are economic for the notions of value, utility, interest, luxury, wealth, acquisition, accumulation. (McGee, Warms. Anthropological Theory. pg 104. 2019).

His words on this exchange posits that the physical transfer of goods is only one aspect of the event. Also represented in the trading of goods are notions of the self. Indeed the objects traded are the same or representative of the individuals who gave them. This can have different meanings in different settings, for example, "In social systems in which the power hierarchy is perceived as stable and legitimate, it is the privileged group's duty to cater to the needs of the

low-status group." (Nadler, Arie, Samer, Halabi. 2006). In this case, the objects or services provided signify power relations explicitly where subservience earns those things needed for daily life and promote social cohesion. In another manner where there is negative history between groups, Acts or objects offered may either proffer peace or serve to deepen the tension between the groups.

This last point relates strongly to the concept of hegemony. Hegemony can be defined simply as dominance and one control of one group or people over another. Both Michel Foufault and Pierre Bourdieu's ideas are applicable when it comes to power, agency and the individual. Michel Foucault has a lot to say about relational power and how it relates to what is and is not expressed in social theory and practice. Scholars following his teaching say the following regarding his theories in regards to power in relation to the expression of knowledge. "Discourse, Foucault argues, constructs the topic. It deffines and produces the object of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about." (Hall, pg 72. 2001) Ahearn, pg 279. 2017). If we apply this concept governing knowledge and speech as Foucault understands it, to social behavior and action, we can see similar results in power dynamics and social relations between different groups and how they assist or hinder each other.

Bourdieu offers similar thoughts: "The relations of communication are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers of their respective groups are actualized." (Bourdieu, pg 37. 1991) Ahearn, pg 284. 2017). In other words, the physical and verbal exchanges between groups are expressions of and emblematic of the power dynamics between said groups. It is clear that agency, the ability to act in respect to social norms and culture is highly subject to these mediating factors.

Culture and Cross-Cultural comparison

In general it is known that cultures may fall into one of two different categories when talking about their social orientation at a societal level. These categories are individualistic, and collectivist. In the former there is less social regard for the other and the primary focus for a member of that society is on the self. For the latter category there is greater overall concern for the other. In turn a member of this society would be less motivated by personal goals and desires and would be more motivated to act for the benefit of the whole group rather than the self. This defines how these societal organizations may affect individuals generally, but also that "personal values at the individual level, especially prosocial values for human beings, may function independently regardless of the societal level culture." (Zang et al, 2019). Moving on, there is another force at play that is worthy of note.

Uncertainty avoidance also impacts the way individuals may behave in certain situations where the rules of engagement are unclear or they are faced with a situation that is new to them. In these situations the concept of cultural tightness or looseness comes out. This refers to how strictly or loosely the norms, or rules of a given culture are impressed upon members of that society. It is suggested that in cultures with more tightness where there "is a limited range of expected and acceptable behavior across social situations and there is little individual discretion in deciding how to behave", (Luria, et al. 2015) that prosocial behavior is lower because there is less capacity or drive to perform informal prosocial acts such as helping a stranger and higher uncertainty avoidance. Conversely it was noted that individualist societies promote higher levels of prosocial behavior. This is likely due to more individual freedom in how to behave. This may

also be due to tradition being less important in guiding actions and increased import of personal growth that is often associated with helping others.

As vectors of culture, thought and language have long been considered when it comes to culture and how it is carried out and perpetuated. According to the Sapir-Whorf theory, Language, thought, and culture all mutually affect each other, and to this many would agree. The difficulty lies in to what degree does each impact the other? As of yet, the only consensus researchers have found is that they all have a role in each other. It is extremely difficult to separate these active forces from each other. Edward Sapir, a well versed linguistic anthropologist says the following on the matter: "The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be consistent as representing the same social reality." (Sapir, pg 162. 1929) Ahearn, pg 93. 2017).

If we flip this to represent the language used by specific subcultures or groups within a society, it is possible to note differences in the ways that subcultures communicate within a given social context. Extending this concept along the lines of different generations, it is possible to pick out "generational accents" or language that is specific to a particular generation. In turn this language may shape and be shaped by the thoughts and culture that those individuals exist in at a specific point in time, causing changes between generations in conceptions and discourse of culture. In this way, semantic domains, or the groupings of words with similar core meanings become dynamic entities.

The way that my grandmother gave matching sets of clothes to me and my brothers for our birthdays growing up is a great example of this. In her culture, dressing the same symbolized being part of a group and something greater. It was a physical reminder of the community you

belong to and those you can rely on. In giving me and my brothers the same shirts and pants year after year she enacted this value onto us and the ways we presented ourselves. As American boys we did not share the same thoughts about being dressed alike. We wanted our own things and to look unique. We did not signal our social relations in this way, and as such it became evident that we were coming from two different cultural perspectives and we had to learn how to navigate that in an appropriate manner.

Prosocial behavior also looks different when looked at from a cross cultural perspective. Studies comparing the effects of solicited versus unsolicited support on outcomes show a marked difference between Asian and European Americans. While European Americans responded positively to both unsolicited and solicited help, Asian Americans reported more positively when receiving unsolicited help. This is relevant because "For Asian Americans, unsolicited support may boost one's self-esteem." (Mojaverian, Kim, 2013). Many Asian countries have collectivist societies where this kind of positive feedback may serve to strengthen social ties. It stands to reason that European Americans did not see a large difference in positive outcome between solicited and unsolicited help due to the individualist nature or those respective societies. In that context social ties between individuals would have less importance due to the focus on the self instead of others.

Religious ideas and values are strongly related to the giving of resources and assistance as powerful cultural aspects and institutions. Research by Christopher J. Einolf on subjective religiosity and prosocial behavior has indicated that "Equating religion with morality correlated only with religious giving" (Einolf, 2011). Furthermore religiosity as part of a person's identity seems to be highly connected to prosocial behavior. Individuals who "do ordinary amounts of volunteering and charitable giving, religion is just one motivation among others, but for highly

prosocial people, religion seems to be very important." (Einolf, 2011). Interestingly though, the concept of "Divine Control", or a sense of God's power and purpose may hinder prosocial behavior in religious individuals. It was concluded that people who feel that God's control and purpose for their individual life may help less because they feel that "God will bring about good in the world without the need for them to act." (Einolf, 2011).

Looking more closely at personal values a novel consideration has been taken in regards to the values that motivate us to help others. Using the Social Values Survey as a measure, world change orientation was found to be its own distinctive motivator of prosocial behavior. This refers to "the extent to which the individual attributes his or her prosocial action to the function of making the world a better place." (Oceja, Salgado, 2013). This has been posited as a new type of motivator due to the interaction of values such as universalism, self-direction, and stimulation and distinction from "self-esteem enhancement", community concern, and "social relationships". Those values, (universalism, self-direction, stimulation) according to the Social Values Survey, fall into the "self-transcendence" and "openness to change" poles. This means that the world change orientation can be used to indicate a disposition towards the greater good on a global scale which is important in light of the globalized context of our modern world. This is an important perspective because it reveals that World change orientation should be a consideration when investigating prosocial behavior because it adds another layer of context that informs the choice to help that has not been noted before.

It would be ignorant to leave out gender in the discussion of prosocial behavior as it too relates to culture. In a study looking at same sex friendships Male and female participants sought and gave support differently. According to work by Zhou et al, Females are more likely to both give and seek emotionally base support than males. This has been attributed to the emotional

intimacy present in female same sex friendship dynamics but less present in male only contexts. This may also be due to the salient gender roles within society that predispose men and women differently. Women may seek and give assistance on an emotional, problem, or informational basis due to the association of the female role with nurturing and more open emotions in general. Men however may participate less in prosocial behavior in both respects due to expectations of independence and competence. In this situation men and women are positioned differently in relation to how seeking and giving help affects their identity with men at a disadvantage and women facing an expectation of such. However, work by Zhou et al has determined that "Males are equally likely to seek help as females as long as they perceive the relationship as safe and supportive." (Zhou et al. 2017). This is likely due to the fact that in supportive same sex friendhips the risk of damage to self esteem through being seen as weak or dependent for seeking help is minimized.

Methodology

The primary source of data for this study comes from an online survey conducted with people representing various demographics. It was first administered to members of the Gold LEAF organization in association with the University of Maine at Farmington. This institute works with senior citizens in the local area who wish to further their education and helps to facilitate that process. Participants from this group were contacted through email where they were then able to access and take a survey asking about their experiences, thoughts and observations in regards to language use, age, and prosocial behavior. This allowed for the

collection of data specific to older individuals that could then be compared to the responses of younger participants. In order to get the younger generation's perspective the same survey was sent out through a general email list at the University of Maine at Farmington where students could then respond to the survey and provide their input at their convenience. Students were also contacted through the social media app Snapchat, where they could share the survey with friends as well.

Overall there was a total of 78 respondents to the survey, with 19 participants being between the ages of 18 and 25, 5 participants being between the ages of 26- 41, 16 participants being between the ages of 42-57, 30 participants being between the ages of 58-76, 7 participants being between the ages of 77-94, and 0 participants between the ages of 95-100. A total of 56 participants were female, 18 were male, and 3 were non-binary.

A post on the popular online discourse forum Reddit was also made. Within the "Casual Conversations" community I posed the question: Replying "no problem" vs ``You're welcome" to being thanked, Where does that come from and who uses which reply? In this thread 10 individuals offered their thoughts and feelings concerning this social phenomena in open discourse, bouncing off and responding to the ideas of others regarding the topic. This forum provided a way to directly converse with participants and follow up with them concerning their thoughts and gain further information.

Finally a series of interview type questioning was done online, both through email, and the Korean messaging app Kakao Talk. In order to get a cross-cultural sense of prosocial behavior in America and South Korea, interviews were done with two female participants of similar age and socio-economic status relative to their country. Due to time difference and the participant's schedule, Solicitation was done through Kakao Talk, and the interview questions

presented through email to be completed at the convenience of the participant. The American interviewee was also contacted and given the questions digitally for her convenience as well. Both participants were given the same questions regarding prosocial behavior and the intersecting forces of age, culture, and language use; permitting a look into some discrepancies that may be related to their relative culture and upbringings.

A third interview was conducted with a Korean American male. This survey allowed an even closer look at the intersection of culture in a Korean- American context concerning language use, age, and culture through lived experience. This participant was also given the interview questions through email to be completed at his discretion due to time difference and a busy schedule.

The data collected from these instruments will be used in a comparison analysis to tease out the relation of age and language use, and also how that dynamic may play out in the Korean socio-cultural context.

Findings

The following will be a general presentation of the findings from the different instruments used in this study, a discussion looking into the implications of these findings and what they may reveal will follow. The survey and interviews will be broken down question by question with main trends indicated. The interviews between the Korean and American individuals will have an additional comparative analysis later in the Discussion section.

Gold LEAF/UMF Student survey

1) Growing up how were you taught to ask for help? What specific language do you remember using? How do you ask for help now?

Responses to this first question highlighted the importance of manners, citing language such as "please", "thank you", and "excuse me" when asking for help as well as raising a hand in school settings. Asking for help however is largely seen as a last resort and something to be done discreetly as independence is strongly emphasized for many respondents as children and as adults. In cases where help is solicited both body language and oral requests are used. In the case of oral solicitation, requests are explicit and direct, but where body language is used many state that they would often wait until someone noticed they were struggling and intervened on their behalf. School and family settings are generally agreed to be the main places where one learned how to ask for assistance, though some participants responded that they do not remember being taught how to ask for help. In many of these instances these individuals admit difficulty in asking for help later in life as an adult.

2) Growing up, in what ways would you help others? How do you help others now?

Among respondents there is a strong sense of "see a need fill a need" instilled in childhood. Helping others, especially family members and community members is a common thread shared by many. Vectors of prosocial behavior include housework, and volunteering. There are a variety of institutions and groups where volunteering takes place such as Girl/Boy Scouts, Soup kitchen, Church, Senior living homes, and more. In general efforts are made to assist the family, neighbors and then the community at large growing up. Generally the main forms of help cited is advice and physical labor by doing things for others. In adolescence the latter happens most but in adulthood the giving of advice and mentorship becomes more

commonplace, as well as increased emotional support and being a "therapist friend". In adult life participants often continue serving others in similar roles that they took in childhood, especially church, and through volunteering. Those who grew up helping siblings with tasks around the home or with homework seem to do the same for others once grown up; working as tutors, teachers in some capacity.

3) When you hear the word "Help" what words do you associate with it?

Overall there was a trend indicating that participants thought of the word "help" along at least three different parameters. Those can be described as negatively associated, positively associated, and action based associations. While both the negative and positive connections were made in relation to emotions felt surrounding help, negative associations referenced emotional or physical insecurity and even danger. Ideas of being reliant and open with oneself were also categorized this way as well as things being difficult. On the positive side, there is a strong delineation of positive feelings felt for someone else and what one may feel. Words such as empathy, compassion, and benevolence exemplify how participants might feel while giving help while acceptance, caring, and love might be felt when one receives help.
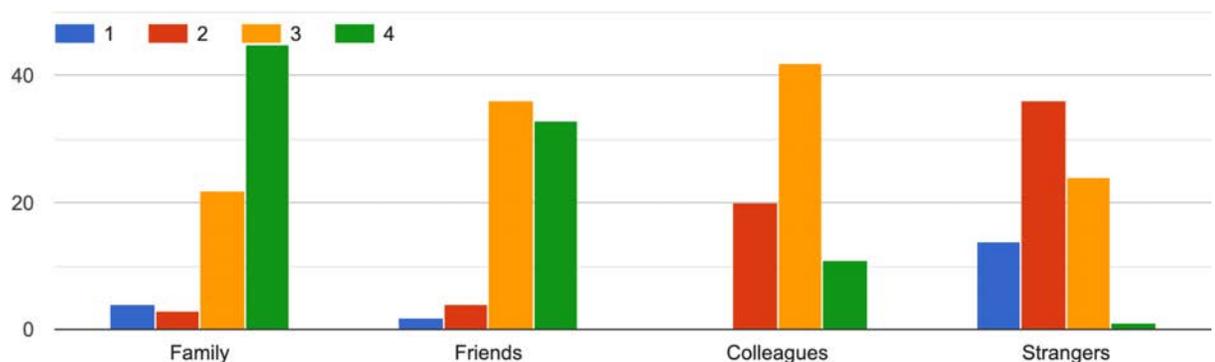
4) What changes in behavior and language do you see in younger generations regarding giving and receiving help?

When it comes to behavior there were a lot of differing observations made by older participants. In no uncertain terms there is a consensus that younger individuals seek help with "less discipline" and seem to request it or even demand it with little need and little hesitation. Younger individuals also seem to be increasingly reliant on the internet and less connected with

neighbors and the local community. Participants connect this with younger people being isolated and more reluctant to ask for help. There is also more of a need to ask younger people to help and less of a "drive" for it unless it serves for personal gain. Notably there are some opposing observations such as mental health and toxic masculinity being talked about more and help regarding those issues is also more and more available. Some individuals note that they actually see younger people asking for help more, and more directly. They state that this is likely due to the lack of judgment that younger people have around help, especially concerning mental health. Participants also mention the use of the internet as a place of helping others among younger people with examples of "crowdsourcing" and the GoFundMe platform. The use of "I love you" is also more common in this context directed to and between strangers.

5) Looking at the different groups of Family, Friends, Colleagues, and Strangers there was a clear breakdown in how participants divided their support giving as shown in the chart below.

Identify the degree of support you provide to the following groups, with 1 being the least degree of support and 4 the most.
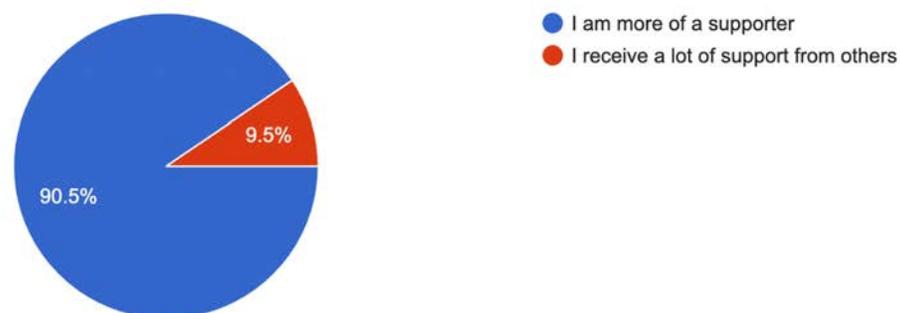
While all social groups received some form of assistance, Family and Friends clearly received the most support with 45 respondents reporting the highest level of support for Family, and 33 for Friends. Friends and Colleagues both note high levels of help as well with Colleagues getting 42 participants who rank it as the second most support given and Friends at 36. Strangers while getting the least amount of support are not left lagging too much as 36 participants say they provide them the 3rd most amount of support and 24 with the 2nd most amount of support that they give overall.

6) participants were asked to respond to the following statements as indicated by the chart below:

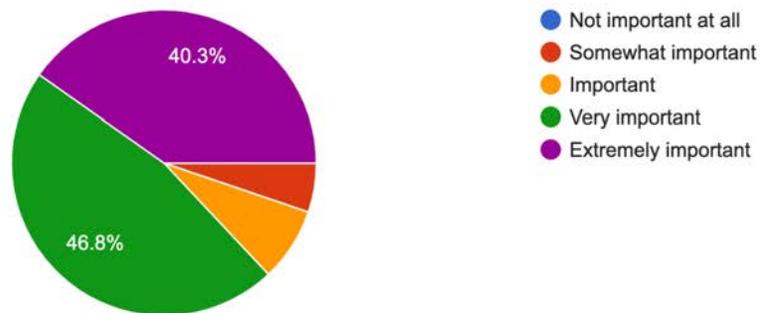Which statement feels truer of you as an individual.
74 responses

Among participants it is clear that the identity of supporter or provider is very strong with 67 out of 74 participants marking that they feel more of a supporter and only 7 identifying otherwise.

7) Similar to the last question, respondents were asked to state how strongly they valued being able to help others. The results are as below.

How important is it to you, as an individual, to be able to support others?
77 responses

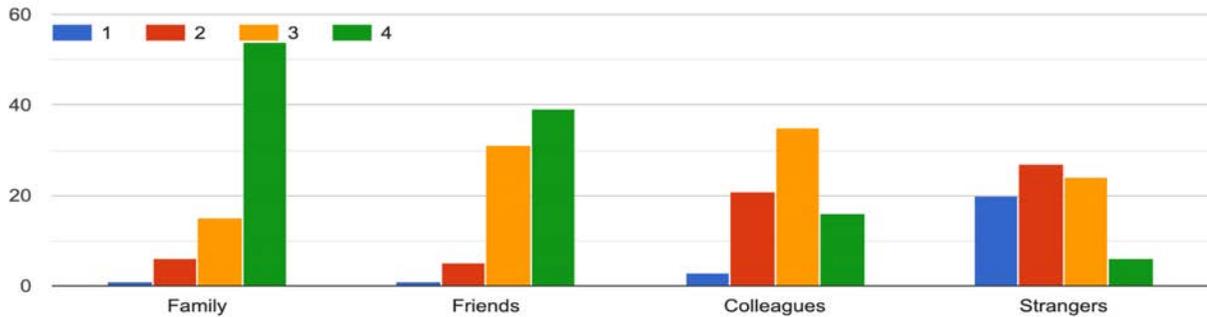Not unsurprisingly 87.1% of individuals reported being able to support others as at least Very important to them personally. Only 13% or 10 participants felt being able to support others was at least Somewhat important to them and no participants reported that they did not care about being able to support others.

8) Looking at feelings of obligation within different relationships the following was revealed.

Identify how obligated you feel to help individuals with whom you have the following relationship, with 1 being the least obligated and 4 the most.

There is a marked difference between feelings of obligation towards Family and the other categories of Friends, Colleagues, and Strangers. 54 Individuals noted Family as having the highest level of obligation loosely followed by Friends at 39 Rating it the highest. Colleagues and Strangers begin to have more diverse rankings when it comes to obligation but Colleagues comes high above Strangers at 35 people ranking it second highest and only 27 reporting Strangers as getting the second most amount of support from them.

9) Growing up, please describe how the following influences affected your attitudes about helping others: Family, Peers, Culture/Ethnicity, Religion.

Family as well as school were the most influential on how participants learned to help others with grandparents and parents specifically mentioned as enforcers of prosocial etiquette. Interestingly In cases where the Family did not model or push helping others as important Peers serve as that model and for many are the second biggest influence on how and why they help others. Culture/Ethnicity are not cited here specifically though a culture of masculinity being tied to independence is cited as hindering help seeking behavior by several participants. Similarly

having a shared experience such as that of being a veteran or growing up in poverty serves as motivation to help those with that same background. In general there is also a sense of individualism and the idea of helping those "less fortunate" especially coming from a white, middle class background. In this there is a prevalent value of "extending a helping hand". In regards to Religion different faith traditions such as Catholicism, Judaism, Methodist and Protestant are noted. Here there is a direct connection with giving through religious practices such as alms, volunteering, and the general view of helping others as a spiritual practice. Of note is the comparison of one Catholic participant stating their observation of Protestant prosociality as being more civically oriented.

10) Again participants were asked to identify how strongly they agreed with different statements, but this time in regards to culture and how it mediates the ways in which they help others.

Which of the following statements do you agree with most?
74 responses

- My culture greatly effects how I help others
- My culture effects how I help others somewhat
- My culture has little effect on how I help others
- My culture has no effect on how I help others

37.8%
31.1%
21.6%
9.5%

This question was asked to get at deeper notions of culture and how it impacts prosocial behavior. Well over half of participants stated that their culture at least somewhat affects how

they help others with most reporting that it greatly affects it. This is interesting as in the previous question where specific aspects of culture such as Religion and different relationships were contrasted with culture, most indicated Culture/Ethnicity as having a weaker effect. This may be due to the fact that culture posed as an all encapsulating entity as it is here, includes the influences of many different factors that make culture seem stronger as a mediator of behavior.

Korean American Interview

The following comes from a Korean American individual, "Lee", Male 32 years of age.

1) Growing up, in what ways was helping others emphasized or not? How do you think this compares to your peers who were not of Korean descent?

Lee reported that for him, helping others was secondary to "working as hard as I could". Teamwork was not something that was taught in the household.

2) Can you describe the dynamic of helping or receiving help from a Korean individual younger than yourself?

In general, among Koreans and Asians in general Lee states that there is a shared experience of being Asian and an "unspoken Knowledge". In relation to this he recounts how he was intimidated by older Asian men, and now as an adult himself Lee sees that he has the same effect on younger Asians.

3) Identify how obligated you feel to help individuals with whom you have the following relationship, with 1 being the least obligated and 4 the most.

Lee ranks the relationships of Family, Friends, Colleagues, and Strangers in the following order:

Family: 4
Friends: 3
Colleagues: 3
Strangers: 2

4) What rules exist for you when asking for or giving help to family members or other Koreans? How does this change when with non-Koreans?

To this question Lee mentions that while the rules of interaction do not change from family and Korean to non-Korean, he will ask more questions and in general be more communicative when interacting with non-Koreans. He states that this is due to the poor communication style of Koreans and that he himself is working on this issue.

5) When asked how deeply his culture affects how he helps others from greatly to no effect, Lee reports that his culture greatly affects how he helps others.

6) Can you describe the dynamic of helping or receiving help from a Korean individual older than yourself?

Here Lee cites the "strict rank culture" of the military and Korean culture he is familiar with as the source of intimidation he feels when interacting with Koreans older than himself. Lee notes that when taking to older individuals who are not Korean he does not feel the same sense of intimidation

7) Growing up, what kind of language would your parents use when seeking help from those younger than them? Older than them?

In Lee's family and home life most conversation, especially around helping others occurred in Korean and therefore carries connotations of hierarchy and respect that is necessary when talking to those older than you or in positions of authority.

8) What kind of support, in your experience do Koreans provide best in terms of mental, emotional, or physical support? What areas might you seek out someone else?

In his experience, Koreans in Lee's life are not good at providing mental or emotional support. Physical support is more readily available however but even that he is unsure of to what degree. Lee attributes this to the language barrier He has experienced living in America with the older generation specifically and how they were taught to "bottle every emotion up, or lash out physically".

9) In what ways does image and the perception of others influence the ways you as a Korea-American provide and seek support from others? How does this play out for your parents or other older Koreans you can speak to?

In response Lee shares that in his position as a Korean-American he has formed the habits of self sufficiency and suffering in silence. It is "incredibly" hard for him to seek out support and is something he is actively working on improving, especially in his job and marriage.

Korean/American Interviews

  The Korean Interview was completed with a 52 year old Korean woman. "Choi" living in Seoul, South Korea, She is of middle class standing and has a husband and children. The following are her responses.

1) What kind of Culture or ethnicity do you have?

  Choi defines her Korean heritage as individuals "who cooperate more especially when they are in need, and they are affectionate and gentle." Other important aspects of her culture include traditional food like soy bean paste, and red pepper paste, and the preservation of other traditional things such as the traditional dress, and games.

2) What does it mean to you to help others?

  Choi notes personal choice in helping but states that those who help are those who help others and that it is a good influence to help others. She also cites her faith in God and his will to help others as important and the desire to "give good faith in everyday life".

3) Do you think helping others is a gift or a service provided?

  To this she clearly states that helping others is a gift when you don't want anything and service comes from a business relationship when you do want something from someone.

4) How do you ask for help from someone older than you? What kind of help are you going to ask for?

  In this case Choi states that she would politely ask for directions.

5) How do you ask for help from someone younger than you? What kind of help are you going to ask for?

Like before Choi says that she will be polite, especially in the case of meeting them for the first time. In the case of the younger person she stresses that they must speak formally because they are younger. In this context she says she would feel comfortable asking for directions or for them to assist with her luggage or something of that sort.

6) How do you think people your age will react when you are thanked for helping others? What language is spoken?

To this question Choi says there are a number of reactions. Some individuals may question why she is putting herself out there for others so much. Others may offer praise and say ""You did a great job, you are cool". She adds that if you go about helping others in a timid manner then your assistance may go unnoticed.

7) How do you think people younger than you will react when you are thanked for helping others? What language is spoken?

In this instance she says that she would be a good role model for younger people which is important to her, Choi muses that they would think: "The older people must be helping well." and that this is "the most ideal look".

8) What kind of rules do you have about helping others in your culture? Do you think the rules have changed since you were a child? If so, how?

For this response Choi shares that it is rare to help others by your own volition if not asked first, you would only really do that if the person looks "very weak". She says that this is because they might not like being approached that way and that it is like this everywhere.

The American interview was completed with a 49 year old female, "Sarah" who identifies as a white female born in the United States. She is of middle class standing and has a husband and children. The following are her responses.

1) What does it mean to you to help others?

Sarah defines giving help in a number of specific ways. Those include physically, emotionally, spiritually, informationally, and selflessly. In a physical sense her identity as a personal trainer adds to conceptions of physical acts of help such as clearing someone's driveway and moving heavy objects to helping others make connections in themselves between their minds and bodies. Emotional support for her consists of being there for someone no matter the situation, the good, the bad, and everything in between. This also includes small acts of kindness like being a stranger who offers a small smile while passing by in the street. Spiritual help in her mind is not connected to religion. Rather it is more important to lift one's spirits by "changing their mindset and their mood". Her job as a secretary informs the informational aspect of helping others. As someone who finds satisfaction in giving others the information they need she is able to help them in their situations. Overall Sarah views selfless help as the best form of help. seeing the needs of others whether great or small and putting them before your own needs is "a beautiful and powerful thing", and that is the most important kind of help you can offer in her opinion.

2) How do you think people younger than you will react when you are thanked for helping others? What kind of words or language is used?

While she cites the words"thank you" as the usual form of thanks given due to it being instilled in childhood, Sarah holds that thanking someone for helping others is "a universal language" that transcends social boundaries like age, and gender. She also notes that some people may be offended if they are not thanked for helping others, but that younger people would react kindly when thanking others. She continues talking about the universality of the phrase "thank you" as it is said in French and Spanish, as well as nonverbal forms like sign language, nodding your head, or bowing. Slang like "thanks", "nice", or "that was cool" may also be used; and with technological changes she notes that some people now convert "thank you" to "ty" in texting.

3) How do you ask for help from someone older than you? What kind of help are you going to ask for?

Being polite and saying "Can you please, help me with something" tends to be how Sarah asks. In general she says that the things she asks for help from younger people are technological like social media, or physical labor like chores around the house.

4) How do you think people your age will react when you are thanked for helping others? What language is spoken?

Reflecting on her own generation Sarah believes that others will have positive reactions both verbal and physical. Examples for her include saying "it was nice that you helped her out with that", and nodding their head to show approval.

5) What kinds of rules do you have for helping others in your culture? Do you think the rules have changed since you were a child? If so, how?

Again here Sarah cites helping others as something that occurs across cultures and as such no rules come to mind in relation to her culture as an American. Instead her own morals and tendency to help others modeled by her parents is what guides her when choosing to help others. She shares that this is something that she struggles with and others may take advantage of her giving nature as she is often, "too nice". As far as helping others compared to when she was younger she believes that now one must exercise more caution as the world has definitely changed. Sarah holds that it is important to "be aware of the situation and your surroundings". Here too she notes the changes in technology with how things used to be delivered in person and unannounced but now things can be scheduled and monitored with the use of the internet.

Reddit Post

The post to the thread R/CasualConversations was made so that people could freely weigh in with their thoughts and opinions concerning the use of "you're welcome" vs "no problem" and where that comes from and why. The following are the main trends and thoughts from that discussion.

There existed a consensus among those who participated in the discussion that the use of "no problem" in place of "you're welcome" was both a recent development and one that originated with younger people within the last 10 years or so. This is attributed in part to the "stricter" upbringing of older generations where exchanges may be more transactional and formal.The "no problem" generation in the eyes of some individuals view helping as "standard", "you weren't doing anything above and beyond you weren't given a problem but an opportunity

to help so when thanks was given it was literally "no problem". Response can also be related to perceived difficulty of request. For example, "handing me a kleenex = no problem, "truly de nada" States one participant aged 55 male. He continues, "Yes, and the degree of formality that the situation demands, independent of the scale of the service. I would never say "No problem, your Honor," even if it was just for passing a Kleenex.

Though individuals middle aged and above understand the interchangeability of "no problem" and "you're welcome" there remains a feeling of "dismissiveness" or the feeling that the reply conveys that the help was provided grudgingly and it was in fact "a problem". One participant paints a particularly detailed picture of what he imagines when he hears this phrase, sharing, "It brings to mind the image of a young woman leaning against a counter filing her nails indifferently right after serving you in a store or fast food drive-thru". This brought the question of the genuineness of this kind of reply. In times where one is not sure how to take the use of "no problem" at face value, other factors like tone, body language, social setting, age, facial expression, and nature/ purpose of the conversation are used to discern what is really meant by this phrase.

Discussion

It is important to restate the focus of this study is the change of language and behavior over time in relation to helping others specifically. Therefore it is also important that we understand the history and original use of the phrase, "you're welcome". Historically these words have been categorized as a phatic phrase. A phatic phrase is any saying or statement that does not carry any meaning in and of itself. Instead it serves to fulfill social obligations in interactions. In

this case the original meaning of "You're welcome" was, "be my esteemed guest". While still serving as a nicety as it does today there is a marked change in the degree of formality between these two phrases and even the meaning conveyed. Nowadays this phrase is most often used when showing appreciation or gratitude for receiving assistance. a far cry from welcoming a guest. More contemporarily we see this change in other forms of language. The extension of this phrase in the grammatical acceptance of "your" instead of "you're" indicates a sense of possessiveness instead of a state of being as the latter traditionally states.

In the context of a digital world it is hard to delineate if this is just a mistype that has become accepted despite its technical inaccuracy or if we as a society have changed the way in which we view the act of helping someone else over time. Furthering this idea is the use of this phrase "you're welcome" in memes and other digital works that lie completely outside of the traditional setting where these words are typically used. In many places on the Internet text posts sharing information or images of cute animals can be found bearing the words "you're welcome". While it may seem odd or boastful to see one person say "here is a picture of a cute puppy, you're welcome"online, in this kind of exchange it is often humorous. The dynamic here is that of the creator or speaker knowing that in presenting what they are sharing, it will be well received and bring joy to the other person. This provides a good example of how the use and meaning of language used in prosocial behavior has shifted over time.

Language and behavior change also occurs in other contexts of course. Looking at cultural differences in behavior this is an obvious fact. The social history that molds this behavior and language is important to understand in order to fully grasp the intentions and meaning of the language use and its change in regards to certain behavior such as in helping others. In the Korean context social reality has been and still is strongly informed by Confucian

ideology. As such explaining the tenets of this philosophy and how they have shaped Korean society to its modern form is needed to inform the comparison of the interviews carried out with Korean and American individuals.

In the late 1500's a prominent Philosopher and mentor Yi Hwang, better known by his pen name T'oegye presents Neo-Confucian ideas regarding self-realization. Like most scholars and sages during his time T'oegye taught that no matter how you pursue it, Confucian ideas must be internalized and practiced in daily life. In this way self-cultivation became an integral aspect of Neo-Confucianism. "Reflections can be on things of the world, but it must be directed towards oneself, thus "self-reflection." (Kim, 2017. pg 205). What are the self-reflections that bring about self-cultivation though? Well, around 1392 at the dawn of the Chosŏn dynasty institutions like the Confucian Academy were deeply concerned with the morals of the people. In order to both improve the lives of the people and ensure a strong kingdom "proper human relations between ruler and subject, father and son, older and younger, and friends" (Deuchler, 1980. pg 102) fell under purview of the law as the cornerstones of social order. In order for subjects to pursue self-cultivation the "basic moral energy of the state" (Deuchler, 1980. pg 110) as seen in the customs and relationships people have and practice must be properly managed. To that end ritual behavior and social relationships became highly regulated as the main areas where self-cultivation may be developed. Over time this evolved into every aspect of life including marriage, the family, ancestor worship, and the domestic/ public spheres having codes of conduct under Neo- Confucian philosophy. Looking specifically at gendered values, women fall at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Key traits of a "virtuous" woman include devotion to one's husband and kin, chastity, and obedience. This reflects the worlds that men and women were

relegated to during the Chosŏn dynasty; Women the domestic and subordinate and men the public and controlling.

Returning to modern times, We can analyze the thoughts of Choi knowing some of the societal values that inform her actions and opinions. An outstanding example of these values in how she behaves would be the difference in how she would ask for assistance from those younger or older than her. Following the social hierarchy that still runs through Korean society today Choi feels more comfortable asking more of someone younger, especially in regards to physical labor, and she stresses the importance of speaking formally from the stance of the younger individual in a social exchange. This is entirely lacking in Sarah's responses. For her language surrounding helping others is much more universal. Though she mentions the importance of being polite, the emotional connection of helping others is much more salient in her response. For both Sarah and Choi there is an understood etiquette in asking for help from others, and a certain level of politeness expected.

Key differences lie in Sarah's kindness being taken care of, and Choi's feeling that one must not help unless requested or someone very apparently looks like they need it. This may be tied to the emphasis on the family in Korean society and the subsequent lower level of care for strangers. In America if an ambulance is coming it is law to pull over and make a path. In Korea however, I remember sitting in a taxi in Seoul and hearing a siren behind me. I turned and watched an ambulance struggle to make its way through the dense traffic. Upon asking a Korean acquaintance I was told that the reason no one moves aside is because they do not know who is in the back and therefore don't feel the need. This is starkly different from the American sentiment that you should always move because you never know if it's someone you know or love in there and you would want others to do the same for you.

Another difference in how Sarah and Choi act prosocially is that Sarah holds being there in a variety of ways such as physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually as important and Choi knows from her societal culture that helping someone unsolicited is not the norm. This is something that resonates with Lee. In his discomfort about going to Koreans versus non-Koreans for issues and advice Lee specifically notes how he would more easily converse and work with non-Koreans due to the communication issues that Koreans in his experience tend to have. This may be related to the way that prosocial behavior is restricted in Korean society that he feels in his own life that mediates the ways in which he himself seeks or struggles to seek help.

The thoughts and feelings of Choi, Sarah, and Lee fall in lie with the findings of previous research on the effect of cultural norms on prosocial behavior, especially research pertaining to individualistic and collectivist societies and stranger oriented prosocial behavior being more common in individualistic groups such as seen with Sarah's comparatively more open thinking about helping others compared to Choi. Choi's hesitance to help others unsolicited is also not out of character as it is important in Collectivist societies like that of South Korea to not burden others with your issues. In Lee the clash of these approaches and ideals is evident in the way he goes to different people for different advice or help.

In regards to the survey with the Gold LEAF Institute and UMF students, there is one major take away that leads me to the following hypothesis. When questioned about the ways in which they do and do not see how younger individuals help others, older participants spoke to a very interesting trend. It seems to them that younger people are pulling away from the local communities in favor of digital communities, and seek help as a tool for the short term and with more frequency. This leads me to conclude that the confusion of older people over how to interact with the younger generation and their perceived lack of prosociality comes from the

increased use of the internet by younger people where older people do not venture as much. As indicated by their responses, many older people grew up taking roles as active members of their local community, supporting family, neighbors and others around them. With the rise of the internet and the ability to have social connections there, younger people have withdrawn from participating in the local community in manners familiar to older people. The perceived lack of helpfulness as the vast majority of social behavior that younger generations participate in, including prosocial, have been relocated to the online world. This would also be a reasonable explanation for the discomfort that younger people seem to have about having traditional forms of communications such as face to face or over the phone. Younger people may prefer to use texting or other interfaces because they are used to the anonymity and freedom that they provide. This is likely the source of the desire for immediate and more frequent help due to the fast pace and broad nature of the internet as well.

With this disparity in the location of social interaction it would make sense that the deterioration in intergenerational communication and behavior exists. The question now is what needs to be done to ensure the social needs of all members of society are being met and how does technology, as an inescapable facet of our lives, play into that process. In an increasingly globalized world it will be important to understand how the internet and technology are shifting culture in both language and behavior. Bridging the gaps of language use and behavior between different cultures and countries is important, but we must also remember the different experiences and histories that inform the language use and behavior of different subcultures of these larger peoples as this is the heart of what is seen in cultures as a whole.

While this is the main takeaway from the Survey with the students and Gold LEAF members there are other notable considerations. Along with the changing medium of social

behavior the content and focus of social behavior and language has also evolved. It stands to reason that the anonymity that the internet provides combined with the increased acceptance of needing help has facilitated mental health and other topics like toxic masculinity to enter into discourse. With this new social environment it has become easier and acceptable to share issues of this kind where in the past they were bottled up and you were more on your own to resolve them. This change is reflected in the inclusion of words and behavior like "venting", and the taking of mental health days which is something absent from the experiences of older individuals.

In conclusion, by looking at prosocial behavior through the lens of language, time, and culture we can see the developing impact of the internet, and globalization on how we think of and enact helping others. Much research has been done in the past regarding mediating forces such as gender, culture, emotions. But by looking at age differences and how that translates to differences in language and behavior, insight on prosociality and how it plays out intergenerationally is revealed. By analyzing cultural values and language across time *and* space we can see how multicultural experiences show the blend and flow of language, values, and behavior not unlike what is seen cross-generationally. I believe further research should be done focusing on these considerations as data emergent in this study shows them to be mediating forces in social engagement, especially that of a prosocial nature.

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