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# A Brief Research Report on Understanding the Meaning of Driving for Older Americans: A Korean's Perspective on Two Cultures

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## Abstract

This discussion paper used a brief qualitative research report to understand the meaning of driving to older Americans from the perspective of a Korean researcher in order to increase cultural sensitivity.

In-depth audio-recorded interviews were conducted with two older Americans by the Korean researcher. A conventional content analysis was performed, resulting in the conceptual model describing their meaning of driving according to life cycle. The Korean researcher's auto-biographical journal, a coding scheme, peer debriefing, and thick description with quotes were utilized to ensure the trustworthiness of study findings.

Participants described the meaning of driving throughout their lifespan as having four themes: Starting to be autonomous, Staying autonomous, Losing autonomy, and Regaining autonomy.

Unlike older Koreans, having driving privileges greatly influences the feeling of *autonomy* among older Americans. In order to provide culturally-sensitive care for older Americans, it is imperative to recognize the loss of *autonomy* that results from losing their driving privileges.

**Key words:** Meaning of driving; Qualitative content analysis; Korean perspective; Autonomy

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## INTRODUCTION

By 2,030.40 million American baby boomers are expected to face the challenge of potentially losing driving privileges in the United States (U.S.). Shared moral values emphasizing *independence* in American culture may subsequently be put at risk by this rapid increase. It is no exaggeration to say that the framework of society in the United States is rooted in independent transportation by an individual driving. Any restrictions on driving could thus seriously impact an older adult's quality of life by limiting normalcy in daily life (Kostyniuk & Shope, 1998).

Many people in the U.S. have been concerned about access to a safe transportation system for the near future. Among countless debates related to older adults' driving, two questions that seem to be of the most interest or concern are: a) "What should American society do for older adults who find it increasingly difficult to drive safely and/or drive cars without realizing they jeopardize safety?" and a) "What efforts should American society put into maintaining their mobility?" Also, some counterplans seem, either in whole or in part, to consider only age-related functional changes in the elderly that may alter driving performance ability such as critical thinking and smooth manipulation: Abilities required to ensure safe driving for themselves and others. One example is the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2015), which provides elderly-tailored programs aimed at ensuring older drivers' driving competency and thus reducing possible traffic-related injuries and fatalities.

Although it is important for all Americans to address the safety of older adults' driving to achieve a safer traffic system, it is also necessary to understand *their perceived meaning of driving*, the evidence of which is very limited. This information should not be overlooked because *holistic well-being* moves beyond physical health, encompassing psychological values such as autonomy, dignity, and self-determination (George, 1995). That is, for older drivers, driving may mean something special to their holistic well-being, beyond being simply a means of transportation. This is relevant to all of us since relatively few studies on the meaning of driving exist, rendering this subject incomplete despite the fact that any policies affecting older drivers can greatly influence their quality of life.

A recent meta-synthesis of several qualitative studies (Burkhardt, Berger, Creedon, & McGavock, 1998; Johnson, 1998, 2002; Kostyniuk & Shope, 1998; Kerschner & Aizenberg, 1999; Sterns, Sterns, Aizenberg, & Anapole, 1997) focusing on older adults' meaning of driving reported that two emerging core constructs in the analysis were *identity* and *independence* (Classon, Lopez, & Winter, 2009). Older adults were more concerned about the threat of being prevented from driving than the risks of crashing or receiving citations because they felt it threatened their identity as independent individuals (Classon et al., 2009). Classon and colleagues (2009) noted four themes that emerged from the analysis (the 4 Ds): (a) *Destinations,* referring to the personal meanings of the places older adults visited and how these motivated them to drive; (b) *Drugs*, referring to a decreased awareness of how medications affected driving; (c) *Disconnect,* referring to the barriers older adults, family members and professionals encountered in looking for assistance and information from service providers, and a need for (d) *Diverse mobility options* (p.28).

According to Eisenhandler (1990), having a driver's license and driving are known as "The Asphalt Identikit," and are two ways to remain connected to the mainstream social world (p. 9). He notes that, regardless of age, driving helps the elderly function in other aspects of their lives. He also points out that although driver's license retesting may eliminate drivers with the most obvious problems, it does not address issues of identity associated with driving: "Car keys, automobiles and licenses are symbols that one is still an integral part of society. Each day they remind older adults that freedom, independence, and change are still possible" (p.11).

Whitehead and colleagues (2006) stress the importance of health care professionals being aware of the devastating effect that losing a driver's license can have on older adults. These effects include isolation, higher rates of depression, and a decreased quality of life (Marottoli et al., 1997).

Given that the meaning of driving can have a great impact on older Americans' holistic well-being, a deeper understanding of the meaning of driving in this population must precede developing and further implementing beneficiaries' needs-sensitive interventions that fully address psychological, safety, and mobility issues related to driving. In particular, progressive reforms of the social norm and mores accompanying the psychological implications could be difficult to achieve solely by education in the short term. An alternative transportation system can be effective in ensuring the safety of society for all nations only after one considers the elderly's preferences on diverse mobility options embedded in their meanings of driving. All these considerations strongly suggest that system-wide approaches to addressing this matter are required.

To meet these social needs nationally, a qualitative study to determine how possession of a driver's license and the ability to drive a car affects the "identity," "independence," and "meaning of life" of older adults is needed. This preliminary qualitative study thus aimed to address these research gaps by exploring the meaning of driving, in particular from the viewpoint of a Korean, in order to contribute to an enhanced cultural sensitivity leading to a "less distorted view" of the phenomenon of interest (Risjord, 2007, p.72), which builds on the fact that a researcher is an instrument reflecting data and theoretical thinking in qualitative research (Bowers, 1988).

### A. Research Purpose

This preliminary qualitative study aimed to describe the meaning of driving for older Americans from the perspective of a Korean researcher in order to increase cultural sensitivity, which can lead to an in-depth understanding about the elderly's perceived meaning of driving by illuminating their lived driving experiences in American culture.

### B. Specific Aims

*Through a Korean's lens of seeing the world,* this preliminary qualitative study sought to address the following specific aims:

(a) To explore how the possession of a driver's license and the ability to drive a car affects the identity and independence of older American adults.
(b) To illuminate their lived experiences related to driving in the U.S.

### C. Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

(a) How do older American adults perceive the importance of having a license and being able to drive a car?
(b) How/which psychological impacts affect their quality/meaning of life?

## 1. METHODS

### 1.1 Sample

Eligibility criteria were a) at least 65 years of age and b) currently driving or having stopped driving within the

past five years. Two participants were identified through purposive sampling: both are female and Caucasian.

### 1.2 Ethical Consideration

Each participant was guided to listen to the first author's detailed explanation about the study's purpose and procedures and was given the option to voluntarily participate in this study through the signed consent form. The participants were also informed that they had the right to drop out of the study at any time regardless of reason. To comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), no Protected Health Information (PHI) was asked. A transcription was made by the first author at the University of Florida on a secured computer during June 2013. Any possible identifiable information was de-identified, and accidently collected PHI by each participant was removed from the transcribed text before data analysis. The research design and interview guides were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, in the U.S.A; the IRB reference number is #2009-U-0500, "*Understanding the Meaning of Driving for Older Men and Women."* All data were collected during June 2013.

### 1.3 Procedure and Setting

Two individual in-depth interviews ranging from 45 minutes to 90 minutes were conducted by one author, who was Korean, using face-to-face formats at the participants' preferred locations. Semi-structured guides and audio-recording were used. Field observations for all individual interviews were also conducted. Several typical open-ended interview questions were as follows:

A) For those who drive,
   (a) Where do you usually go when you drive?
   (b) What do you think will happen if you become unable to drive?
   (c) How will you obtain basic services without driving?

B) For those who are unable to drive,
   (a) How do you get where you need to go?
   (b) Are there places you would like to go but can't?
   (c) How do you feel when you have to ask for assistance with rides or you would like to go somewhere but can't?

### 1.4 Instrument

The researcher is an instrument processing data reflected by his or her unique perspective in qualitative research (Bowers, 1988). Therefore, "distinctive" theoretical thinking can be carried out according to "who the researcher is," making the study findings different from one researcher to another. For this reason, it is important to reveal the researcher's world view.

Although the Korean researcher is currently pursuing a graduate education in the U.S., she lived in Korea for over 30 years. She has a strong quantitative background, a partial language barrier, and limited familiarity with American culture. Also, due to a traumatic traffic accident that happened when she was a teenager, she does not drive. In addition, Korea has an excellent public transportation system. Further, in Korea, driving a car traditionally has been the responsibility of men, and it is not considered necessary for women. Finally, since respecting older adults is a virtue of Korean culture, an elderly Korean's attitude toward driving is radically different from an elderly American's.

Given these conditions, this Korean researcher might find it difficult to understand elderly Americans' loss of independence due to be unable to drive. However, she may more strongly realize a certain meaning derived from the data compared to her fellow American researchers. Based on her cultural background and life experiences, she may also find something valuable that they may not see.

### 1.5 Conventional Content Analysis

Conventional content analysis is a research method mainly used to describe a phenomenon of a researcher's interest through the systematic analysis process of coding and categorizing (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Grbich, 2007). It is useful for illuminating contextual meaning embedded in the text data when existing theories or research evidences on the phenomenon of interest are limited (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In conventional content analysis, analytic procedures are rooted in the naturalistic paradigm (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), wherein codes/categories/themes directly originate in both the text data and unobtrusive exploration of the text data (Grbich, 2007), and a researcher's efforts to avoid preconceived notions (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) are required. That is, it is critical to let codes/categories/themes flow from the data and accordingly permit new knowledge and insights to emerge by inductive theoretical reasoning (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). However, it is important to acknowledge that the phenomenon of interest depends on the researcher's "subjective" interpretation of the text data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The distinctiveness of the qualitative researcher aids in understanding the dynamic mechanism between researcher(s) and participants embedded in the mutual, cooperative, interactive, contextual, and value-bound text data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It thus makes unique creation of the essence derived from the data from one researcher to another possible, acceptable, and explainable in conventional content analysis. It also occurs by "flexibility," allowing each researcher various and singular protocols and procedures (Grbich, 2007). The subjective epistemology may accordingly help approach nature more closely by illuminating multiple aspects of the phenomenon.

### 1.6 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted throughout the study following Graneheim and Lundman's (2004) guidelines. Verbatim transcripts of recordings as well as analytic

memos were analyzed line by line to achieve a level of abstraction. NVivo version 10 for Windows was utilized to analyze data.

Specifically, verbatim statements were repeatedly read word by word to achieve immersion in the whole context (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and continuously analyzed line by line until an achievement of the level of abstraction was obtained (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The unit of analysis was set up as every word. Line-by-line analysis first revealed the meaning units, indicating the constellation of key thoughts or concepts (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Those meaning units were abstracted and labeled as codes through condensation (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The codes were then sorted into categories depending on how those codes were linked and related (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The iterative coding process continued until category identification and thematic generation was achieved under the given situation of limited sample size.

The categories are core components revealing the manifest content embedded in the text in the qualitative content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004); thus, categories were abstracted in order to be homogeneous internally and heterogeneous externally (Patton, 1987). The categories may include several sub-categories at the different levels of abstraction (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Next, the themes emerged from the categories by linking the underlying meaning of each category together, which had multiple and various meanings (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

Lastly, the conceptual model building was performed by identifying the relationship between and within themes, categories, and sub-categories (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) according to the life cycle, which systematically described the meaning of driving for older Americans from a Korean perspective in the given context.

### 1.7 Scientific Integrity

To establish the trustworthiness of the study findings, reflexivity addressing the Korean perspective of the Korean researcher was utilized to establish confirmability through an autobiographical reflexivity statement before being involved in the research. A tree diagram was developed to obtain credibility and was consistently followed throughout the study. Also, three to four doctoral students and one faculty member convened in four peer-debriefing conferences to achieve general agreement among all authors in the data analysis process, which strongly supports credibility and dependability. Descriptions with quotations contribute to the transferability of the study findings.

## 2. PRINCIPLE STUDY FINDINGS

A total of 65 units of analysis were condensed to 24 meaning units, which were then sorted into 11 codes. Seven categories emerged from the 11 codes. Finally, four themes from the Korean perspective reached the highest level of abstraction according to the life cycle: a) starting to be autonomous in adolescence, b) staying autonomous in the noon of life, c) losing autonomy in early older age, and d) regaining autonomy in later older age. A conceptual model was correspondingly created by identifying relationships between themes and categories according to the life cycle (Figure 1). Structures of data analysis on the meaning of driving for older Americans from a Korean perspective were described in Table 1.

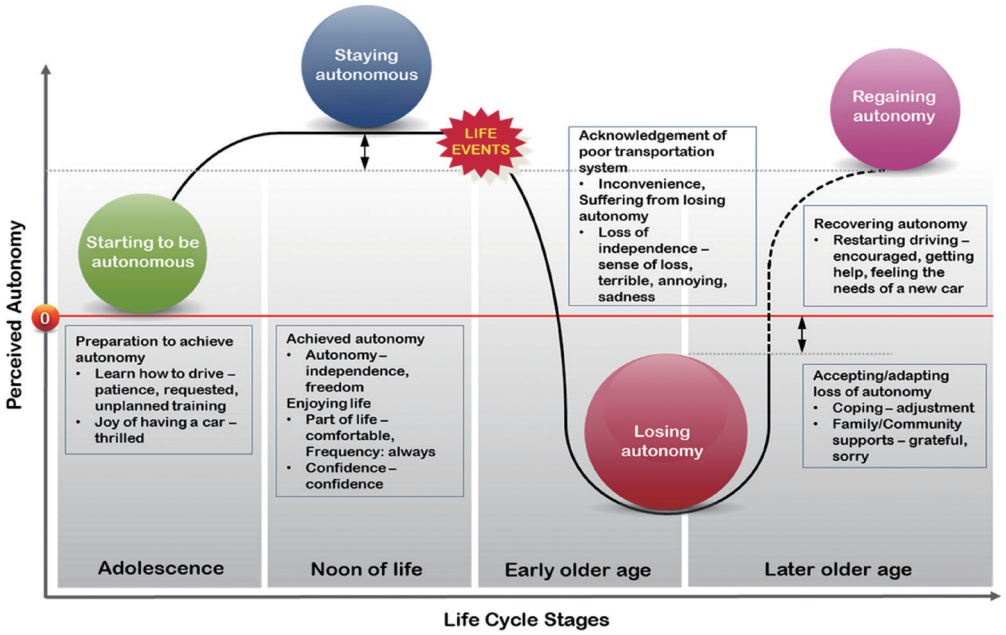


**Figure 1**
**The Meaning of Driving for Older Americans From a Korean Perspective**

**Table 1**
**Structures of Data Analysis on the Meaning**

| Condense | Abstraction | Abstraction | Abstraction |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Meaning unit** | **Code** | **Category** | **Theme/cluster** |
| Patience<br>Requesting<br>Unplanned training | Learn how to drive | Preparation to achieve autonomy | Starting to be autonomous |
| Thrilled | Joy of having a car | | |
| Independence<br>Freedom | Autonomy | Achieved autonomy | Staying autonomous |
| Comfortable<br>Frequency: always | Part of life | Enjoying life | |
| Confidence | Confidence | | |
| Poor public transportation system in the U.S. (in the region in which public transportation is relatively bad)<br>Difficulty in driving (in the region in which public transportation is relatively good) | Inconvenience | Acknowledgement of poor transportation system | Losing autonomy |
| Sense of loss<br>Terrible<br>Annoying<br>Sadness | Loss of independence | Suffering of losing autonomy | |
| Adjustment | Coping | Accepting/adapting loss of autonomy | Regaining autonomy |
| Family supports<br>Grateful (about family supports) | Family support | | |
| Community supports<br>Sorriness | Community support | | |
| Ready to start to driving again<br>Help<br>Encouragement<br>Expressing inconvenience | Restarting driving | Recovering autonomy | |

## 2.1 Starting to Be Autonomous

First of all, participants "started to be autonomous" through driving in their early adolescence. Learning to drive was mainly done by a request of their parents or another family member. It was striking to the Korean researcher that the legal age to drive was just 16, which seemed to be too young to begin driving. Most Korean adolescents from age 14 to 19 intensely focus on their school work and commonly receive their parents' dedicated support in order to ensure academic success (e.g., entrance into highly reputable high schools or universities). Thus, it is unusual for teenagers in Korea to learn how to drive cars in their adolescence.

> Participant 1: I learned to drive when I was 16 years old. ... When I was a senior in my high school, my mother would say, let's go to Palm Beach, which was an hour drive away, … and I would be expected to drive in West Palm Beach which was … a big city. ... Then later in my father's life ... he [my father] asked me to drive for him when we would be traveling together. He just ... it would tire him out and ... he would rather I drive.

> Participant 2: I have been driving since I was ... a teenager 16. My father taught me to drive.

Interestingly, both participants' learning experiences on how to drive were rooted in unplanned training, while almost all Koreans, particularly in their early "adulthood" (19+ years old) start to attend driving academies and systemically learn how to drive, with five hours allotted for learning knowledge and another eight hours for practice (South Korea's Ministry of Security and Public Administration, 2014). From a Korean perspective, the participants' learning experiences on how to drive thus sounded too risky to ensure safe driving.

> Participant 1: When they [my children] reach 13, I let them put the can — we call it "slop"— and put the can in the car and drive up to the north end where they would dump it out into the hog pen, and that's where they learned how to drive. They learned how to drive on the farm, feeding the hogs.

**"Thrilled"—**the participants felt this dramatic feeling when they first acquired their own car. This emotional response did not look much different from Koreans'. However, for the participants, the beginning of "independent driving" signifies "enjoying their life." For Koreans, driving might simply signify means to an end, not an end

in itself. An expression such as "adventure" also describes this feeling. The word seems to imply some trepidation about their confidence in driving, yet it also implies a great excitement about being able to enjoy their "freedom." At this point, driving became associated with "autonomy," which refers to the ability, opportunity, or free will to make our own decisions for ourselves without being controlled by anything else (Beauchamp & Childress, 2009).

> Participant 1: We were thrilled to death! Beyond words! … I have had some adventures. … Wonderful adventures driving.

## 2.2 Staying Autonomous

Soon, the participants arrived at the noon of life, which is represented as "staying autonomous." Fully enjoying life was derived from their independent and comfortable driving, which led them to feel free and "fully autonomous." One participant stressed "independence" related to driving, which was very impressive and also strange to the Korean researcher. In Korean culture, the mutual dependent/coadjutant relationship is a desirable virtue, and it is virtually the opposite of independence.

*Independence*

> Participant 1: I want to go, when I want to go. … I will still be wanting to drive for my 90th.

> Participant 2: I am very independent. I do things on my own. … I am fully capable of making a decision. … I can do my own decision making. And I like that. I am very independent. … I can function independently. I like to be able to make decisions about how I am going to spend my time. … I feel very comfortable giving of myself because I am independent and I can do that.

*Comfort*

> Participant 2: I am very comfortable. … I have never been nervous or afraid. I know the car, I know its limitations. I know what I can do. I am very familiar with all of the mechanisms of it. So I am very relaxed to drive.

Both participants also emphasized their confidence in driving, saying, "I am not a spring chicken!" They looked as if they wanted to prove their safe driving despite the fact they were at an advanced age, providing supportive reasons such as good driving records. However, it is precisely their strong confidence in driving that has allowed them to "stay autonomous" in this stage of their lives. Driving had been embedded into this stage of their daily lives. **"It [driving] is just part of me"** represents the meaning of driving for participants in the noon of their lives, but becomes so closely linked to identity that this belief persists in later life as well.

*Confidence*

> Participant 2: I am very aware of everything that's around me. … I've never had a problem. … I have never caused an accident, and I have never received a traffic citation for speeding, for parking illegally. Never, never, have I received one. (She seemed very confident in driving and proud of her driving record.) That is a good record.

*Frequency: Always*

> Participant 2: I always drove. … We drove all the way.

## 2.3 Losing Autonomy

Both participants went through "losing autonomy" early in advanced age. For them, losing driving privileges was above and beyond simple suffering from inconvenience due to the inability to drive, which was mainly caused by unexpected diseases related to aging. The participants began to recognize the poor public transportation system in the U.S. and acknowledge inconvenience and discomfort in their daily lives caused by it, which was likely the first time in their lives. Above all, they felt very psychologically stressed about the inability to drive. The sense of loss of their "independence" led them to sink into a deep sense of despair, feeling as if **"[their] wings had been clipped,"** and these psychological shocks were expressed as stress responses such as **"terrible," "annoying,"** and **"sadness."** Interestingly, they expressed feeling displeased with themselves when asking for someone's help related to driving. They thought that they were imposing/annoying people because of their inability to drive, even though the helpers were their adult children.

By contrast, the ability to drive in advanced age is not a concern for older Korean adults. Koreans commonly assume that they have the responsibility to take care of their parents even though these traditional moral values are breaking up in favor of the nuclear family. This cultural practice explains why many children work very hard to wait on their parents hand and foot. Also, in Korea, not only is respecting the older adults a virtue of the culture, but the public transportation system is also well-developed. Moreover, driving a car was traditionally the man's responsibility; thus, women were less likely to need to be able to drive a car. For these reasons, when elderly Koreans become unable to drive a car due to disease or other reasons, they may feel less a sense of losing their independence than their American counterparts.

*Inconvenience*

> Participant 1: It [the bus] stopped so many times. And I had to change a couple of times, and it took me all day long to do something. If I had driven myself, I could have been done in, you know, a couple of hours. And so I gave that up.

*Suffering from losing autonomy: "I was down and about to die."*

> Participant 1: I was down and about to die. … That part of my life is over. It is very very sad. … I would feel like my wings had been clipped. ... How terrible!

> Participant 2: I would be lost if I couldn't drive. I would feel very struck down. I would feel like I was bound to stay in this house. … It would really just devastate me. ... I would just be devastated if I couldn't drive. … Oh! My world has crashed on me. … I am just stuck. I would feel helpless … It would be devastating to me. … I felt very helpless. … I was very, very, very insecure.

Participant 1: It's just that you impose on people. … You don't like to keep having to ask people to come and pick you up to take you places. It just got really annoying to me to have to do that and impose on people like that…

### 2.4 Regaining Autonomy

Lastly, the participants entered the stage of "regaining autonomy." Some elderly people accepted/adapted to their loss of autonomy due to their inability to drive, and other elderly people regained their sense of being independent by beginning to drive again. Their adaptation was mainly based on family and community support. And the family's — mainly the spouse's — suggestion and encouragement motivated them to begin to drive again.

*Coping/Adjustment: "Slow down."*

Participant 1: I'll try to adjust because that's life: you know, you have to adjust. If you don't, then you go to depression or die.

If we were willing to wait for a bus, that would cause us to slow down some, and that is what I would have to do if I were no longer be able to drive. And when I want to use public transportation, I just have to learn to slow down.

*Family support/Community support*

Participant 1: I can call on them [her son or daughter]. If I really needed him, my son would come, would come.

Participant 2: People volunteered. They volunteered. They did. They did things for me. … It is a wonderful spirit of … everybody helps each other. … I never asked anybody if they had to pick me up for the meeting or something like that. They volunteered.

I have never had to call on them [her son or daughter] because I always had some neighbor or friends who live close by, who would volunteer to do that.

*Restart driving*

Participant 1: My gentleman friend, one day said, would you like to start trying to drive again? … He encouraged me. He helped me to get started back with my driving. Gradually driving, further and further … I gradually started driving again. As if I'd never stopped … you know, I remembered it very well. I continue to drive…

However, one participant also stated that a family member was anxious about her driving. The family member often voiced her anxiety whenever the participant drove. It made the participant feel daunted and also feels stressed. The other participant also felt a stronger fear of driving in the complex city. This unit of analysis could not be abstracted to the meaning units and then the codes, but seems to suggest that the level of autonomy may not be recovered up to the highest level of their feeling autonomous in the noon of life even if they succeed in restarting to drive or adapt well to the new non-driving environment.

Participant 1: Truthfully, my second, my first daughter … She is not a comfortable rider. … She does not want to be in the car with me anymore when I drive. … She won't let me drive. … I felt sort of frustrated because I can see that she is tired and I would like to relieve her a little … but She's "oh no I can do it!" … (Participant 1 looked a little upset) There's something about my driving that makes her uncomfortable, but I don't know what it is.

If I lived in the big city, I would want to use public transportation because it is "too scary." … all the traffic and everything. And I think it's safer to use public transportation.

## 3. DISCUSSION

This preliminary qualitative study was conducted to understand the meaning of driving for older Americans as seen through the eyes of a Korean in order to enhance cultural sensitivity. Conventional content analysis revealed their meaning of driving with a Korean perspective throughout their lifespan as having four themes: a) Starting to be autonomous, b) Staying autonomous, c) Losing autonomy, and d) Regaining autonomy. It also manifested that the significance of their perceived sense of "autonomy" derived from driving privileges, which are embedded in the context of American culture but relatively insignificant among the majority of older Koreans. In the discussion, we focused on how a Korean researcher perceived cultural differences rather than each study finding in detail, which could not be inferred from the scant data of two participants.

### 3.1 Safety of Society in the Transportation System

Koreans may believe that ensuring the safety of society should come before the elderly's loss of independence. However, it may be different according to the context or the person asked. Given the study findings, Americans might disagree. However, the fact that the participants did not mention the safety or security of society at all during any of the interviews supports this view. Participants intensively talked about their confidence in safely driving and the deep sense of loss caused by not being able to drive for themselves; however, they were silent about how their driving could make other people fear for their lives and threaten the security of society. This is quite surprising from a Korean perspective because Koreans have a group consciousness regarding the public good and often regard the common interest to be more important than that of each individual (Jung, 2010; Song, 1997).

This difference in perspective seems to be derived from cultural differences between the Korean researcher and American participants. Korean culture, as the most collectivistic culture (Triandis, 1989, p.515), has several distinctive features that differ from an individualistic one, such as American culture. First, Koreans place more value on self-sacrifice and self-devotion to achieve/keep the interests of a group or society and the public good, which explain why Koreans place great emphasis on humility, interdependence, and followership (Song, 1997). Second, it is more important for Koreans to maintain harmonious

mutual relationships with each other even if their personal benefit would be damaged, i.e., co-dependency (Song, 1997; Triandis, 1989). Third, filial behavior is a fundamental virtue composing collectivistic Korean culture, which is placed before any other knowledge or skills and is directly linked to a hierarchical societal order (Song, 1995). And, fourth, while the emotional bond among group members is very strong, the relationship with a different group member is mutually exclusive and competitive (Song, 1997). These characteristics seem to be exactly opposite to American culture where the belief is that each individual is an independent being separated from everyone else (Song, 1997; Spance, 1985, p.1285). For Americans who have lived in the context of individualism, their independence, autonomy, competition, and achievement are the irreplaceable core values to sustain and preserve their own dignity (Song, 1997). This explains why they believe that their individual interests precede the benefits of a group or even society (Song, 1997).

Considering these cultural differences, participants' non-response on the safety/security of society or stress responses due to inability of driving may be understandable to some degree. These cultural characteristics in Americans are also evident in previous research. Classon and colleagues (2009) reported that older American's driving was directly tied to 'identity' and 'independence.' Eisenhandler's study (1990) illuminated the values of driving for the elderly as an identifier that enables them to feel a sense of belonging to society as well as freedom and independence. As for the meaning of losing driving privileges, Yassuda and colleagues (1997) reported similar results to the statement "I was down and about to die."

However, despite concern for the elderly's autonomy, American society might need to pay more attention to the fact that older adults' shaky driving could inevitably influence other generations, possibly to the point of threatening their lives and the lives of others. No matter how strong an individual's "confidence in driving," evidence in literature that their confidence corresponds to safe driving is very limited. Rather, as the number of elderly people is rapidly increasing, higher rates of morbidity and mortality resulting from driving issues have been reported and are also expected to increase (U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 2006). In particular, older adults are very vulnerable to any possible traffic collision; thus, their possibility of being injured and/or killed is much higher than any other age group (U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 2006). Further, their degenerating cognitive ability and tool-handling abilities such as agility and reflexes may worsen their driving skills over time.

### 3.2 Practical and Political Implications in the Healthcare Welfare System for the Aged

These societal changes may suggest to us the need for collectivistic approaches to address this matter in order to ensure the safety and security of society as a whole. That is, every effort by society, the younger generations as well as the elderly, may be needed.

Specifically, various accessible elderly-centered transportation alternatives for older American adults need to be established. Classon and colleagues (2009) found that 'diverse mobility options' was one of the four themes explaining an older driver's safety and community mobility (p.28), which supports the necessity for building an elderly-friendly alternative transportation system. Considering that geographic barriers and a limited public transportation system in the U.S. are cited as the reasons why older American adults prefer and choose driving as their 'feet' (Classon et al., 2009, p.24; The Brookings Institution Series on Transportation Reform, 2003), societal endeavors are necessary to close the gap between these limitations and older Americans' need to maintain normalcy in daily life even in non-driving situations.

Hereby, it is important that any alternative transportation system be effective in ensuring the safety of society only after the elderly's preferences on diverse mobility options are considered based on their meanings of driving. As seen in the earlier quote, "It [driving] is just part of me," driving privileges greatly influences the feeling of "autonomy" among older Americans to maintain normalcy in daily life; thus, endeavors to help older Americans to preserve their "autonomy" as much as possible should be attended to, even when they use a public transit. A good solution could be to strengthen their rights of choice on diversity of mobility options or run-time in using the public transit.

It is particularly important to establish a culture of understanding for older Americans who feel a loss of independence and autonomy when driving is no longer possible for them. Considerate policies built on a culture of safety may prevent the possibility of shifting the responsibility on older Americans' individual endeavors or driving competence and/or accordingly stigmatizing older American non-drivers as alienated members of society. Since driving privileges are so closely linked to their identity (Classon et al., 2009; Eisenhandler, 1990), older Americans could also suffer from this potential stigma. For this reason, the fear of losing their driving privileges has been expressed as psychological stress responses such as "terrible," "annoying," and "sadness." Yassuda and colleagues (1997) also reported similar results to the statement "I was down and about to die." At the same time, older Americans may need to accept a regular physical/cognitive examination to ensure their safe driving and further ensure the safety of society.

### 3.3 Suggestions for Social Welfare in Korea

Traditional social norms and values among Koreans are rapidly changing from collectivism to individualism as the transition to information-oriented society is accelerating.

Even though the fundamentals in Korean culture are still embedded in collectivism, most Koreans today live in a newly created culture — one part collectivism, one part individualism (Song, 1997, p.5). These trends suggest that older Koreans covered under the cultural virtue of "filial obedience" may lie in the blind spot of the transportation system. Older Koreans may one day feel an irreplaceable sense of loss that they are not respected by the younger generation, which could be a threat to their quality of life aside from the transportation issues linked to maintaining their normalcy in daily life.

In addition, the Korean public transportation system actually focuses on convenience for the younger and productive generation rather than the aged. It is not too extreme to say that their national values (e.g., working very hard at a very fast speed) are justifying these trends. This explains why the excellent public transportation system in Korea is not actually built on a disabled- or elderly-friendly framework. That is, older Korean adults can use public transportation conveniently in terms of being able to reach most places, but they may also find certain aspects inconvenient such as long transfer distances, steep flights of stairs toward the exits, and/or limited supporting aids. Further, in remote areas, public transportations is limited.

These societal phenomena may be connected to potential transportation issues in the U.S. even though the underlying causes are different. For the Korean elderly, it may be helpful for an enhanced quality of life to improve their perceived sense of "independence" and "autonomy," which are core values for Americans, rather than by putting more value on interdependence or co-dependency, including the expansion of more elderly-friendly public transportation systems. Culturally-sensitive care can promote a better quality of life in older adults all over the world.

### 3.4 Research Limitations and Implications

The major limitation of this study is its very limited sample size — i.e., two American older adults — which threatens the scientific rigor of the study findings because saturation of data has not been achieved (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Grbich, 2007; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003). However, this study could make an important contribution to the literature in spite of weaknesses such as sparse sample size in that it can be considered as a preliminary ethnographic study of elderly Americans' meaning of driving compared to Koreans'. How does someone from another culture conduct research on a cultural phenomenon in a different culture than their own? The obvious answer is to conduct an ethnographic study; however, with limited time and resources, it is often necessary to understand a culture without spending years living in the culture (Creswell, 2009). The process of investigation/analysis with American peer colleagues, the reflexive activities, and the investigation of Korean culture in this study could enable readers to a) understand an aspect of American culture and b) learn how to conduct interpretive research in a different culture. Our recommendation for research practice thus becomes a method to achieve cultural sensitivity that may facilitate further investigation and also aid others attempting this type of investigation in a culture different than their own. Given that the conventional content analysis is considered as an initial approach for grounded theory methodology and phenomenology to develop an advanced theoretical knowledge base such as theory development or the essence of participants' lived experiences (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), this study also deserves special consideration as a pilot study that may facilitate further investigation.

In particular, this study is meaningful in terms of satisfying "Conceptual/Thematic Descriptive Qualitative Research" (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003). Unlike a thematic survey, this study went above and beyond simply labeling each group of data and reached a conceptual description to reframe the phenomenon (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003). Further, since the theoretical interpretation of the study findings extended to an intellectual tradition to illuminate participants' lived experiences (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003), a better understanding of the phenomenon is realizable to some degree in spite of the limited sample size.

However, for ensuring trustworthy study findings, a sample should be not only saturated, but also theoretically diverse in future studies; that is, a consideration of complexities such as participants' races, ages, and gender is required. This suggests that within—and between—a group study utilizing a comparative qualitative study design is highly recommended to improve generalizability of the study findings and further explicate the essence and meaning of the phenomenon.

Secondly, the Korean researcher had a strong quantitative background, a partial language barrier, and limited familiarity with American culture, which may limit fully eliciting subtle meanings and nuances from interviews with the American interviewees. Considering that language itself is the most important research source for qualitative study, we cannot rule out the possibility of failing to accurately and completely represent the phenomenon of interest in the study findings. This strongly suggests that a fully competent bilingual expert in qualitative research should be included in future studies.

Thirdly, the conventional content analysis does not allow this study to go up to the level of abstraction for the development of theory or the complete understanding of the given context, which may result in limiting the full description on the participants' lived experiences (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Even though this study reached conceptual model building (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Lindkvist, 1981), a careful interpretation of the model is warranted.

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