OLDER TAIWANESE WOMEN: LEARNING AND SUCCESSFUL AGING

THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

by

LI-KUANG CHEN

(Under the Direction of Sharan B. Merriam)

ABSTRACT

A dramatically aging population is a worldwide challenge in the 21st century. To age successfully is an objective for individuals and societies as a whole. The main studies of successful aging have largely missed the voices of women and ethnic minorities. The purpose of this study was to understand older Taiwanese women's learning through volunteering and the role of that learning in successful aging. Four research questions guided this study: (1) How do older Taiwanese women define successful aging? (2) How and what do older Taiwanese women learn through volunteering? (3) How does the learning through volunteering influence older Taiwanese women's successful aging? (4) How does the Taiwanese cultural context shape the definitions/perceptions of successful aging of older women? A qualitative design was employed. Fourteen older Taiwanese women who aged 60 and older and had volunteered regularly for at least two years were selected for this study.

This study helped build an understanding of what successful aging means by asking older adults themselves. For these older Taiwanese women, successful aging was defined as (1) being healthy, (2) having no financial worries, (3) maintaining good relationships and connections, (4) continuing contributing to society through volunteering, and (5) having a good death.

Volunteering is a learning context as well as a learning resource for these older women to connect old and new experiences. By means of various ways, these older women developed and learned wisdom, knowledge, and skills. Learning through volunteering facilitated the perceived successful aging of the older women by (1) establishing a meaningful life, (2) building and improving relationships, (3) enhancing positive changes and self-evaluation, and (4) promoting physical and psychological health. Four cultural factors were found relevant to the perceived successful aging: (1) a changing intergenerational dynamic, (2) believing in karma, cause-and-effect, and fatalism, (3) being satisfied with what one has, and (4) valuing a good death.

Three conclusions were drawn based on the findings of this study. First, elder learning through volunteering facilitates positive development. Second, volunteering is a holistic approach to older adults' successful aging. Third, perceptions of successful aging are gender-related as well as cultural-specific.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my deceased parents. My beloved mother passed away in June 1996 and my father passed away in January 2007. If both of them were still alive, they would be 67 years old. It is my deepest pity in my life that I can never contribute to their successful aging. However, I know that their love will be with me forever wherever I will be.

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Looking back at this process -- from the moment I decided to study overseas to when I really left home and headed for the U.S., passed all the qualifying exams, conducted this huge dissertation work and then finished the degree -- it seems like a dream I had yesterday. Too many faces came to mind when I wanted to say thanks. I would like to use this section to express my sincere acknowledgement of those who have helped and supported me with this document and my academic career.

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When I debated about studying overseas, Dr. Bao Feng Lo, my teacher who experienced the terrible 921 Earthquake with me in Taiwan, bought me a brand new IBM laptop. She encouraged me and said, "Just go and try it for one year. If you do not enjoy the life there, just fly back and return the laptop. If you stay there for more than one year, the laptop is yours." I

really appreciate the kind gift. Her encouragement helped me to put my worries about various uncertainties of studying overseas aside and to give it a try. Without her words, I might still be wondering how I can survive in the U.S. Her gracious gift and advice gave me a good beginning point and made me less anxious to embark on a new learning experience in the U.S.

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The past four and half years have been very productive and filled with challenges and learning. I am so happy that I decided to pursue this experience. The flowers of learning and experiences bloomed after I overcame all the challenges, and they have enriched me as a responsible scholar as well as a braver, more open-minded, and self-confident person.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2004-2005), from 1980 to 2050, the world

population will almost double. Along with the growing population, one of the most challenging

demographic phenomena of the twenty-first century is the dramatically fast aging of the world's

population. As the third most populated country in the world, America had 2%, 4%, and 12.6%

seniors who were 65 and over in 1790, 1900, and 2000 respectively. By 2050, this group will

represent 20.3% of the total population (Atchley & Barusch, 2004). The life expectancy at birth

was 47.3 years in 1900 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004, p. 143) and is

projected to be 78.5 years in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004-2005). As in America and other

Western countries, many Asian countries are also encountering the same demographic issue.

Based on U.S. Census Bureau (2004-2005, p. 846) Japan is the country with the longest life

expectancy at birth (80.9 years in 2003) in the world. Most Asian countries have more than 70-

year expectation of life at birth which is greater than the world average life expectancy.

According to the United Nations (2002), Asia and the Pacific will become home to the largest

proportion of older persons aged 65 and above in the next 30 years. Increased longevity, lower

death rate, and a higher proportion of the population being seniors have become a general fact in

every country.

Due to this global phenomenon, a growing number of studies have focused on aging-

related issues through psychological, societal, and cultural perspectives. More and more people

who are categorized as elderly do not feel old in many ways. The proportion of healthy seniors in

older populations is also higher than ever before. Recently, the oldest-old which is defined as

those aged 85 years and over (Hoyer & Roodin, 2003), and centenarians have increasing

proportions among the whole population. The images of the old in societies are no longer those

of being fragile, sick, and dependent. Recently, researchers use different terms, such as positive

aging, productive aging, successful aging, healthy aging, and so forth, to express and reflect

people's experiences and expectations in late adulthood. Among these terms, *successful aging*

has been used most commonly and *successful agers* were created to identify those who age

successfully, even though some researchers have criticized and debated the suitability of the term

successful.

Since the 1960s, successful aging has become an academic term. To age successfully is a

need for everyone and successful aging has become "a guiding theme in gerontological research

and a challenge for the design of social policy" (Paul B. Baltes & Baltes, 1990a, p. 4). The

explorations of successful aging have supplemented and enriched the significant understanding

of late adulthood. To date, studies mainly focus on definitions, exploring determinants, such as

health, theory-building (Paul B. Baltes & Baltes, 1990a; Bowling, 1993; Crowther, Parker,

Achenbaum, Larimore, & Koenig, 2002; Kahn, 2003; Rowe & Kahn, 1987, 1997), and

understanding the definitions and perceptions of successful aging from different age groups and

cultures (Chou & Chi, 2002; Lamb & Myers, 1999; Phelan, Anderson, Lacroix, & Larson, 2004;

Torres, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003).

In 1987, Rowe and Kahn first proposed the differences between usual aging and

successful aging and roughly regarded successful agers as those who "demonstrate little or no

loss in a constellation of physiologic functions" (p. 144). Ten years later, they proposed that

successful aging has three core and relative components: "low probability of disease and disease-

related disability, high cognitive and physical functional capacity, and active engagement with

life" (Rowe & Kahn, 1997, p. 433). Further, in 1990, P. B. Baltes and M. M. Baltes proposed their psychological model of successful aging. They regarded successful aging as a process which involves three adaptive strategies: selection, optimization, and compensation and defined successful aging as "minimisation of losses and maximisation of gains" (M. M. Baltes & Carstensen, 1996, p. 405). From these two most often-cited definitions, we can see that besides keeping healthy, in a sense, successful aging means positive development and adaptation to late adulthood.

Development is a process of change that happens when people experience varying psychological needs (Erik H. Erikson, 1963), or go through different roles and tasks (Havighurst, 1972). Although old age is the last stage of life, development is still continuous. Currently, development theories have mainly been discussed in the education and psychology fields and the discussion and exploration of successful aging has primarily been in gerontology. However, because of increasing healthy elderly populations and their need to age successfully, it is pressing to connect development theories and concepts of successful aging in the field of adult education in order to facilitate older adults to prepare for and reach successful aging. In fact, development theorists have used various developmental work to describe what successful aging means, although they have not exactly used this term. For example, Erikson believed that seeking to balance, reconcile, and integrate one's life means successful aging. To Havighurst, successful aging means reaching personal goals and a new maturity. In the adaptation and transition to late adulthood and to successfully aging, many studies have shown that the declines and losses of biological and psychological functions in old age can be overcome and offset by various external interventions, such as training and education. For example, researchers found memory training has durable effects for improving the elder's memory performance

(Verhaeghen, Marcoen, & Goossens, 1992). A study also indicated that the gap in the risk of age-related cognitive decline between the poorly and highly educated persons might be substantially narrowed by increasing work-related mental stimuli and challenges (Bosma, Van Boxtel, Ponds, Houx, & Jolles, 2003). However, such studies have primarily focused on seniors' cognitive functioning, such as memory and attention. We know little about linkages among experience, learning, and successful aging.

Many studies have shown that through adaptation in old age, the later years can be seen, for the individuals, as an opportunity rather than a crisis, and for societies, as an asset rather than a burden. A key to adaptation and successful aging is learning. Learning drives development and is the means through which we form meaning from life experiences. Learning also is a substantial tool to overcome tensions and transitions in life-span development. In this information epoch which is full of ever-changing skills and knowledge, lifelong learning has been included into significant policies in many countries. Through continued learning, elderly learners can develop new knowledge, skills, relationships, and facilitate autonomy and social connectedness. By means of learning, the elderly can prevent themselves from being excluded from fast societal changes. Thus, despite being in the last stage of life, people can adapt to old age by means of continuing learning.

The most prevalent and significant type of learning in adult life is learning from experience. Experience composes our everyday life. Experience also is the material and foundation of adult learning and knowledge. As Knowles (1980; 1984) argued in his assumptions of andragogy, an adult has an accumulated reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing rich resource for learning. Jarvis (1987; 1995) and Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin (2003) defined learning as the process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values,

feelings, and so forth. One can even argue that seniors would have more potential to learn than youth because they accumulate more experiences as they age which can be the material for transformation into knowledge and skills. Therefore, it is necessary and significant to understand how older people learn through experiences and how such learning influences adaptation to changes in late adulthood.

One of the most obvious changes in late adulthood is losses in relationships and roles. Facing such a change, volunteering has often been regarded as a compensation or substitution for losses and also can develop new possibilities in old age. Volunteering is a valuable activity and also a significant type of experiential/informal learning for people. Through volunteering, older people can be better used as resources in societies. By participating in voluntary activities, the elderly can fill unused time, create a structure for daily life, satisfy communication needs, neutralize the influence of loneliness, build a fuller sense of identity, and create and participate in a functional and socially approved role (Bradley, 1999; Hunter & Linn, 1980). According to Wilson and Musick (1999), volunteering leads to individuals developing stronger networks that "buffer stress and reduce disease risk" (p. 150). Many studies have shown that volunteering in late adulthood indeed maintains physical health, increases positive changes in perceived health, and has positive effects on mental health and subjective well-being (Willigen, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1999). For the elderly, the altruistic features of volunteerism might also promote coping strategies, the learning of new skills and knowledge, and building emotional support. Although studies have supported and shown that volunteering does have positive effects on older adults' development, we know little about the learning process involved.

Currently, development theories and definitions and discussions of successful aging are based on Western contexts and concepts. Few studies focused on successful aging have been

conducted in non-Western countries. Because successful aging is a social and cultural construction (Torres, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003), it is likely that different values and cultures might result in different concepts of successful aging. Thus, there is a need to hear from the East, especially Asia and the Pacific region, with the most rapidly aging population in the world (United Nations, 2002), when we explore issues related to successful aging.

Taiwan, where this study is based, has been facing a quickly increasing older adult population. The population of 65+ was over 7% and almost 10% in 1993 and 2006 respectively and still keeps growing (R.O.C. The Department of Statistics; Ministry of the Interior, 2006b). In 2005, life expectancy at birth was 77.42 (R.O.C. The Department of Statistics; Ministry of the Interior, 2005) and for women and men respectively was 80.80 and 74.50 years (R.O.C. The Department of Statistics; Ministry of the Interior, 2006a). The rate of literacy in 2006 was 97.48% for those 15 years of age and above, and was 83.51% for those 65 years of age and above (R.O.C. The Department of Statistics; Ministry of the Interior, 2006c). In this fast aging country, religion, traditional values, and concepts and attitudes toward aging are very different from Western societies.

As economic and family structures change, more women are involved in the workplace and representing more significant work and intellectual capital in societies than ever before. According to the World Bank (2001), women have longer life expectancy than their counterparts have in most countries. This gender gap in life expectancy results in women being the majority of the elder population. However, living longer does not mean living better. Many studies have also shown that women have less possibility than men to age successfully. Because women tend to marry men who are older than they are and women have higher life expectancies than men, women tend to have a longer time to live alone without spouses. Also because of the prevalence

of patriarchy, women often have lower educational opportunities and work income at any age than men have. It means that women are more likely to encounter economic difficulties as they get older than men. Presently, most studies of women and aging still focus on health and family roles. It reflects again the stereotypes of how people view old age and women's spheres. Although more women have gained chances to pursue education and work or career, older women's learning has not been much noticed and studied. There is a need to know more about women's successful aging and how learning can promote women's well-being when they become older.

Though development still continues in late adulthood, many theories of adult development rarely include this stage in detail, not to mention the related issue of older women's development. Furthermore, although there is a growing diversity among older populations in modern societies, most aging-related studies, statistics data, and adult development theories have been based on white and middle-class Westerners. Thus, to have more inclusive theories and models of adult development and successful aging, it is essential to explore related issues based on older women's experiences and non-Western worldviews. Moreover, although different studies have focused on aging and women, rarely has the association between aging and *learning*, and further between older women and learning been studied. We know little about the relationship among learning, aging, and women and how those three factors interact in Eastern cultures.

In short, most of dominant development theories are based on Western and often male-specific contexts and primarily stress ages of 20-60. Life-span development studies consider the influence of developmental tasks on learning, rather than looking into how learning impacts adults' development, especially for the elderly, not to mention for senior women. Although there

have been many studies of both adult development and successful aging, there is a lack of

connection between these two issues, especially in the field of adult education. The existing

studies and exploration of successful aging chiefly focus on its definitions and determinants.

Studies related to the influences of informal/experiential learning on aging successfully are few.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

The fast aging of the world's population is a challenging fact in the 21st century.

Increased life expectancy and a higher proportion of seniors in the population have become a

reality in most countries. There are more healthy seniors than ever before. Besides reducing risks

of diseases and disability, successful aging also means better development and adaptation to old

age. Recently, successful aging has become a significant need and expectation, for both

individuals and society as a whole.

Frequently-cited adult development theories have been dominantly focused on the stages

before age 65. It has been only since the 1980s that researchers have started noticing and

building women-specific development models. Among those models, older women have almost

been invisible. Development theorists have used different development tasks and gerontologists

have used various terms to describe successful aging. Regarding explorations of successful

aging, most studies focus on health maintenance. In two often-cited definitions, successful aging

was defined as "low probability of disease and disease-related disability, high cognitive and

physical functional capacity, and active engagement with life" (Rowe & Kahn, 1997, p. 433) and

the need to develop adaptive strategies to reach "minimisation of losses and maximisation of

gains" (M. M. Baltes & Carstensen, 1996, p. 405) in old age. However, other researchers point

out that the definitions of successful aging need to be based on different cultural values. Some

studies also have shown that seniors have different perceptions and definitions of successful aging from the aforementioned definitions that researchers proposed.

Despite studies suggesting that education and training also significantly influence successful aging, related studies are rare. At a time when knowledge is the key to a better life, continued learning for the elderly might reduce their risks of being excluded from society and facilitate to preparing for and engaging in successful aging. In contrast with formal learning, the most essential and accessible type of learning for adults is learning from experience. Volunteering is one form of experiential learning which benefits societies and also those who provide help. Many studies have supported the positive effects of volunteering on elderly people's development. However, little is known about how learning from such experiences contributes to successful aging.

Further, while our world is increasingly diverse and aging is as fast growing a phenomenon in Asia as in the West, most aging related studies have been based on Western viewpoints with Western populations. Although women outlive men and are the majority of the elderly population, many studies have shown that women have less advantages for aging successfully than men have. To address this gap and need, this study of elder women's learning through volunteering and its relationship to successful aging was conducted in Taiwan.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand older Taiwanese women's learning through volunteering, and the role of that learning in successful aging. The study was guided by the following research questions:

(1) How do older Taiwanese women define successful aging?

(2) How and what do older Taiwanese women learn through volunteering?

(3) How does the learning through volunteering influence older Taiwanese women's successful aging?

(4) How does the Taiwanese cultural context shape the definitions/perceptions of successful aging of older women?

Significance of the Study

The aging of the population is a worldwide phenomenon and issue. Especially in every industrialized country, the proportion of seniors with better health and longer life expectancy is higher than ever before. To prepare for an aging society, it is important to know as much as we can about how development proceeds in late adulthood and how to enhance successful aging.

For a long time, academia and practitioners mainly followed the study findings and knowledge that had been explored and established in Western contexts. This practice continues today. However, in this more diverse and globalized world, people will and have to live in societies which are more inclusive and multicultural. Therefore, it is even more necessary and important to understand development in late adulthood and successful aging of older women and Eastern perceptions.

The theoretical significance of this study is its contributions to existing knowledge of adult development, successful aging, and the roles of learning in these two areas. In particular, this study adds to our understanding and knowledge from Eastern systems and facilitates more inclusive theories on development and successful aging. Regarding adult development theories and models, this study extends our knowledge by shifting the focus to older women in an Eastern culture. Regarding successful aging, this study widens current definitions from dominant Western worldviews. Through this study, research dimensions of successful aging can be extended to the exploration of possible contributions of learning. This study promotes our

knowledge base about experiential learning, especially its influences on aging. Moreover, through this exploration, we understand and connect the gap among development in late adulthood, successful aging, and learning.

Many countries have still not noticed aging issues in detail. For those governments that have paid attention to aging issues, they mainly focus on resolving poverty and promoting health and nursing systems for older populations. However, the increasing proportion of healthy seniors also has their needs. Because of prolonged life expectancy and changed concepts of leisure and work, more elder people choose to retire earlier to enjoy their own time or to extend their work in different ways. Either in retirement or in continuing working, some external interventions have been shown to be a useful way to counteract physical and mental declines in old age. Moreover, volunteering has been associated with an increasing sense of value and a supportive network for the senior.

The practical significance of this study is its contributions to gerontological practitioners (volunteer trainers, social workers, and adult educators) and policy makers. Regarding practitioners, this study provides a better understanding of the psychological needs for senior women, the main part of elderly populations. Regarding policy makers, this study facilitates understanding about older women's viewpoints and provides governments a clearer picture about older healthy women's well-being. Facing increasing national and international immigration, this study facilitates thinking and understanding about possible multicultural issues of elderly citizens. The study also assists policy makers to better make use of senior women as useful societal capital. Especially in Taiwan, the government has started to develop a national volunteer system. Thus, this study provides a helpful reference to Taiwan's policy makers as they consider

including senior female citizens in volunteering. Significantly, this study provides a possible way

for individuals, families, and societies to understand, promote, and reach successful aging.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to understand older Taiwanese women's learning through volunteering, and the role of this learning in successful aging. The study was guided by the following research questions: (1) How do older Taiwanese women define successful aging? (2) How and what do older Taiwanese women learn through serving others? (3) How does the learning through volunteering influence Taiwanese women's successful aging? (4) How does the Taiwanese cultural context shape the definitions/perceptions of successful aging?

This review of the literature represents studies found in three areas --- adult development in late adulthood, successful aging, and experiential learning; in particular, studies with elderly women and in non-Western cultures were included. Key words of successful aging, aging, older adult, old women, development in old age, learning in old age, and adaptation in old age led to the foundation of the present review. Data bases including ERIC, Education Full Text, Academic Search Premier, PsycINFO, Dissertation Abstracts, Social Abstracts, Social Work Abstract, Age Line, Google Scholar, Women's Studies International, and Chinese Journal Index (R.O.C. National Central Library) were searched to compile this review.

The literature review includes three parts. Part One of this review is focused on successful aging. I first describe the origin of the concept of successful aging, summarize three significant models of successful aging, and then review related empirical studies. Part Two of this review is focused on connecting developmental tasks with the concepts of successful aging. I present related development theories in late adulthood, such as the classic models of Erikson,

Levinson, Havighurst, and so forth. Studies on elderly women's development were reviewed. Connecting developmental tasks with successful aging is also discussed. Part Three is focused on the relationship between continuous learning and successful aging. Since the goal of this study is to understand the role of experiential learning in elder women's successful aging, especially in volunteering context, I first reviewed the literature on learning in late adulthood. Then I reviewed experiential learning theories, women as learners, and the possible contribution of learning on successful aging.

<div align="center">Part I Successful Aging</div>

Aging is a complicated process of development and adaptation that involves physical, psychological, and social changes that go together with advanced age. Before researchers proposed and discussed the concepts of successful aging, the 4 Ds - disease, disability, dementia, and death - were the main focuses of studies on aging (Strawbridge, Cohen, Shema, & Kaplan, 1996). The concept of successful aging has made gerontological studies transfer from focusing on physical declinations and negative emotions in old age to pay attention to continuous growth and positive adaptations (Butt & Beiser, 1987). In this section, I first address the origin of the concept of successful aging. Then, I summarize three often-cited models of successful aging: Rowe and Kahn's three-factor model (1987; 1997; 1999), Baltes and Baltes's model of selective optimization with compensation (SOC) (1990a), and Torres's culturally-relevant theoretical framework (1999; 2001; 2002; 2003). Studies about characteristics and predictors of successful aging, definitions of successful aging based on different elder groups, and the relationship between women and successful aging also were reviewed.

Origin of the Concept of Successful Aging

The introduction of the concept of successful aging in social science dates back to the early studies on life satisfaction in the 1940s by gerontologists in the U.S. (Bowling, 1993). The term has become an academic term since the 1960s (Paul B. Baltes & Baltes, 1990b; Phelan & Larson, 2002) and was popularized in the 1980s.

In 1984, the MacArthur Foundation provided grants and brought a group of scientists from widely disparate fields together and initiated the Network on Successful Aging in the U.S. This interdisciplinary network examined data collected from three community-based populations in East Boston, Massachusetts, New Haven, Connecticut, and Durham County, New York. It aimed to identity those who were 70-79 years of age with higher levels of physical and cognitive functions and to compare the characteristics of these healthy seniors in a range of domains with those who were categorized as intermediate and lower levels of functions (Andrews, Clark, & Luszcz, 2002). Driven by this interdisciplinary network, successful aging became an important research goal and was first wildly popularized in America at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America in 1986 (Bowling, 1993; Day, 1991). Further, it became more popular after Rowe, the chair of the Network, and Kahn's article published in 1987 in *Science* (Rowe & Kahn, 1987). In this article, these two scientists discriminated between usual aging and successful aging, and also pointed out that the general images of aging were derived from effects of disease rather than age.

Based on these historical veins, life satisfaction became one of the most frequently investigated dimensions of successful aging (Ryff, 1982). Some gerontologists even tend to see successful aging as equal to life satisfaction (Bowling, 1993; Butt & Beiser, 1987), although Fisher's (1992; 1995) study pointed out the differences between successful aging and life

satisfaction. Based on the eight-year work of the Network on Successful Aging, researchers have proved that aging well is not simply genetic, but a lifestyle choice that everyone can have. Through these decades, life expectancy has been prolonged and the population of healthy elder adults also has grown dramatically. Successful aging has become a more common reality and also a need and expectation to increasing elderly populations. Facing this global issue of fast aging, successful aging has also become "a guiding theme in gerontological research and as a challenge for the design of social policy" (Paul B. Baltes & Baltes, 1990a, p. 4).

Researchers in multiple disciplines, such as psychologists, behavioral scientists, physicians, and health service professionals have contributed to studies of successful aging. The explorations of successful aging have supplemented and enriched the significant understanding of late adulthood. To date, related studies mainly focus on definitions, exploring determinants, and theory-building (Paul B. Baltes & Baltes, 1990a; Bowling, 1993; Crowther et al., 2002; Kahn, 2003; Rowe & Kahn, 1987, 1997; Strawbridge, Wallhagen, & Cohen, 2002), and understanding definitions and perceptions of successful aging from different age groups and cultures (Chou & Chi, 2002; Lamb & Myers, 1999; Phelan et al., 2004; Torres, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003). Below I summarize three often-cited models of successful aging and review studies on this issue.

Definitions and Models

The answer to the question of what is successful aging depends on one's personal value system or individual social construction (Bowling, 1993; Torres, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003). The definition of successful aging to one may also be quite different over different life events and stages. Thus, it will be more complicated to find a consensus on the definitions and measures of successful aging if we consider the diversities of gender, class, race, cultures, languages, social

roles, educational backgrounds, and so on. Some researchers define it by physical functions (Seeman et al., 1995; Strawbridge et al., 1996), others define it through psychological viewpoints and mainly focus on cognitive functions, perceived control, and life satisfaction (Havighurst, 1961; Palmore, 1979; Schaie, 1990), or sociological perspectives where social interaction and proactive skills such as coping with losses are stressed (Kahana & Kahana, 1996). Some define successful aging from a single perspective, while others stress the multiple factors that contribute to successful aging. Here I describe three significant models that conceptualize successful aging. They are (1) the three- factor model proposed by Rowe and Kahn (1987; 1997; 1998), (2) the SOC model proposed by P. B. Baltes and M. M. Baltes (1990a), and (3) the culturally-relevant theoretical framework proposed by Torres (1999; 2001; 2003). The former two focus on individual levels to consider how elderly people can maintain what they have or can do best with what they have. The latter one crosses individual's dimensions and looks at societal and cultural influences.

Rowe and Kahn's Three-factor Model

Rowe and Kahn's (1987) model is the most often-cited and the earliest proposed one to describe successful aging. They urged that elderly groups are heterogeneous. They also appealed to researchers to emphasize gains as well as losses in the way people function in later life and to study the factors that contribute to successful aging in combination rather than just as separate influences. Among non-diseased older persons (i.e., normal agers), they distinguish successful agers, low risk and high function, from usual agers, non-pathologic but high risk (Rowe & Kahn, 1987; 1997). That is, usual aging is a process in which extrinsic factors (e.g., life styles) heighten the effects of intrinsic aging; successful aging is a process and also a result when extrinsic factors counteract intrinsic aging. They argue that successful older people are those who can control

extrinsic factors and keep physical and psychological capabilities similar with those of younger people. They also use different studies to prove that many negative images of aging and functional losses and deficits in late adulthood might be age-associated but not age-determined. Moreover, many age-related changes can be modified and improved by means of extrinsic factors and interventions, such as exercise, diet, social support net, education, and so on. In their original model, they defined successful aging as the avoidance of disease and disability. Later, Rowe and Kahn further offered an expanded definition and conceptual framework of successful aging. In their latest model, they defined successful aging as including three main components: (a) low probability of disease and disease-related disability, (b) high cognitive and physical functional capacity, and (c) active engagement with life (Kahn, 2003; Rowe & Kahn, 1997). The last factor includes both being connected to others and engaging in productive activities such as cleaning house. Further, the elderly need to meet all three components in the model in order to be counted as aging successfully (Rowe & Kahn, 1998). They explained that each of the three components of successful aging includes subparts and they are most concerned with interpersonal relations and productive activity as the two main forms of active engagement with life. Recently, due to many studies showing the contributions of spirituality or religion on enhancing health and subjective well-being, and on reducing depression and morbidity, Crowther et al. (2002) proposed that it was necessary to add the fourth factor--positive spirituality into Rowe and Kahn's model to make it more integrated.

Rowe and Kahn's model is attractive because of its stress on the possibilities of no disease and decline in old age. Thus, many clinical studies have followed up to explore how to measure successful aging and how to promote and maintain low risks of health and functions. However, the term of *successful* has often drawn criticism. Some researchers point out that this

model was too narrow and could not include all the pictures of successful aging. Researchers criticize that Rowe and Kahn's model only sets active engagement with others as a fixed criterion but ignores some elder people may have adaptive and healthy aging because they purposefully reduce the frequency of social interactions (Scheidt, Humpherys, & Yorgason, 1999). Moreover, researchers also remind us that this model only emphasizes the importance of reducing risks of health and age-related losses, but ignores the meaning of loss for successful aging. Likewise, this model is often considered for elite groups because it does not consider those who have no resources or lack capacities to reach successful aging (Reker, 2001; Scheidt et al., 1999).

Baltes and Baltes's SOC Model

In contrast with Rowe and Kahn's three-factor Model, P. B. Baltes and M. M. Baltes (1990a) proposed "a process-oriented approach to successful aging" (M. M. Baltes & Carstensen, 1996, p. 413). Similar to Rowe and Kahn, P. B. Baltes and M. M. Baltes also asserted that it would be more balanced to consider successful aging with multiple criteria. In their model, success and successful aging were respectively defined as "goal attainment" and "minimisation of losses and maximization of gains" (M. M. Baltes & Carstensen, 1996, p. 405). The notions of mastery and adaptation in their model allow people to reach various specifications of the goals as aging. They proposed seven propositions about the nature of human aging and used them as their main framework of the model. The seven propositions are:

1. There are major differences between normal, optimal, and sick (pathological) aging.

2. There is much heterogeneity (variability) in aging.

3. There is much latent reserve.

4. There is an aging loss near limits of reserve.

5. Knowledge-based pragmatics and technology can offset age-related decline in cognitive mechanics.

6. With aging the balance between gains and losses becomes less positive.

7. The self remains resilient in old age (p. 7-18).

Regarding the relationships among their propositions, they urged that a joint consideration of all propositions is essential. They defined successful agers as those who manage to remain productive. In particular, they suggested a set of pragmatic strategies, selection – optimization – compensation, to facilitate successful aging. The SOC model suggests that despite facing losses while aging, through actively selecting domains based on personal and social importance and relevance, and compensating by technical aids, elder people can reach to optimal old age. They viewed this model as a prototypical model of successful aging, but it also can be implemented at different ages.

Torres's Culturally-relevant Theoretical Framework

Torres (1999; 2001; 2002; 2003) urged that successful aging is a social and cultural construction. As she asserted, it is necessary to include culturally-relevant theoretical frameworks when exploring successful aging. She proposed that before we better understand successful aging in a specific area, it is necessary to understand the value orientations regarding human nature, the relationship between men and nature, relations, time, and activity. However, before we understand the value orientations in a specific area, we need to first understand the foundations of value orientations, such as political, economic, and religious systems, in that specific context. For example, Torres (1999) quoted Vatuk's and Tilak's studies about successful aging in India. They found Hindu scriptures dictates that when one ages one should withdraw from all worldly activities and interests, implying that disengagement constitutes the normative

order of aging in India. Also, because American culture emphasizes individualism, while Chinese culture stresses relations, the perceptions of successful aging between Americans and Chinese will have different orientations. Moreover, Rowe and Kahn (1987) defined successful agers as those who are able to uphold their physical capabilities. In the light of culturally-relevant framework, Torres (1999) argued that their definition is shaped by the master orientation of the man-nature value, a value thought to be characteristic of dominant American culture. From the aforementioned examples, it shows the necessity of understanding successful aging through the culturally-relevant theoretical framework.

In addition, Lawton (1986) in his model of the good life includes *behavioral competence*, *perceived quality of life*, *psychological well-being*, and *objective environment* as the main sectors of successful aging. Schulz and Heckhausen (1996) proposed a life span model of successful aging based on their life course theory of control. In their model, they first defined primary control as individual abilities of targeting and achieving effects in the external environment and defined secondary control as individual abilities of targeting the self and achieving individual changes. Then, they used the criteria of successful aging proposed by Rowe and Kahn (1987) and the viewpoint that regards successful aging as a process of selection and compensation proposed by P. B. Baltes and M. M. Baltes (1990a) to further conceptualize successful aging as "development and maintenance of primary control throughout the life course" (p. 711). In other words, they regard elderly people who can engage and impact external environments around them for the longest period of time as most successful. However, they overemphasize primary control which is the main criticism for this model. Ryff's (1982; 1989a; 1989b) multidimensional model combined developmental, clinical, and mental health perspectives and defined successful aging as achieving the ideal end states of self-acceptance, positive relations with others,

autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Riely and her colleagues (1990) proposed structural lag theory to reflect on and remind people of the failure of social structures, norms, and institutions to keep pace with the metamorphosis in their later lives. They urged that a complete model of successful aging should include the exogenous variables such as environmental, institutional, societal factors, and should develop adequately the social structural opportunities that are necessary for realizing successful aging.

Among various model and definitions, presently, most researchers in gerontology adopt Rowe and Kahn's (1987) model or/and Baltes and Baltes (1990a) SOC model to explore successful aging. Basically, the former model regards successful aging as "a state of being, a condition that can be objectively measured at a certain moment" (von Faber et al., 2001, p. 2694), the latter views successful aging as a process of continuous adaptation to challenges in old age. These two dominant perspectives of successful aging also divide the related studies into two main strands: setting clinical standards and building psychosocial theories. In the former strand, research focuses on measuring successful aging. In the latter strand, researchers focus on exploring the process of adjusting to aging (Tate, Lah, & Cuddy, 2003). Below I review those studies related to characteristics and predictors of successful aging, different definitions based on the perceptions of elderly participants, and the relationship between women and successful aging.

Characteristics and Predictors of Successful Aging

Since older groups are heterogeneous and successful aging involves subjective perceptions, there are difficulties in achieving consensus on the definitions of successful aging and good criteria for successful aging (M. M. Baltes & Carstensen, 1996; Paul B. Baltes & Baltes, 1990a; Day, 1991; Ryff, 1989a; Schulz & Heckhausen, 1996). The lack of common operational definitions also results in difficulties of developing measurements of successful

aging. Besides, some measures can be explained as either predictors or outcomes of successful aging, such as self-rated health, absence of disease and disability, and staying out of nursing homes, and this condition makes measures of successful aging more complicated (Ford et al., 2000). Thus, many studies of measuring successful aging often simply respond to individual preferences of researchers (von Faber et al., 2001). Although some researchers have suggested that eclectic measures that combined subjective factors (e.g., morale) and objective factors (e.g., amounts of participating activities) (Havighurst, 1963) or multi-criteria approach can better understand successful aging (Paul B. Baltes & Baltes, 1990a; Reker, 2001; Rowe & Kahn, 1987; 1997; Steverink, Lindenberg, & Ormel, 1998), such a advocacy has not been widely reflected in the literature to date (Knight & Ricciardelli, 2003).

Day (1991) pointed out that good health and long life are two of the most widely accepted markers of successful aging. Based on a literature review, P. B. Baltes and M. M. Baltes (1990a) identified seven characteristics of successful aging: "length of life, biological health, mental health, cognitive efficacy, social competence and productivity, personal control, and life satisfaction" (p. 5). Through a review of empirical studies, among a variety of operational definitions and criteria of successful aging, no difficulty on any activities of daily life (ADLs), such as bathing, grooming, dressing, eating, and toileting, and self-rated health condition, seem to be the two most often-used standards when assessing successful aging. In addition, some researchers further used various physical and cognitive functions to measure successful aging, such as most of the MacArthur studies of successful aging. Some included psychological definitions such as life satisfaction and cognitive functions or social factors such as skills of coping losses and social interactions to identify successful aging. Therefore, based on different focuses on definitions of successful aging, different age groups, and different

measurements, there are various studies and findings related to characteristics and predictors of successful aging.

Traditionally, research related to predictors of successful aging has mainly been toward a stress/coping perspective which focuses on environmental factors, personal characteristics, lifestyle factors, social resources, and coping strategies (Reker, 2001). Ford and colleagues (2000) followed a population-based sample of 602 non-institutionalized urban residents aged 70 and over for two years. Based on their definition of successful aging, sustained independence during the period of observation, they found that younger age, male gender, fewer medical conditions, good physical function, nonsmoking, and attitudes of favoring family or self over agency assistance and not expecting filial obligation were associated with successful aging. Defining successful aging as a high level of physical well-being, psychological well-being, and adjustment, Reker (2001) compared community-residing and institutionalized seniors who were 65 to 94 years and examined the unique and combined contribution of existential variables (e.g., purpose in life, religiousness, and death acceptance) and traditional resource measures (social resources, intellectual competence, and cognitive competence) on successful aging. He found different predictors between the two groups. However, in both groups, purpose in life, the existential variable in this study, was a unique variance in successful aging over and above that accounted for by demographic and traditional predictors.

The following three longitudinal studies also show again the diversity in studies that explored predictors of successful aging. In a 21-year longitudinal study, Palmore (1979) defined successful aging as survival to age 75, physical function rating less than 20% disability, and happiness rating indicating generally or always happy. They found physical function rating and the happiness rating were the two strongest predictors among men and women. Moreover,

activities of secondary-group (i.e., groups other than family, friends, and relatives) and physical activities were important explanatory predictors of successful aging. In Roos and Havens's (1991) 12-year Manitoba Longitudinal Study, they examined characteristics of individuals that predicted successful aging from 3,573 participants who aged 65-84 and lived in the urban and non-urban communities in 1971 and regarded participants' survival and independent functions in 1983 as successful aging. Comparing what they found in the beginning and the end of the research, self-reported health, bad outcomes occurring to spouses (e.g., died or living in nursing homes), and no diabetes was three common predictors of successful aging. In their 6-year longitudinal study, Strawbridge, Cohen, Shema, and Kaplan (1996) defined successful aging as needing no assistance nor having difficulty on any of 13 activity/mobility measures and little or no difficulty on five physical performance measures. They found absence of depression and four specific diseases predicted successful aging. Moreover, other researchers have found that exercise and having social networks and support (i.e., personal contacts or community involvement), (Seeman et al., 1995; Strawbridge et al., 1996), physical activity, and mental health (Strawbridge et al., 1996), lifestyle (e.g., non-smoking and alcohol), personality (Costa, Metter, & McCrae, 1994; Havighurst, 1963), perception of personal aging (Uotinen, Suutama, & Ruoppila, 2003), and capability of independent mobility (e.g., can drive and no difficulties on ADL) (Andrews et al., 2002) predict successful aging based on their different definitions and measures.

Regarding research sites, few studies focusing on successful aging have been conducted in non-Western countries. Among them, Lamb and Myers (1999) used data from the WHO regional studies to examine successful aging in three Asian countries, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. They found most results are similar to those found in more developed countries. Different from Western experiences, in Indonesia, being an unskilled worker or

housewife/husband is 80% more likely to be a successful ager but people with the same work in

Thailand and Sri Lanka were 24% less likely to age successfully. In a study that examined

successful aging among Hong Kong Chinese older adults, researchers found similar indicators of

successful aging to those found in the West: age, gender, years of education, number of close

relatives, frequency of contact with friends, financial condition, number of chronic diseases, self-

rated health, hearing impairment, and life satisfaction were associated with successful aging

(Chou & Chi, 2002). However, a study of exploring aging in seven developing countries

(Eyetsemitan & Gire, 2003) and a study exploring leisure activity and well-being among

Taiwanese seniors (Zimmer & Lin, 1996) found some similar and also some different results

from hypotheses developed in the West. Since there are many differences in terms of family

composition and relationship, house arrangement, social values and support systems,

philosophies of death, and so on between Eastern and Western countries and between developed

and developing countries, it seems reasonable to presume that the definitions and determinants of

successful aging might be different from different cultures. To better and more inclusively

understand what successful aging means and enhance people to reach successful aging, more

research on successful aging in non-Western culture needs to be conducted. In addition,

quantitative measures have been the dominant tools when exploring predicators and

characteristics of successful aging. Studies using qualitative interviews or blended qualitative

and quantitative designs to understand successful aging are rare, such as Fisher's (1992; 1995),

Knight and Ricciardelli's (2003) and Day's (1991) studies.

<center>*Whose Definitions Count*</center>

Recently, more researchers started to notice definitions of successful aging from the

viewpoints of elder people themselves. Based on the aforementioned definitions the researchers

propose and Bowling's (1993), Knight and Ricciardelli's (2003), Bowling and Dieppe's (2005) summaries, we can say that the academic definitions of successful aging have mainly emphasized longevity, physical and mental health, positive functioning, psychological well-being, social network and activities. Knight and Ricciardelli (2003) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the perceptions of successful aging among sixty participants (18 male and 42 female) who aged from 70 years to 101 years by asking them "What do you think successful aging is?" or "What do you think it means to age successfully?" (p. 226) and compared those seniors' perceptions with the definitions given in the literature to date. They found elder participants mentioned only one or two criteria of successful aging if asked for a definition. However, when prompted, overall, elder participants' perceptions of successful aging were similar with what has been identified in the literature, although not all participants saw all aspects as important. Such consistent definitions between the elderly and the literature were also shown in Tate and his colleagues' study (2003) when they asked elder participants to self define successful aging. In Knight and Ricciardelli's (2003) study, health, activity, personal growth, happiness, close personal relationships, and maintaining independence were the first six often-mentioned by elder participants among the emerged themes; 55.32% identified physical inability or ill health as the worst aspects of aging. At the end of the interview, each participant rated ten aspects of successful aging that emerged from the literature. Health, happiness, and mental capacity were rated as the first three most important criteria.

However, other studies provide different pictures. Strawbridge and his colleagues (2002) used two definitions of successful aging, participants' self-rating and Rowe and Kahn's definitions, and made associations with well-being for each definition. As they pointed out, they drew participants from the Alameda County Study that included representative samples of the

larger American population in terms of gender, age, and minority groups. Among 867

participants who were aged 65-99 years, 50.3% rated themselves as aging successfully but only

18.8% were classified as successful agers based on Rowe and Kahn's definitions. In Tate and his

colleagues' (2003) study, among their participants who were a retired cohort of World War II

Royal Canadian Air Force male aircrews, 83.8% regarded themselves as successful agers.

However, as Strawbridge and his colleagues (2002) pointed out, and also supported by other

empirical studies (Ford et al., 2000; Roos & Havens, 1991), researchers who used similar or

modified criteria of Rowe and Kahn's definitions found average proportion of being counted as

successful agers was simply 20% -30%. A study also found 45% participants over 85 had

optimal scores for well-being but only 13% had optimal scores for overall functioning. These

oldest-old mainly stressed successful aging as a process of adaptation rather than a state of being.

They also emphasized more the importance of well-being and social functioning than physical

and psycho-cognitive functioning (von Faber et al., 2001). Moreover, Phelan and her colleagues

(2004) compared perceptions of two well-educated community-resident groups, a Japanese-

American group and a white group, regarding successful aging with 20 attributes identified and

abstracted from the successful aging literature. In both groups, about 90% thought about

successful aging before, but about two-thirds reported that their thoughts about successful aging

had changed over the past 20 years. Moreover, two groups rated the same 13 attributes as

important to successful aging and the white group added "continuing to learn new things" in

their rating. Interestingly, although the dominant measure of successful aging is functional status

(Tate et al., 2003), among the 13 attributes rated by those elder participants, only one item

related to functioning, two to social health, and two to physical health. For elder participants,

psychological (mental) health, such as perceptions of autonomy, control, and coping (eight items)

seemed a more important component of successful aging. Bowling and Dieppe's (2005) comparison between the definitions produced by academic and lay people also provide a few different pictures of successful aging. The above findings presented that elderly people considered successful aging as a multiple-component concept. Also, these studies seem to show a difference between researchers' definitions of successful aging and seniors' perceptions of successful aging.

Successful Aging and Women

Besides the aforementioned predictors and characteristics of successful aging, the relationships between demographic factors and successful aging also are worth discussing. Although some researchers have found that demographic factors such as gender, age, education, income, and marital status do not have significant correlations with successful aging (Palmore, 1979), most research findings have found that most of these demographic factors, especially gender and age, are importantly associated with successful aging. In those findings, generally speaking, men, younger seniors, seniors with more education, and higher income were more likely to age successfully than their counterparts (Andrews et al., 2002; Lamb & Myers, 1999). Differences in education and assets were more evident as possibilities of successful aging for the intermediate and lower functioning groups (Andrews et al., 2002). Ethnicity is related to successful aging with white being more associated with successful aging than non-white (Leonard, 1982; Strawbridge et al., 1996).

Ohsako (1999) pointed out, based on an international comparison report conducted in Japan, Korea, America, U.K., Germany, and Sweden, in all these countries, more male seniors than female seniors reported that they were happy and fulfilled. Concerning relationship between gender and possibilities of successful aging, most studies also have shown that men have

advantages to more likely age successfully than women (Andrews et al., 2002; Chou & Chi, 2002; Lamb & Myers, 1999; Strawbridge et al., 1996). However, in Roos and Havens's (1991) 12-year longitudinal study, among 3,575 participants aged 65-84, they also found that men were more likely to age successfully in their oldest age group but such a phenomenon did not happen in the youngest group. Also, Williams (1963) used participants' stable degrees of autonomy or dependency to indicate successful agers and found that men were less likely to successfully aging than women were. Such different results between gender and successful aging might be due to different definitions and operational measures of successful aging. For example, when researchers define successful aging as longevity, women might have the advantage of successful aging because the censuses in many countries have showed that women live longer than men. However, gender is a significant marker when discussing physical aging. Although women have higher life expectancy than men, in many European and Asian countries, women also tend to report higher illness at all life stages than men do (Ohsako, 1999). Elder women are more likely to develop and report a greater number of acute illnesses and long-term health problems (Belsky, 2001; Victor, 1991). Belsky (2001) also pointed out that elder women in most developed countries are at higher risk to have difficulties coping with normal life tasks because of their high risks of developing ADL impairments. Also, they on average live for about a decade as widows and have a far higher risk of entering nursing homes. Ohsako (1999) also pointed out, based on an international comparison report on seniors, a significant greater number of women than men were alone. The number of single senior women in Japan and Korea was even four times larger than that of men. Kendig (2004) also pointed out the significance of focusing studies of successful aging on elder women, especially in Asia-Oceania region, because women have lower marriage rates (one of important resources in old age), higher illiteracy rates, lower employment

opportunities after age 65, and longer vulnerable years in late life than men do. Therefore, when definitions of successful aging are changed as independence or having physical well-being, the advantage of successful aging of women might be influenced by the aforementioned social-economic factors and resources they have or can access to.

In addition, with different definitions and operational measures of successful aging, researchers found different predictors to distinguish female and male successful agers. For example, researchers defined successful aging as high levels of psychological well-being and found customary or habitual physical activity predicted successful aging significantly for men but not for women (Morgan et al., 1991). Also, emotional security (i.e., feeling beloved and wanted), sense of usefulness, and prestige had strong predictive value among women rather than men. Financial status and work satisfaction were significantly correlated with men's successful aging rather than women's (Palmore, 1979). Day (1991) combined quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews in a 10-year longitudinal study that was only focused on women who were born in 1900-1910. In her model of successful aging of elderly women, sense of well-being, capabilities to manage on their own (independent activity), and availability of private means of support were three substantial life domains of successful aging. Each domain has a set of empirical measures as markers of successful aging. Those female successful agers ranked high on each of the three domains and incorporated numerous markers of the three dimensions, such as friends for company, perceived their health as at least fairly good or not a factor strongly limiting what they wanted to do. The interrelationship between all three domains determined characteristics of the aging experience for these women. For example, in the study one participant sat on a wheelchair and needed to depend on her husband's care for many things but she was counted as a successful ager by herself and her caregivers and also possibly by the

society as well because her high perceived well-being and personal sources for asking help and supports. However, her model of women's successful aging did not include black women, women who never married, and those too ill to be interviewed.

All in all, even within an aging cohort, the process of aging is very heterogeneous. To different age groups, successful aging means different things. Between researchers and the researched, pictures of successful aging are also not the exact same. Even to the same person, the perceptions of successful aging change along advancing age. Presently, studies have shown the complexities and multi-dimensions of concepts of successful aging. As Fisher (1995) said: "gerontologists are still struggling with the necessary ingredients and proportions needed to ensure a successful 'recipe' in later life" (p. 240). It is very apparent that various predictors and characteristics of successful aging have been found based on various conceptualization and operationalized measures of successful aging. However, combining definitions of successful aging provided by researchers and elder participants, successful aging needs to include physical and mental, functional, psychological, and social health. Regarding demographic factors, most findings have supported that men, younger seniors, more education, and higher income have advantages in successful aging. Although women outlive men and are majority of elder population, based on the aforementioned review, it is obvious that women, no matter marital status, non-white, non-Western, and low social-economic status, have been underrepresented in explorations of successful aging. To better understand successful aging, research conducted in non-Western cultures is needed.

Part II Development in Late Adulthood

Development is a process of change that happens when people experience their shifting psychological needs such as identity and intimacy in different life stages (Erik H. Erikson, 1963),

or when they go through different roles and tasks like getting married and rearing children (Havighurst, 1972). Development also means a possibility of growing and being better. As Kastenbaum's (1993) description, development "proceeds as a form moves from its potentiality to actuality. An acorn and an oak are obviously very different from each other, yet obviously intimately connected…the oak is the actuality of the acorn and the acorn is the potentiality of the oak" (p. 113). Even though more attention is focused on change in a positive direction, development may also be retrogressive (Paul B. Baltes, 1987) and has "the twin aspects of 'growing up' and 'growing down' " (Daniel J. Levinson, 1986, p. 10)

There are various models of development. Although there is no consensus about whether development is singular direction or multi-directional, hierarchical or non-hierarchical, internally driven or externally driven, and whether features of adult development can be demonstrated in most people or in some people in some circumstances, in general, there are three categories of determinants of developmental change: (1) normative age-graded factors, (2) normative history-graded factors, and (3) non-normative or idiosyncratic life events (Paul B. Baltes, 1987; Hoyer & Roodin, 2003). We can also relate the aforementioned triggers of development to various "clocks," including the biological clock, the societal, historic, and cultural clock (or contextual clock), and the personalized clock. For instance, the maturation and deterioration of the brain and nervous systems, one of normative age-graded factors or a kind of biological clock, occur at roughly the same ages in all individuals. Some aspects of development appear normative, or are similar across individuals and cultures, and development throughout life appears to be subject to a variety of normative age-graded factors. Some developmental influences are closely related to specific historical eras or events such as wars and economic depressions rather than to chronological age. These events are under the categories of normative history-graded factors or

societal, historical, and cultural clock (contextual clock). Also, how social-cultural factors influence and construct roles, gender, class, race, sex-orientation, and so forth are also under the category of the contextual clock. Such societal, historical, and cultural factors may influence people's development through their whole lives. In addition, non-normative or idiosyncratic life events, the personalized clock, refer to unique happenings to the individuals. They do not happen at any predictable time or stages in a person's life. Besides the above three categories, researchers set five dimensions--biological, psychological, and cognitive changes, socio-cultural influences, and integrative perspectives-- to facilitate the discussions and understanding of adult development (Caffarella et al., 2000; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). However, in this fast-changing and diverse era, a high degree of inter-individual variability is more obvious among adults than ever before. Also, the perspectives used to better understand about adult development have become multiple. Many researchers tend to agree that it may be more appropriate to regard developmental changes in adulthood as being decided by the interactions of the aforementioned factors rather than by any individual one.

Different theorists divide life-span and developmental work in different ways. However, Western theories and attention related to human behaviors have traditionally focused on youth or life before age forty (Butt & Beiser, 1987). Often-cited developmental theories focus on age from twenty to sixty or even to just forty-five. Although there are plenty of significant studies and theories of adult development, little attention has been paid to those age 65 and over. Although nowadays the life expectancies in many countries have been over 70 years, some people even live over 100 years, theories of adult development have not updated and extended the exploration of development to match this phenomenon. In this section, I first address significant development models and theories that include older adults' development. Then,

studies of elderly women's development are reviewed. Connecting developmental tasks with successful aging is also discussed.

Developmental Theories in Late Adulthood

Although there are many development theories, not all of them include development in late adulthood. Only Erikson's (1982; 1984; 1997; Erik H. Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1986) and R. Peck's (1968) ego development models, Levinson's season framework (1986; Daniel J. Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978), Havighurst's model of developmental tasks (1972), Neugarten's social-cultural perspectives (1963; 1973; 1979), Fowler's faith development model (1981), and Fisher's framework (1993) discuss older people's development.

Erikson's and R. Peck's Ego Development Models

Despite many criticisms and questioning, because studies of adult development have been taken seriously in the science fields since the 1950s, most of the research of adult development is based on and impacted by Erikson's work (Daniel J. Levinson, 1986, p. 3). Erikson (1982; 1997; Erik H. Erikson et al., 1986) defined a stage in terms of its developmental tasks. He characterized each stage in various polarities, (e.g., Young Adulthood: intimacy vs. isolation; Adulthood: generativity vs. stagnation; Old Age: integrity vs. despair) and identified eight stages of ego development in people's life cycle. Each stage has specific psychosocial themes of development. He stressed that the main ego developmental tasks of each stage are to come to terms with both ends of the polarities and approach a balanced and integral self.

There are different psychosocial crises and spheres of social interaction in each stage. Both ends of the polarity in each stage are necessary for people's existence and "only out of a kind of creative balancing of these two tendencies can hope develop" (Erik H. Erikson et al., 1986, p. 38). To Erikson, there are three characteristics of developmental changes. First,

developmental changes are driven by internal and external / environmental forces. An individual

life cycle cannot be adequately understood apart from the social context that one lives in.

Secondly, developmental changes are step-wise and hierarchical in nature and build on one

another but do not depend on a specific chronological age. Thirdly, developmental changes can

be back and forth between stages throughout the life. The ratio of two ends of polarity, positive

and negative driving forces (e.g., Intimacy versus Isolation) in each stage decides the direction

people move toward.

Focusing on the older groups, in their eight-stage development model, Erikson et al.

(1986) categorized those who were in their early 70s through the late 90s as at the stage of old

age. Later, his wife and collaborator, Joan M. Erikson (1997) added the ninth stage which

focuses more on one's eighties and nineties to address the needs and challenges in the final life

stage. In general, Erikson's model viewed old age as seeking to balance the tension between a

sense of integrity/enduring comprehensiveness and despair/ hopelessness/ dread. He and his

colleagues regarded such a process as "attempting to reconcile the earlier psychosocial themes…

and to integrate them in relation to current, old-age development…It is through this last stage

that the life cycle weaves back on itself in its entirety, ultimately integrating maturing forms of

hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, and care, into a comprehensive sense of wisdom"

(Erik H. Erikson et al., 1986, p. 55-56). They also pointed out that the task of the elder is not

only to re-affirm life, to reinforce psychosocial strengths by maintaining meaningful involvement

with people and activities but also to recognize, accept, and prepare for the inevitability of death.

Due to the physical, psychological, and relational changes in old age, older adults may review

each earlier stage to resolve the unbalance at the two ends of polarities in each earlier period in

different ways and renew the senses of hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, and care.

For example, reconciling lifelong generativity and stagnation involves the elder in a review of his / her own years of active responsibility for nurturing the next generations, and also in an integration of earlier-life experiences of caring and of self-concern in relation to previous generations. Also like young adults, older people have to re-assimilate a sense of intimacy with the experiences of being alone, re-consolidating the capacity for love especially with changed relationships (e.g., losing spouses and longterm friends). Erikson et al. (1986) believed that in old age, time for solitary reviewing of the past is essential to reconcile the psychosocial tensions of a lifetime. They stressed that the eight psychosocial themes were a set of perpetually intertwined and inseparable concerns and significant characteristics of the life cycle, so the reviewing the eight themes in old age in no way represents eight independent processes. In the ninth stage, based on the description of Joan Erikson (1997), development is conceptualized as taking place at three separate levels—social and individual relations, the self, and the cosmic (Brown & Lowis, 2003). Joan Erikson (1997) argued that previously resolved crisis points are confronted again in late adulthood. For example, elder people may lose trust in themselves because of physical and functional losses. However, she also pointed out that elders could make headway toward gero-transcendence if they could come to terms with the negative element of the pair in their life experiences in the ninth stage.

Like Erikson, R. Peck (1968) also explored ego development in adulthood. He divided the second half of life, after 30, into Middle Age and Old Age. During Old Age, three stages of ego development occur—(a) ego differentiation versus work role preoccupation, (b) body transcendence versus body preoccupation, and (c) ego transcendence versus ego preoccupation. The first stage is represented by a crucial shift in the value systems of older adults who are

retired; the second stage occurs as older adults experience a decline in resisting disease and an increase in more bodily pains. The third stage happens when people face death.

Lenvison's Season Framework

In contrast with Erikson, Levinson stressed the life structures that were formed in every period. As Havighurst (1972), Levinson and his colleague (Daniel J. Levinson, 1986; Daniel J. Levinson et al., 1978) argued that development is bound to specific ages. Levinson used seasons or eras rather than stages to divide life cycle. He proposed that the human life cycle consists of four different stages (Era of Pre-Adulthood: age 0-22; Era of Early Adulthood: age 17-45; Era of Middle Adulthood: age 45- 60; Era of Late Adulthood: 60-?) and each with distinctive characters. Between two joined eras/ seasons, there are various five-year transitional periods. Levinson (1986) found that people develop through an orderly sequence which consists of stable and transitional periods that correlate with chronological age. He also found that relationships with various others in the external world are the main components of a life structure and the development of life structures was also through "a relatively orderly sequence of age-linked periods during the adult years" (p. 7). He found that it was an invariant basic pattern in the evolution of life structure for men and women. Like Erikson, Levinson asserted no stage is better or more important than any other, and each has its necessary place and contributes its special character to the whole.

Although Levinson's life cycle model mainly focused on middle-aged men and women (Daniel J. Levinson et al., 1978; Daniel J. Levinson & Levinson, 1996) he did mention his speculations and temporary views of the eras after middle adulthood. He set 60 to 85 as Era of Late Adulthood with a transition during 60-65 years of age and speculated that Era of Late Late Adulthood starts around 80, as a concluding segment of the life cycle. Levinson et al. (1978)

recognized that grouping people who were over 60 or 65 as at a single era was obviously

oversimplified. However, they believed that every man in the Late Adult Transition must deal

with the various declines or losses, terminate and modify the early life structure, and keep his

youthfulness in a new form appropriate to Era of Late Adulthood. They asserted that the

developmental task is "to overcome the splitting of youth and age, and find in each season an

appropriate balance of the two" (p. 35). They believed that in late adulthood a man could be

creative and wise "as long as a man retains his connection to youthful vitality, to the forces of

growth in self and world" (p. 35). They stressed that late adulthood needs to be recognized as "a

distinctive and fulfilling season" (p. 34) and "is an era of decline as well as opportunity for

development" (p. 37). Based on Levinson et al. (1978), the primary developmental task of Era of

Late Adulthood is "to find a new balance of involvement with society and with the self" (p. 36).

They also argued that older people would become less interested in getting the rewards offered

by society and would more pay attention to the voices within themselves. They stressed that even

though the elder continued to involve the external world, older people would seek a new balance

in which "the self has greater primacy" (p. 36). Levinson et al. believed that once old people

created a new form of "self-in-world" (p. 36), the Era of Late Adulthood could be as rich an era

as the others. Moreover, to Levinson et al., the Era of Late Late Adulthood is a process that aging

is more evident than growing. In this era, most people suffer from diseases and at least one

chronic illness. The life structure usually contains only a small dimension and a few significant

relationships. Under severe personal decline and social deprivation, Levinson et al. (1978)

believed that there still was psychosocial development accompanied senescence in the Era of

Late Late Adulthood. They regarded the meaning of development in the very end of the life

cycle as a process of preparing death. "He must come finally to terms with the self—knowing it and loving it reasonably well, and being ready to give it up" (p. 39).

Havighurst's Model of Developmental Tasks

Havighurst (1972) regards development tasks as the tasks the individual must learn: "A developmental task is a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society, and difficulty with later tasks" (p. 2). As people grow, they face different physical and psychological changes and social demands and expectations. All three forces form a series of developmental tasks that link between the demands of society and individual needs and must be mastered if one is to be "a successful human being" (p. 5). Havighurst also stressed "some of the developmental tasks may be located at the stages of special sensitivity for learning them. When the body is ripe, and society requires, and the self is ready to achieve a certain task, the teachable moment has come" (p. 7). In his six developmental tasks, three happen in adulthood. Havighurst set ages 18-30, 30-60, 65 and over as Early Adulthood, Middle Age, and Later Maturation respectively. Each has different developmental tasks. In Later Maturation, Havighurst posited that the developmental tasks differ in only one fundamental respect from those of other ages: involving disengagement from some of the more active roles of middle age and deciding if they want to engage in other roles.

Neugarten's Social-cultural Perspectives

Neugarten (1976; 1979; Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985) used more socio-cultural perspectives to explain adult development and mainly explored how societies and cultures shaped age systems and resulted in age norms and appropriate behaviors. She suggested that

"every society is age-graded, and every society has a system of social expectations regarding age-appropriate behavior. The individual passes through a socially regulated cycle from birth to death as inexorably as he passes through the biological cycle: a succession of socially delineated age-statuses, each with its recognized rights, duties, and obligations" (Neugarten, 1976, p. 16). Even though age systems created predictable and socially recognized turning points that provided roadmaps for human life and paths, Neugarten (1979) and Hagestad and Neugarten (1985) asserted that age-graded or stage theories of adult development were oversimplified for several reasons. First, the timing of life events is becoming less regular, age is losing its customary social meanings, and the trends are toward the fluid life cycle and an age-irrelevant society. Second, the psychological themes and preoccupations reported by young, middle-aged, and older persons are recurrent ones that appear and reappear in new forms and do not follow in a single fixed order. Third, intrapsychic changes occur slowly with age and not in stepwise fashion. Also, there were plural age-grading systems with not necessarily synchronous criteria. For instance, in the political system, those who reach 18 are categorized as members of adulthood and have rights of voting, but many of them reach adulthood in the economic system later when they become full-time workers. Moreover, due to the diversities of the contemporary societies, Neugarten reminded that subgroups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, SES) might have their own age systems. Also, perceptions of life periods in population subgroups with life expectancies significantly different from the general population also need to be examined and included in the existing stage models. So, based on the aforementioned reasons, she asserted that the models of a single age stratification structure and of movement from one cross-cutting stratum to another do not capture the complexities of age systems or age-related transitions in modern societies (Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985). Moreover, due to increasing diversity as people grow old,

according to Atchley (2000), Neugarten (1975; 1981) was among the first to call for systematic differentiation by age within the older population. She divided older people as young-old and old-old based not on age but on social and health characteristics. It seemed an effort to try to counter the age systems and not to categorize old populations as homogenous and a singular group. Using data in a early study, the Kansas City Study of Adult Life, Neugarten and other (Havighurst, 1963) proposed neither activity theory nor disengagement theory could give a satisfactory explanation of patterns of aging; personality was the key factor in predicting relationships between level of activity and life satisfaction in old age.

Kohlberg's Moral Development and Fowler's Faith Development Models

Kohlberg's, Fowler's, and Gilligan's studies are often mentioned in adult moral and faith development. However, only Kohlberg and Fowler extended the explored dimension to late adulthood. Both Kohlberg and Fowler stressed that in their models, moral and faith development move only upward and cannot skip previous stages. Of Fowler's (1981) six stages of faith development, three occur in adulthood. Individuative-Reflective Faith and Conjunctive Faith are mainly developed at young adulthood and mid-life and beyond respectively. Those who develop the Universalizing Faith, such as Gandhi or Mother Teresa of Calcutta, possess radical commitment to justice and love and selfless passion for a transformed world. However, Fowler also stressed that the stage sequences were not a perfect match to chronological age and simply helpfully illuminate differences in the ways people make meanings in different contexts.

Fisher's Framework

Fisher (1993) interviewed 74 people over 60 (age range: 61-94) and found five age-independent periods: (a) continuity with middle age; (b) early transition; (c) revised lifestyle; (d) later transition; and (e) final period. His frame suggested that late adulthood was not a singular

stage. First, Fisher stressed that the adequacy of theories describing older adulthood as a single life stage, such as Havighurst's and Erikson's models, and using chronological age to identify differences among older adults must be seriously examined. Also, he questioned if the tension between integrity and despair was sufficient to describe the broader changes that occur during this single life period. His results of the empirical study basically supported the developmental speculation for older groups proposed by Levinson and others (Daniel J. Levinson et al., 1978). That is, the aforementioned five stages basically happened by an upward sequence through each period and the three stable periods were followed by the two transitional periods. Structure-building and structure-changing are respectively proceeded in stable and transitional periods. Through the two transitions, the life styles of the older participants changed from those they had in middle age to being independent and then at last became dependent. Significantly, although this framework basically was sequential, Fisher found "principal exceptions" (p. 87) in this sequential movement. For instance, people might die before experiencing all five periods, or because disabling illness happened before or during the first period so participants skipped some periods and moved directly into the last period. He also asserted that: "it was impossible to anticipate the length of each period or to predict the age at which a person may experience any period" (p. 88) because he found the length of time of each period differed for each individual. Also, due to the fact that 70% of the respondents were women, Fisher's framework also could be regarded as a certain index for older women's development, especially since there has been a lack of older women's voices in developmental models. In his study, he found women who had never experienced work outside home had more elusive concepts of retirement than women and men who had been employed outside the home, and would continue their homemaking activities through the first three periods or until unable to do so. The aforementioned findings including

exceptions, different length in different people's development, and housewives' perceptions and development supported that development is a system of diverse change patterns and not all adults follow the same pathways (Paul B. Baltes, 1982; 1987).

Elderly Women's Development

The aforementioned often-cited development models, especially age/stage models, are often based on life experiences of men (Caffarella & Olson, 1993). However, development is not universal. Moreover, because of extensive life expectancy and awareness of the heterogeneity of elder people, there is a challenge and need to re-evaluate current development models. Especially, there is an extra need to explore how women develop in late adulthood because women on average live longer than men and are the majority of seniors.

Many researchers have advocated and also found that women's aging process differs from men's (Belsky, 2001; Day, 1991; Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985). Hagestad and Neugarten (1985) reviewed some empirical studies, including the Kansas City Study of Adult Life, and summarized different perspectives and perceptions of age between women and men. For instance, women and men encountered different transitions, had different definitions on each age period, had different normative structures of age-related behavior, and different standards to measure their lives. Thirty was mentioned most often by men and forty was frequently mentioned by women as an important point of transition, women were likely to be labeled middle-aged or old at an earlier age by men than by women, and so forth. Moreover, although there still are debates, many studies verify that in women's ego and identity developments, relationship and care is central. Further, there is a movement toward increasing intimacy and interdependence with others than toward autonomy and dependence (Caffarella & Olson, 1993; Carlton-LaNey, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; T. A. Peck, 1986). That is, the connection to others significantly impacts

women's worldview, self-definitions, and behaviors in everyday life. T. A. Peck's (1986) model

of adult women's self-definition described women's development as a spiraling funnel that is

influenced by relationship and social / historical factors that include chronological time and

physiological aging. The process of self-definition happens as a spiral motion which means there

is a constant monitoring between her own growth and any negative effects from changes on

valued relationships. Influenced by the sum of relationships and the sum of social-historical

forces, when women can get clearer self-definition, the funnel-shape figure in the model will be

widened, or it will be like a column. This model has been found to be the most comprehensive

model for women's development (Norman, McCluskey-Fawcett, & Ashcraft, 2002). Finally, in

Caffarella and Olson's (1993) review of the conceptual and empirical literature of existing

developmental models for women, they found three themes descriptive of women's psychosocial

development: diverse and nonlinear patterns of development filled with role discontinuities and

changes, the importance of intimacy and identity throughout women's lives, and the centrality of

relationships and connectedness to others. However, because of the limitations that most of

related empirical studies have been done on younger or middle-aged, and middle-class white

women, the researchers argued for more research on women's development from different

socioeconomic, ethnic, and age background.

Among the few studies focused on the development of elder women, researchers

(Carlton-LaNey, 1994; Melia, 1999) found that attachment, family role involvement,

interpersonal networks, religious faith, and a focus on the present rather than the past were key

factors in well-being and coping for older white and African-American women. More

specifically, Barnas, Pollina, and Cummings (1991) found 94% of the elder female participants

who were white, 65-87 years of age, middle- to upper-middle-class placed at least one adult child

in their social support networks. These women with insecure attachments to their adult children would tend to have negative social, physical, and psychological well-being and reported using more strategies while coping with stress. Besides, although stage development theories are dominant, some studies (Carlton-LaNey, 1994; Melia, 1999) found that senior women did not have an identity crisis in late adulthood based on Erikson's development model; rather continuity theory rather than developmental stages explain development of the elder women well. In Melia's (1999) qualitative interviews with 39 Catholic nuns who were 68-98 and were highly educated, she found that these women's lives did not conform to a sequential pattern of late life developmental stages. Recurring themes, such as family, serving others, prayers, and so forth were constant throughout life and supported the women's continuous identity formation. Also the sense of integrity must be reestablished constantly when changes occur. For these elder women, generativity and ego integrity were continuous throughout lives rather than a culmination in specific developmental stages. Besides, Norman et al. (2002) used a measure of Erikson's development model to compare women's development between two cohorts aged 60-70 and 80-90. Based on Erikson's eight-stage development theory, the researchers found age differences only in identity/identity confusion and trust/mistrust developmental tasks. Overall, the 60s group reflected a consistent sense of self that continued over time and had greater trust and sense of safety to themselves and others than the 80s group. The 60s group also had significantly higher scores on total resolution scale that provides a summary of the balance between positive and negative aspects of the eight developmental stages than the 80s group had. Because most of the women in the 80s group were widows and most of the women in the 60s were married, the researchers inferred that diminished sense of identity in the 80s group might be explained based on the protective benefit of multiple roles and centrality of relationships for

women's identity formation and developmental work. To establish if a ninth stage of Erikson's model occurs only in the very elderly, Brown and Lowis (2003) conducted a quantitative survey and compared the scores on the eighth stage and ninth stage for 32 women aged 80s-90s and 32 women in their 60s. Similarly to what Hogstel and Curry (1995) found in their ten-year study on a male participant, Brown and Lowis found that the level of ego integrity achieved in the 60s remains relatively stable over subsequent years. Moreover, they also found the scores for the 80s-90s group on the scale of geron-transcendence, the primary developmental work at the ninth stage of Erikson's model, were significantly higher than for the 60s group. Although findings of a 5-year longitudinal study which had over 70% female elder participants also showed continuity for most domains of self (Frazier, Hooker, Johnson, & Kaus, 2000), the continuity and change of women's development in late adulthood still need more research, especially with a longitudinal design, to further explore.

In sum, development is a process of change that includes either growth or decline. Various development models describe how people change and develop along advancing age. Often-cited development models mainly focus on age 20-45 and have been based on experiences of middle-class, white men. Even though women's development has been explored over the last two decades and researchers have found the centrality of relationship as a core characteristic of women's development, there is still a lack of understanding of how development proceeds for women with various social-economic status and cultural background after age 65. In general, the main developmental of late adulthood may be summarized as seeking a balance among the past self, present self, and future self, and preparing for and engaging in successful aging.

Linking Older People's Development and Successful Aging

Currently, the concept of successful aging has primarily been applied in gerontology and the development theories have been mainly discussed in the education and psychology fields. To date, the explorations of successful aging have not been much connected with development theories and tasks in late adulthood. To facilitate practical and academic efforts on enhancing well-being in late adulthood, it is necessary to have interdisciplinary cooperation and to connect development work of late adulthood with successful aging.

Besides reducing diseases and disabilities and maintaining productive activities, there are numerous routes toward aging well. In addition to the aforementioned measures and standardizations of successful aging, the second strand of studies related to successful aging is exploring adaptation to old age. In this strand of studies, researchers advocate positive adaptation to old age as successful aging (Paul B. Baltes & Baltes, 1990b; Butt & Beiser, 1987; Scheidt et al., 1999).

Facing biological, psychological, and social losses in this last stage of life, adaptation is a significant vehicle to connect developmental work with successful aging. Among theorists of adult development, just a few such as Havighurst and Baltes used the term of successful aging directly in their follow-up studies; others might use different terms while expressing such a similar concept. Related to these researchers' theories of adult development, successful aging seems to mean to accomplish the developmental work at the stage. For Erikson (1986), the main developmental task in the last stage is to achieve a sense of ego integrity that results in wisdom, for Havighurst (1963; 1972), the last stage symbolized reaching individual goals and arriving at a new maturity. To Levinson (1978), a new form of "self-in-world" (, p. 36) is the ideal result in the final stage. To R. Peck (1968), to be a successful ager would be a person who is purposefully

active as an ego-transcending perpetuation. To M. M. Baltes (1996), successful aging means "minimization of losses and maximisation of gains" (p. 405). No matter what terms were used in various developmental models, successful aging might be summed up as a balanced mind and harmony between the past, the present, and the future, between survival and death, and between self and the world.

To age successfully, seniors need to adapt to changes in biological (appearances, senses, functions, health), psychological (memory, intelligence, autonomy, control), societal needs and priorities, changes in activities and relationship, changes in different dynamics and ratios between growth/gains and decline/losses, and also adjust and prepare for the inescapable death. Such necessary adaptations take various forms in various developmental theories. To Erikson (1982; 1997; Erik H. Erikson et al., 1986) and R. Peck (1968), it involves positive attitudes and feelings about one's life and choices. Moreover, Erikson stressed revisiting the past life is a necessary and significant process of adaptation in late adulthood. E. H. Erikson, Erikson, and Kivnick (1986) suggested that revisiting earlier stages to resolve earlier conflicts is a vital involvement in old age and allows adults to complete the life cycle successfully. Continuing these ideas, Joan Erikson (1997) stated gero-transcendence is a personal ideological shift from a materialistic rationale to a cosmic transcendence resulting in life satisfaction. To R. Peck (1968), successful adaptation in old age means to establish "a varied set of valued activities and valued self-attributes, so that any one of several alternatives can be pursued with a sense of satisfaction and worthwhileness" (p. 90). P. B. Baltes and M. M. Baltes (1990b) view successful aging as "an adaptive process involving the components of selection, optimization, and compensation" (p. 1). They believe that such a strategy of successful aging benefits older people's life and fit a saying of "half can be more than a whole" (Paul B. Baltes & Smith, 2003, p. 133).

Moreover, Havighurst (1963) used the term of successful aging and defined it as "satisfaction with present and past life" (p. 308) which avoids favoring either of the two rival theories of successful aging, activity theory and disengagement theory. These two theories and continuity theory are three often–mentioned theories related to optimal patterns of aging. Activity theory emphasizes that old people, except the inevitable change in biology and health, are the same as middle-aged people, with essentially the same psychological and social needs. "The older person who ages optimally is the person who stays active and who manages to resist the shrinkage of his social world. He maintains the activities of middle age as long as possible and then finds substitutes for those activities he is forced to relinquish" (Havighurst, Neugarten, & Tobin, 1968, p. 161). In a 6-year-longitudial study that explored the relation between everyday activities and successful aging, greater overall activity level, especially social and productive activities, was positively related to successful aging which was defined as greater well-being, better function, and reduced mortality (Menec, 2003).

Conversely, Cumming and Henry (1961) interpreted aging as "an inevitable mutual withdrawal or disengagement, resulting in decreased interaction between the aging person and others in the social systems he belongs to. The process may be initiated by the individual or by others in the situation…his withdrawal may be accompanied from the outset by an increased preoccupation with himself" (p. 14). So, "disengagement is a natural rather than an imposed process" (Havighurst et al., 1968, p. 161) and is "not the same as passive, dependent living" (Havighurst, 1963, p. 311). It appears that older people reach a new equilibrium with a greater psychological distance, new types of relationships, and decreased social interaction with the persons around him/her. Nevertheless, studies found that either activity theory and disengagement theory could happen in old age and personality was pivotal to predict the

relationship between level of activity and life satisfaction (Havighurst, 1963). In contrast with

the above two theories, continuity theory assumes that adult development is continuous and

stresses that to continue the previous life, thinking, and activity patterns in late adulthood will

enhance a more optimal aging. Atchley's studies also proved that older adults who had

developed patterns of thinking and acting that continued to evolve and that were used

continuously in adapting to changing needs and circumstances showed great pleasure in the face

of physical, mental, and social losses. According to Atchley (2000), "continuity theory is about

continuous evolution and individuation. It is a feedback systems theory which assumes that

people are constantly learning about themselves and their world and using that information to

increase, maintain, or retain their adaptive capacity" (p. 120). Based on this theoretical

perspective, developing, maintaining, and preserving adaptive capacity is the developmental core

in late adulthood and of successful aging.

In short, "potential and limits, gains and losses, are parts of the picture" of aging (Paul B.

Baltes, 1993, p. 592). Facing a dramatically changing older population and increasingly healthy

seniors, it is important to build more inclusive models that focus on the needs, adaptations, and

challenges in the late adulthood, especially connected with older people's development work

with their successful aging. Moreover, developmental models or discussions involving older

women are rare. As many developmental theories have shown: through adaptation in old age the

later years can be seen as an opportunity rather than a crisis, an asset rather than a burden. The

declines and losses of biological and psychological functions in late adulthood might be

overcome and offset by various external interventions, such as training and education. Whether

seniors keep active, disengage from society, or continue their behaviors and attitudes, as Jarvis

(2001) pointed out, for seniors, living in a fast-changing world, "there is always a place where

changes present them with potentially new learning situations; where there are still possibilities

of new experiences, new learning and still more personal growth" (p. 44). Continuous learning

might be a significant key to facilitate and contribute to the processes of adaptation and assist

people to age successfully. Moreover, experiential learning is the most accessible opportunity for

adults to continue learning. Thus, in the following section, experiential learning in late adulthood

and related studies, especially for women as learners, are further explored.

<center>Part III Learning in Late Adulthood</center>

Learning often is a significant factor that cannot be ignored as it drives development and

change for human beings. Thus, under a fast-changing and knowledge-based society, continuous

learning is significant for individuals. For a long time, older adults had been not regarded as

candidates for learning. Only within the past few decades, because the elder population increased,

the third age education (e.g., education for those who are after retirement) just started between

1962 and 1972 and has grown tremendously within the past quarter of a century (Jarvis, 2001).

In Britain and America, since the 1970s, the educational needs of older adults began to be

noticed because of increasing life expectancy and demographic structure change (Glendenning,

2001; Manheimer & Moskow-Mckenzie, 1995). According to the National Household Education

Surveys in the U.S., during the 1990s, the percentage of people aged 66-74 who took at least one

adult education class in the previous year more than doubled -- from 8.4% in 1991 to 19.9% in

1999 (Manheimer, 2002). It reflects a growing learning need for older adults. The literature of

older adults' learning has primarily been focused on where, why, and how older adults learn in

formal and non-formal education settings. However, experience is the richest and the most

accessible learning resources for adults, especially when physical and functional limitations

increase along with aging. Rare studies explore experiential learning in late adulthood. In the

section, I first review studies of learning in late adulthood in terms of where (learning systems), why (needs and motivations) and why not (barriers), and how (learning preferences) elder people learn. Secondly, experiential learning theories and the literature on women as learners are reviewed. Last, a possible relationship between learning and successful aging, especially for women, is addressed.

<center>*Where, Why, and How Older Adults Learn*</center>

Older adults have been underrepresented in educational settings and educational studies (Davenport, 1986; Kim & Merriam, 2004). Regarding learning programs and organizations for elder adults, American and European systems are mainly discussed in the literature. In the United States, five types of organizations provide educational opportunities for older adults. They are college and university based Learning in Retirement Institutes, the department-store based Older Adult Services and Information Systems institutions, Shepherd's centers, community colleges, and senior centers. Besides the aforementioned opportunities for seniors to learn with no or low fees, the success of Elderhostel which was established in 1975 and was a fee-driven and travel-learning-vacation program has proven that older adults have various and strong learning needs. Older learners are often assigned roles of planning, teaching, governance, and community service in these educational settings (Manheimer & Moskow-Mckenzie, 1995). The University of the Third Age (U3A) is an educational movement and also an educational program for older adults in Europe. It started in the University of Toulouse, France in the 1970s. At about the same time, U3A began in England but with different model of operation. In France, U3A has a top-down administrative arrangement and the programs are created and taught by academics at the participating universities. The main educational activities are lectures, courses, and workshops taught by faculty. This form attached U3As to the local universities from which they receive

support and has been favored by many continental European countries. In the United Kingdom, and also followed by Australia and New Zealand, U3As are separate from universities and are voluntary autonomous organizations. These U3As are more discussion group-oriented and embody a culture of volunteerism and mutual aid. They have a bottom-up administrative arrangement and interested older learners take charge of defining their learning protocols, electing leaders from older learners to lead their studies. Groups often meet in members' homes. In Finland, U3As are hybrids that used models from the U3As in France and England and started in 1980s by supplying three educational activities: formal lecture series, discussion groups, and research groups. Referring to the recognition of credits, in England and France U3As courses are all non-credit but in Finland U3As do not confer degrees but do provide credits for some courses. All U3As in these three countries require no limitations in age and previous educational background for enrolling (Glendenning, 2001; Jarvis, 2001; Jo Walker, 1998; Yenerall, 2003). Elder learners' participation in roles of planning, teaching, governance, and service is the same characteristic in both the U.S. and European learning systems for seniors.

Regarding motivations of learning in late adulthood, many researchers have found that cognitive interest (i.e., intellectual curiosity or to learn only for the sake of learning) was the most influential motivator for seniors to learn (Kim & Merriam, 2004; Yenerall, 2003). Social contact is also a significant factor of seniors' educational participation in the U.S. (Kim & Merriam, 2004) but seems not so significant for European seniors (Yenerall, 2003). In the study on elder adults aged 80 and over and participating in a university-based lifelong learning program, researchers found that these senior learners were actively involved in planning and directing their own lives. Keeping independent was a motivator and also a result of their continuous learning (Neikrug et al., 1995). Regarding reasons for not participating in learning

activities, based on two international comparison reports commissioned by Japan's Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, the first seven reasons were: do not like to learn, no opportunity around or not know where to find opportunities, no friends to learn together or no family support, and expense and time consideration (Ohsako, 1999). Physical disability and health condition are the most often mentioned barriers to participating in learning for seniors (Purdie & Boulton, 2003)

Regarding how elder people learn, when exploring learning style preferences of older adults, based on Kolb's Learning Style Inventory, Truluck and Courtenay (1999) found that the older adults in their study were evenly distributed across the styles of Accommodator (i.e., learning by feeling and doing), Assimilator (i.e., learning by thinking and watching), and Diverger (i.e., learning by feeling and watching), with fewer preferring the Converger style (i.e., involves thinking and doing while learning). Some age trends in terms of learning style preferences between gender, age, or educational level were noted. They found not all older learners are active, hands-on learners as the adult education literature suggests. Along with aging, elder learners' preferences moved from learning by feeling and doing to watching and thinking. It seemed to show a tendency for older adults to become more reflective and observational in the learning environment when they become older. In contrast with the above study, Davenport (1986) did not find an association between age and learning style. However, she found that gender was related to learning styles which is consistent with previous studies. For example, elder female participants pay more attention to human behavior and prefer group discussion than elder male participants. Comparing seniors' learning in different countries, Ohsako (1999) pointed out, based on two international comparison reports, elder informants in Japan and South Korea tended to be less engaged in individual learning activities (e.g., reading) than their

counterparts in Europe and North America. Also, gender difference in learning patterns in Japan and Korea was also greater than in European countries and America. For example, in all countries, men read more books and magazines and participate more in learning activities organized by workplace or professional units, and women tended to participate more than men in group activities and lectures organized by local school and public centers. Also men tended to aim continuous learning at gaining professional skills, knowledge, and qualifications than women did.

Although the rate of educational participation for older adults is increasing, related reports and statistics of educational participation of elder people have been primarily focused on formal education and community-based non-formal educational participation and can not comprehensively present older adults' learning in general (Schneider, 2003). Based on international comparisons, self-directed learning through books, radio, TV, and magazines was particularly advantageous for senior citizens and was regarded as a way to have fun and get better knowledge in all countries (Ohsako, 1999). Such a finding presents that seniors' learning participations are bigger than what we know based on statistics from educational settings if we count older people's informal learning.

Experience is "the adult learner's living textbook…already there waiting to be appropriated" (Lindeman, 1961, p. 7) and has become another common index used to judge adults' abilities. Informal learning refers to "the experiences of everyday living from which we learn something" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 21) and happens usually intentionally but without much external facilitation or structure (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). In this study, I regard informal learning and experiential learning as analogous and use them interchangeably. Below I review theories/models of experiential/informal learning proposed by Dewey, Kolb, Knowles,

Jarvis, and Fenwick. Then I examine the literature that is congruent with what we know about *women* as learners.

<p style="text-align:center">*Theories and Models of Experiential Learning*</p>

Since *Experience and Education* (Dewey, 1938), people have noticed the implication of experiences and learning. In John Dewey's experiential learning theory, everything occurs within a social environment. Knowledge is socially constructed and based on experiences. Dewey postulated: "all genuine education comes about through experience" (p. 13) and "learning must be rooted in conditions of experience and arouse an active quest for information and new ideas" (p. 96). He justified education based on "learning by doing" and emphasized that not "all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other….Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 13). He also argued: "every experience was a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into" (p. 31). In other words, we cannot realize the value of every experience until it produces some concrete changes and people are not easy to trace if some experience indeed produces learning. If learning comes about through experiences, Dewey argued that these kinds of experiences must demonstrate two major principles: continuity and interaction. The principle of continuity means that learning is produced only when learners connect what they have learned from existing experiences to those in the past as well as see possible future implications. The principle of interaction means: "an experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment" (p. 41). These two principles always work together to provide the basis for experiential learning.

Besides Dewey, Knowles's andragogy model provides a significant foundation of understanding adults as learners. In andragogy, Knowles (1980; 1984) proposed five assumptions about characteristics of the adult learner who (a) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning, (b) has an accumulated reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing rich resource for learning, (c) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles, (d) has a task-, life-, and problem-centered orientation to learning and is interested in immediate application of knowledge, and (e) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors. He stressed that due to the difference of experience, "for many kinds of learning, adults are themselves the richest resources for one another" (1984, p. 10). Knowles also pointed out: "Adults derive their self-identity from their experience. They define who they are in terms of the accumulation of their unique sets of experience" (1980, p. 50). Based on the emphasis on adults' experiences, Knowles suggested various instructional strategies and argued for a learner-centered educational process, in which adult learners are encouraged to reflect upon and share their experiences rather than simply accept the authority of texts foreign to their own expectations.

Furthermore, in Knowles's theory of andragogy, his assumptions about adult learners as being more self-directed and having richer experiences as they grow are congruent with what most researchers have agreed on the components of experiential/informal learning. Besides andragogy, he proposed his description of self-directed learning at the same time as Tough's well-known self-planned learning. Self-directed learning is a learning process in which learners are in charge of planning, implementing, evaluating their own learning experiences. It is a natural part of adult life. Knowles (1975) described six major steps of self-directed learning: (a) climate setting, (b) diagnosing learning needs, (c) formulating learning goals, (d) identifying

human and material resources for learning, (e) choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and (f) evaluating learning outcomes. Both Tough's and Knowles's pioneer work and the numerous follow-up studies on self-directed learning verify that adults do deliberately learn on their own and tell how they do this.

Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning is a fundamental presentation of this approach and has often been discussed and modified into various models. His model is derived from the concepts of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget and has been adopted widely across the management and educational fields. Kolb defined learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p.38). So, to form new knowledge, a learner needs to both grasp and transform experiences. The model is a four-stage cycle involving four adaptive learning modes--concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE). In an easier way, it can be called a process of experience-reflect-generalize-test. Among the four stages, CE/AC and RO/AE also represent two opposed pairs of grasping and transforming experiences respectively. The conflicts between the two extremes of each pairs will determine the results of experiential learning.

Kolb conceptualized that learning from experience requires four abilities respectively at each stage. They are: (a) an openness and willingness to involve oneself in new experiences (at CE stage); (b) observational and reflective skills so these new experiences can be viewed from many perspectives (at RO stage); (c) analytical abilities so integrative ideas and concepts can be created from their observation (at AC stage); (d) decision-making and problem-solving skills (at AE stage) so new experiences can be transformed and used in actual practice. Whatever action is taken in the final phase becomes another new set of concrete experiences, and the new

experiential learning cycle starts again. Moreover, an important feature of Kolb's theory is that the different stages are associated with different learning styles. Kolb identified four learning styles: divergent, assimilative, convergent, and accommodators, and suggested that although learning styles are not fixed, learners tend to favor some learning behaviors over others.

In short, Kolb's model stressed that people and the world the person lives in shape his/her learning style orientation, and then different orientations of learning styles will further impact how and what people learn through their experiences. Later, according to Merriam and Caffarella (1999), Barnett added a fifth factor, planning for implementation, into Kolb's learning cycle to make it more usable by practitioners. It was added between the phase or abstract conceptualization and the phase of active experimentation to give people the time to develop a plan for implementation. Also based on Kolb's model, Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) regarded the stage of "reflective observation" in Kolb's model as a key stage in experiential learning and saw a strong linkage between the reflective process and actual learning from experiences. They set a three-stage model of reflection which included phases of *returning to experience*, *attending to feelings*, and *reevaluating experience*. They stressed the significance of dealing with emotions associated with past experiences since unresolved feelings, such as anger and regret, may act as obstacles to learning. In their revised model, they admitted that individual experience is influenced by the past of the learner as well as the current context the learner faces (Miller & Boud, 1996). This seems to be the same argument as Dewey's principles of continuity and interaction about experiential learning. According to Merriam and Caffarella (1999), both Kolb's cyclic model and other models modified from it stress reflection-on-action, thinking through a condition after it has happened, rather than focusing on reflection-in-action, thinking while doing it.

In contrast with Kolb's definition of learning, Jarvis (1987; 1995) and Jarvis, Holford, and Griffin (2003) defined learning as the process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, feelings, and so forth. He argued against the simplification of Kolb's model. First, Jarvis believed that not only concrete experiences can produce learning, but "these experiences can be natural or artificially created, apprehended by one or any combination of the senses, the process of thought itself, a specific situation or abstract ideas, and be meaningful or meaningless" (Jarvis, 1987, p. 164). Like Dewey, Jarvis emphasized that experience was a product of the individual interacting with his/her environment. His model situated learning within a social context and started with the assumption of "not every experience results in learning, but experience itself is only a potential basis of learning" (p. 165).

By studying about 200 adults and continuously revising his model, in his latest modification, Jarvis et al. (2003) concluded that there were nine hierarchical types of response to an experience which could be categorized into four groups with some subgroups respectively. They are non-learning (subgroups: presumption), non-learning or incidental self-learning (subgroups: non-consideration and rejection), non-reflective learning (subgroups: pre-conscious learning, skill learning, memorization), and reflective learning (contemplation, reflective cognitive learning, experimental/action learning). All these forms of learning can occur simultaneously and all the senses can be involved. Each of the reflective forms of learning can have two possible outcomes: conformity or change. Jarvis et al. (2003) stressed that except presumption, there was an emotional dimension to all of these forms of learning. Also, he regarded reflective learning as the higher form of learning among other groups. In his model, the centrality is reflection and the starting point for a possible learning opportunity is the disjunction

between one's biography (past experiences including the hidden and unconscious happenings) and the cultural-temporal world of one's experiences (present encounter).

Jarvis described that in everyday life, adults often respond to their experiences in an automatic or unthinking manner and these kinds of experiences only can reinforce the stock of knowledge already held (e.g., more confident to conduct similar actions in the future). Only when an adult encounters a new experience but cannot get an automatic response from the stock of knowledge, he/she may have a sense of need to learn. Jarvis concluded that "where there is no disjunction between individuals' stock of knowledge and their perception of their socio-cultural-temporal world, then action may be taken for granted and little or no reflection or learning occurs. But when disjunction occurs, reflection may follow and then learning might occur and the self grow and develop" (Jarvis, 1987, p. 169). He also pointed out that when the gulf between two ends was too big to be changed, or individuals feel powerless to change the gulf, then "experience is meaningless, reflection cannot occur, and learning may not result" (Jarvis, 1987, p. 171). So, based on this concept, Jarvis argued that Knowles's assumption of "as people grow they accumulate an increasing reservoir of experience that becomes and increasingly rich resource for learning" was over simplified. He stressed that what adults accumulate is "an increasing stock of knowledge which results from interpreting and reflecting upon experiences. What is in the reservoir is the transformation of those experiences" (p. 172). Also, Jarvis et al. (2003) agreed with Kolb's beliefs about the influences of individuals' learning styles on their learning. He also suggested that secondary experiences (e.g., video presentation, class discussion, lectures, and other formats that adults learn from other's experiences and interpretations) need to be included in our consideration about experiential learning. Furthermore, he stressed that under a social context, "experiences occur internally and are constructs… and the (experiential)

learning is actually an internal process—one that is cognitive and physical, but also emotional"
(p. 60).

Fenwick (2000) criticized Kolb's model for presenting experiential learning as "a reflection-action (or mind-body and individual-context) binary" (p. 244), for regarding experience as a knowable resource, and for ignoring issues of identity, politics, and the complexities of experience. So, she tried to break the traditional notions of this approach by comparing five perspectives of experiential learning. She pointed out that "experiential learning means a process of human cognition. The root of the word cognition in fact means 'to learn'…Experience embraces reflective as well as kinesthetic activity, conscious and unconscious dynamics, and all manner of interactions among subjects, texts, and contexts" (p. 244-245). The dominant approach to understand experiential learning in adult education has revolved around cognitive reflection upon concrete experiences, an orientation commonly known as constructivism. In addition, Fenwick described and compared four alternate orientations of experiential learning: (a) Interference—a psychoanalytic perspective illuminating desires and resistance emanating from unconscious dimensions of experiential learning ; (b) Participation—a situative perspective emphasizing the connection between individuals and their communities of practice in a collective explanation of experiential learning ; (c) Resistance—a critical cultural perspective focusing on how power and inequity structure experience and promote social transformation through experiential learning ; (d) Co-emergence—an enactivist perspective: upholding an ecological systems and understanding of experiential learning co-emerging in systems of human action, organization, cultures, and nature (Fenwick, 2000; 2001). Below I describe how Fenwick explained each perspective related to experiential learning.

First, Fenwick points out that from a constructive viewpoint, the individual learner is the central and independent constructor of his/her own knowledge. The learner is assumed to be a stable and unitary self who is regulated by himself/herself. Rational reflection on experience is assumed, as is the learner's capacity, motivation, and power to mobilize the reflective process. Through reflecting on life experience, the learner interprets and generalizes this experience and then forms mental structures. This process of knowledge construction is largely regarded as a conscious and rational process. However, it reifies rational control, a male view of knowledge creation. It has also been criticized for not providing any understandings of the role of desire in learning, for denigrating bodily and intuitive experience, for not attending to internal resistances in the learning process and so forth. Moreover, from constructivist perspectives, context is considered as important but separate from learners. A learner is still viewed as fundamentally autonomous from the surroundings.

Secondly, the psychoanalytic perspective views learning as interferences between conscious thought and unconscious psychic conflicts. "Our daily, disturbing inside-outside encounters are carried on at subtle levels, and we draw on many strategies to ignore them. But when we truly attend these encounters, we enter the profound conflicts, which are learning. The general learning process is crafting the self through everyday strategies of coping with and coming to understand what is suggested in these conflicts" (Fenwick, 2000, p. 251). This resembles Jarvis's (1987; Jarvis, 1995; Jarvis et al., 2003) point that potential learning may start when there is a disjunction between the learner's biography and the social-cultural context. Thus, from a psychoanalytic perspective, educative conditions would promote interferences, troublings of the conscious mind, and interruptions of the sense of truth.

Thirdly, from a situative perspective, learning is rooted in the situation in which a person participates. "Knowing and learning are defined as engaging in changing processes of human activity in a particular community. Knowledge is not a substance to be ingested and then transferred to a new situation but, instead, part of the very process of participation in the immediate situation" (p. 253). Individuals learn as they participate by interacting with the community, the tools at hand, and the moment's activity. Knowledge flows in action and emerges as a result of these elements interacting. Because the emphases in the situative perspective is on improving one's ability to participate meaningfully in particular practices, the educator's role is not to develop the learner, but to help him/her to participate meaningfully in practices he/she chooses to enter. Furthermore, from a critical cultural perspective, power is the core issue. Under this viewpoint, to understand people's learning, we have to "analyze the structures of dominance that express or govern the social relationships and competing forms of communication and cultural practices within that system" (p. 256). According to Fenwick (2000), critical cultural perspectives suggest that learning is shaped by "the discourses and their semiotics (sign, codes, and texts) that are most visible and accorded most authority by different groups. These discourses often create dualistic categories such as man/woman, reflection/action, learning/doing, and formal/informal, which determine unequal distribution of authority and resources" (p. 257). Such dualisms exclude people by representing norms and marking nonconformists as "other" to these norms. As Fenwick pointed out, under these perspectives, learners trace the politics and constraints of the contexts of their experiential learning. Learning is coming to critical awareness about one's contexts. Educators' roles are to help learners become more aware of themselves and of their roles in power relations and the production of meaning.

Lastly, Fenwick used the enactivist perspective to help understand the alternative dimension of experiential learning. An enactivist perspective focuses on the relationships binding experience together in a system level rather than on the components of experience. This perspective also focuses on how learning and environment become simultaneously enacted through experiential learning and assumes that learning depends on the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities embedded in a biology, psychological, cultural context. Under this perspective, the person and his/her context are inseparable in the system they enact. Moreover, "as actors are influenced by symbols and actions in which they participate, they adapt and learn. As they do so, their behaviors and thus their effects on the systems connected with them change. These complex systems shift with each change, changing their patterns of interaction and the individual identities of all actors enmeshed in them. Thus, the environment and the learner emerge together in the process of cognition" (p. 261). In short, Fenwick's proposition interrupts the dominant interpretation of experiential learning through reflective knowledge construction but also reminds us that it is not the only way experiential learning happens. Her perspective further provides wider understandings of the processes of experiential learning.

There are other theories about experiential learning, such as Merriam and Caffarella (1999) pointed out that the model proposed by Merriam and Heuer stressed how people face and adapt to a new meaning system when their experiences differ from the previous value systems. Marsick and Watkins' (2001) model showed how adults often learn to understand puzzling new situations or develop new skills without going near a classroom. They also identified six characteristics of informal learning based on Marsick and Volpe's (1999) conclusion: it is (a) integrated with daily routines, (b) triggered by an internal or external jolt (c) not highly

conscious, (d) haphazard and influenced by chance, (e) an inductive process of reflection and action, (f) linked to learning of others (p. 5, as cited in Marsick & Watkins, 2001, p. 28)

To sum up, most of the models and academic perspectives argue that experience is the most important foundation of adult learning but agree that not all experiences evoke learning. The foundations of experiential learning are context, experience, and reflection. Besides stressing the key influence of reflection on learning through/from experiences, Jarvis's model gives a more detailed description of the complicities of experiential learning; it reminds us that reflection is not an absolute factor in experiential learning and emphasizes the importance of involvement cognitively, physically, and emotionally during the processes. Fenwick's proposition also provides wider and alternative ways to consider and understand experiential learning for adults. The prerequisite of experiential learning happening seems to need two essential elements: (a) a gap between past experiences and existing needs, and (b) learners' active participation in the processes of transforming experience. All the models describe a truth that learning from experience is a complicated process, and adults learn from experiences in diverse ways. However, how do women learn through experiences? Below I further review related literature.

<div align="center">Experiential Learning for Women as Learners</div>

Women do learn to play roles better through their everyday experiences, such as learning to deal with household management through chatting with friends, neighbors, and other family members, listening to radio or lectures, reading related books, observing other people's experiences, and so forth. For a long time, however, our understandings about adult learning and adult learners have resulted from studies using men as informants and from men-specific learning theories and models written mainly by men. Women and their learning have been

invisible. Noted philosophers, both western Plato and eastern Confucius, doubted whether

women could learn at all or could even engage in rational thought.

In school and societal settings, adults have only been taught and trained to regard and

pursue rational thought as an only and higher way of knowing. In the dichotomy of mind vs.

body, emotion vs. intellect, women were categorized into the bodily, emotional, non-rational side.

Gilligan's (1982) studies and *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, &

Tarule, 1986) have profoundly influenced much follow-up research and have brought people's

attention to women as learners. Although there still are debates, many studies have verified that

women's ego and identity development tends to put relationship and care in the center and tends

toward increasing intimacy with others rather than toward autonomy (Caffarella & Olson, 1993;

Gilligan, 1982; T. A. Peck, 1986). That is, connection to others significantly impacts women's

worldview, self-definitions, and behaviors in everyday life, including learning. Moreover,

Belenky et al. (1986) found *connected knowing* was the style most often described by their

diverse women interviewees. Also, knowing by receiving from others and as well as sharing

knowledge with others was also prominent among their respondents. They also found that silence

is a special pattern of women's knowing. Subjective knowing and constructed knowing are two

other ways that appeared in their female interviewees. The characteristic of connected knowing

is embracing new ideas and seeking to understand different points of view rather than looking for

flaws in logic and reasoning in new ideas. "For a connected knower, her procedures of knowing

involve building a connection to the known and are based on empathy" (Taylor & Marienau,

1995, p. 9). Women's presumed orientations toward relationships are linked to characterizations

of women as reliant on intuitive, subjective, and affective ways of learning (Flannery, 2000).

Based on the aforementioned description of women's learning, there are both consistencies and discrepancies with the above models of experiential learning. Like most feminists, Hayes (2000; 2001) also stressed the diversities among women. Her viewpoint about women's learning, in a sense, agrees with Jarvis's view that despite the same context and event, different people with different previous experiences interpret what they encounter differently; therefore their learning results are also different. Many feminists stress how the social-cultural context shapes gender and then shapes role and behavior, proving again how environment essentially impacts women's experiential learning. Similarly, Jarvis's model puts social-cultural environment as a starting point of experiential learning. Also Dewey emphasized the principle of interaction in his proposition about learning through experiences. Their arguments are congruent with what we have known about women as learners. However, with the exception of Fenwick, the aforementioned theorists use context/environment to include too many dynamics during experiential learning without providing detailed description. Since women are concerned with relationship and affection, there might be more complicated interactions and group dynamics in the context around women which will impact their experiential learning. Given women's oppressed and marginalized roles in hierarchical systems, Fenwick's perspectives remind us of the power and inequality women face during their experiential learning. For example, Hayes (2000) described a black woman learned and became aware of racism while facing slower promotions at work.

Dozens of studies have found that most adults have ongoing learning projects, and nearly all adults undertake informal, self-directed, personal learning projects designed to address work and family-related learning needs. In addition, observations from practice underscore that women do deliberately learn by themselves. For example, in both America and Taiwan, women

are the main participants in reading groups. I have seen many female-only reading groups running regularly for more than 10 years. They decide what they want to read, who will lead in turn for discussions and who will take on yearly leadership. Some of them even decide to take actions on different issues, such as visiting and doing art performances for the elderly every month, or arrange various training classes for themselves, and so forth. No matter what the participants want -- building new relationships, enlarging life spaces and perspectives, getting knowledge and skills, or enhancing self-explorations and growth -- in women's reading groups, all the processes involve interactions with the participants' environments (books, activities, other members) and old experiences which in turn leads to new learning and actions.

Another example is the operations of the Homemaker Union and Foundation, a well-known Taiwanese non-profit organization found in 1989. Their members are mainly women and they use experiential learning as a main strategy to form and deliver the knowledge and then promote their advocacy into long-term actions of environmental protection and educational improvement. Starting with their concerns and dissatisfactions—what Jarvis called the emotional dimension and disjunction in his model-- they proposed the movement of collective purchasing to advocate safer purchases (e. g., recycled tissue paper, organic vegetables, and so on). They proposed the necessity of examining public toilets to make them a better space for women in quantity and quality. They also conducted surveys to collect people's opinions about children's meals in schools. All their actions are derived from their practical concerns and experiences as women and mothers.

In the above cases, the emphasis in Merriam and Heuer's (1996) meaning making model which focuses on giving time and support to facilitate learners' engagement with their experiences fits women's ways of knowing well. Moreover, Fenwick's (2000; 2001)

perspectives about Participation, Resistance, and Co-emergence explain women's actions and learning through experiences well and compensate for the deficiencies of other models. Among the women members in both the aforementioned cases, at different points in time, some might be simply silent, or passively receive the messages from other members or leaders. Some might learn in subjective, connected, or constructed ways. However, some might change to other ways of knowing based on their interactive experiences with the whole group and context. Whenever they discuss, act, or learn from trial and error, they dialogue among texts, authors, other members, events, conflicts, and all their previous experiences. Then they learn something and become more and more experienced and self-directed, exemplifying Knowles's (1980; 1984) proposition of characteristics of adult learners.

Both the reading groups and the Homemaker Union and Foundation show again the characteristics of women's learning styles are characterized as more collective and empathetic rather than rational and logical. Many researchers (Kolb, 1984) agree that rational reflection is a key factor in learning from experience. Although women are also capable of autonomous and rational thinking and analysis and problem-resolving, these are not what women mainly prefer when they learn (Hayes, Flannery, Brooks, Tisdell, & Hugo, 2000). Also, reflection is a kind of higher and rational thinking activity and needs to be taught and trained through more education. In hierarchical/patriarchal societies, not all women have opportunities to get education. So, if we agree with the aforementioned models about the necessity of reflection in experiential learning, we might also infer that women with low education and training cannot learn through experience. However, it is not true. As Jarvis's model pointed out, not all experiential learning comes through reflection. Fenwick's (2000; 2001) model also reminds us that learning can be approached not only by reflecting and constructing experiences but also through intuition and

affection. In addition, as Jarvis and his colleagues (2003) argued, one of the major strengths of experiential approaches to teaching and learning is that "the whole person does the experiencing rather than just the individual's mind or body" (p. 55) and thus will be involved cognitively, physically, and emotionally. Those linkages between emotions and reflection or experience make the existing models a better match with what we know about women as learners.

To date, most of the literature related to women as learners has emphasized the importance of collaboration, connection, emotion and relationships in their learning. Based on the theories of experiential/informal learning, researchers often proposed collaborative learning and group discussion as instructional methods to facilitate women's experiential learning. However, such advocates have not always accounted for women of various age, race, class, and so on. There is a need to explore issues about women's learning from a more inclusive perspective, just as Flannery and Hayes (2000) pointed out: "women's learning…. are like kaleidoscopes: an endless variety of patterns" (p. 1). Especially in this fast changing era, continuous learning will enhance people's capacities of updating skills and knowledge and increase opportunities of involving societies and building relationships. Roberson's (2003) study showed that self-directed learning is an integral process in the lives of older adults and seniors did undertake self-directed learning to facilitate their adaptation to aging. However, experiential learning of elder women, the majority of seniors, and the roles of such learning in their old age are rarely addressed in the literature.

<div align="center">*Learning, Women, and Successful Aging*</div>

Studies also have supported that learning can compensate for aging in various ways. For the majority of individuals, creative output continues throughout mid-adulthood to later life. In addition, the encapsulation model suggests that adults continue to accumulate knowledge that

becomes increasingly refined with age and experience (Hoyer & Roodin, 2003). According to Horn and his colleagues (Horn & Donnaldson, 1976), crystallized intelligence keeps growing while aging because it reflects the cumulative effects of experience, education, and acculturation while fluid intelligence decreases along with aging. All evidence suggests that people still can and have a need to learn in later life.

Learning also benefits elder people's lives. The possible roles of education/learning for older people include enhancing satisfaction in later years and survival in a more complex society, re-grooming of both mental and physical capacities, rehabilitation of life force, and so on (Glendenning, 2001). Research also has shown that educational attainment and age-related cognitive decline are related to each other (Bosma et al., 2003; Purdie & Boulton, 2003; Strom, Strom, Fournet, & Strom, 1997). Schneider(2003) reviewed related empirical studies and summarized that higher levels of formal education can benefit seniors' life expectancy, coping with critical life challenges and events, and reduce depression and health risks in late adulthood. Studies conducted in different countries suggest that education has a protective effect in the prevalence of dementia in late adulthood (Strom et al., 1997). Bosma et al. (2003) conducted an empirical study and found out that the gap in the risk of age-related cognitive decline between the poorly and highly educated persons might be substantially narrowed by increasing work-related mental stimuli and challenges among the poorly educated people. Besides the above functions, according to Purdie and Boulton-Lewis's review (2003), continuously participating in learning and education in late adulthood can provide seniors opportunities for updating of knowledge, skills, and abilities; help old people stay healthy; facilitate engaging with and supporting others; help older people to take greater charge of their lives, become more self-reliant, and better their opportunities. Moreover, learning can supply self-reflection on life

experiences, thereby leading seniors to greater self-understanding and awareness of their social and political rights and their social roles. Although these contributions from learning in late adulthood are related to successful aging, as Schneider (2003) pointed out, research related to significance of learning on aging is sparse. Although researchers can not assert a relationship between good health and older adults' learning, Neikrug et al. (1995) did find their participants who aged over 80 and chose to engage in lifelong learning had a significantly higher health rate than the average health rate of those who are at the same age. There elderly learners lived as active adults and did not define themselves as old people. Their study suggested a pressing need to investigate the relationship between lifelong learning and successful aging.

Learning is the strategy used for organizing and forming meaning from life experiences. Learning also is a substantial tool to overcome tensions and transitions in life-span development. The most prevalent and significant type of learning in adult life is learning from experience. As Knowles (1980; 1984) argued in his assumptions of andragogy, an adult has an accumulated reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing rich resource for learning. Jarvis (1987; 1995; Jarvis et al., 2003) defined learning as the process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, feelings, and so forth. One can even argue that seniors would have more potential to learn than the youth because they accumulate more experiences as they age which can be the material to transform into knowledge and skills. Therefore, it is essential to understand how older people learn through experience and how such learning influences adaptation to changes in late adulthood.

Chapter Summary

The concept of successful aging has changed the images of aging and old age from disease, disability, dementia, and death to positive growth and adaptation. Facing a worldwide

trend of fast aging, successful aging has also become "a guiding theme in gerontological research" and "a challenge for the design of social policy" (Paul B. Baltes & Baltes, 1990a, p. 4). Because of extensive life expectancy and awareness of the heterogeneity of elder people, to enhance well-being in late adulthood, there are many questions related to successful aging that need to be answered. Through the present review of the literature, three gaps in the existing knowledge base were found.

First, there is a need to add or revise existing development theories and pay more attention to development in late adulthood. The concept of development has been often discussed in education and psychology fields but it needs to be connected with the concept of successful aging. Erikson's integrity, Levinson's balance, Havighurst's maturity, R. Peck's transcendence, and so forth, describe development work and goals in late adulthood which are associated with successful aging. Adaptation is a vehicle to link developmental work in late adulthood with successful aging.

Second, there is a need to pay more attention to successful aging for women and women in non-Western countries. For a long time, academia and practitioners mainly follow the study findings and knowledge that have been explored and established based on male participants. Many studies as I review in this article exclude participants who are women, non-white, non-Westerners, and low social-economic status. In particular, according to the World Bank (2001), women outlive men by 5 to 8 years and by 0 to 3 years in the countries with the higher and low life expectancies respectively. Such a gap in life expectancy results in women being the majority of elder population. The wide gender gap in life expectancy has existed for the past half century in many countries, especially throughout the developed world. In addition, because of extensive longevity and reduced birth rate, we are undergoing "a historic feminization of the world"

(Belsky, 2001, p. 96). However, based on this review, compared with men, women do not tend to age as successfully. Also, many researchers have found that women's development and aging differs from men's. Further, based on the present review, successful aging in non-Western countries appears to be different from the West. Currently, most Asian countries have more than 70-year expectation of life at birth which is greater than the world average life expectancy. Asia and the Pacific will become home to the largest proportion of older persons aged 65 and above in the next 30 years (United Nations, 2002). To better and more inclusively understand what successful aging means and enable people to prepare for and reach successful aging, there is a need to explore successful aging of women especially from a non-Western culture viewpoint.

Third, there is a need to explore the roles of continuous learning in successful aging. Currently, studies of successful aging have primarily focused on measurement and definitions of successful aging. The measurement and definitions have also been mainly related to physical health and functions. Besides maintaining health and delaying losses in old age, it is important to explore other aspects of successful aging. As many theories of development and successful aging have shown, through adaptation in old age, the later years can be seen as an opportunity rather than a crisis, an asset rather than a burden. The declines and losses of biological and psychological functions in late adulthood might be overcome and offset by various external interventions, such as continuous learning. Learning is a significant tool to promote adaptation to changes in later life. Experience is the most accessible learning resource for adults. Research has shown elder people can and have needs to learn. Studies have also supported that learning can compensate for declines and losses and benefit older adults' life. However, studies related to learning in late adulthood have mainly focused on formal educational settings. Research related to the roles of learning related to successful aging is rare.

Based on the aforementioned knowledge gap, in this study, I chose Taiwan, an Asian country as the research site. This study was conducted in a volunteering context to further explore how Taiwanese elder women learn through experiences and how such learning impacts their successful aging.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

An aging population has become a shared fact in every country. Along with longevity,

people expect to age successfully. Currently, most of studies and definitions of successful aging

primarily focus on maintenance and promotion of health and are dominantly based on white

Westerners' experiences and viewpoints. Nevertheless, besides health maintenance, other factors

might contribute to seniors' adaptations to a good old age. Especially in this world which is full

with ever-updating knowledge and skills, learning is a way for seniors to avoid being excluded

from fast societal changes and to enrich their late adulthood. Learning from experiences in

particular characterizes adult life. However, the relationship between learning from experiences

and successful aging has rarely been explored. The purpose of this study was to understand how

the learning that occurs in volunteering affects successful aging of older Taiwanese women. In

particular, the following research questions guided this study: How do these older women define

successful aging? How and what do these older women learn through serving others? How does

the learning through volunteering influence these women's successful aging? How does the

Taiwanese cultural context shape their definitions/perceptions of successful aging? In this

chapter I describe how I conducted this study. This chapter includes the design of the study,

sample selection, and data collection and analysis. Validity and reliability, subjectivity, and

translation issues are covered as well.

Design of the Study

Since the core concern of this study was to understand meanings, processes, and possible roles of older Taiwanese women's learning through volunteering in their successful aging, a basic qualitative research design was employed. In a basic qualitative study, researchers simply aim to "discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" rather than focus on culture, a single case, or theory-building (Merriam, 1998, p.11). Qualitative studies focus on in-depth understanding and description of meanings and processes of an experience or a phenomenon. In contrast to quantitative research which stresses a single, absolute, and measurable reality, qualitative research emphasizes multiple and unpredictable realities that are formed through individuals interacting with their contexts. Although various qualitative designs have different philosophical stances and emphases, all qualitative researchers believe that the multiple constructions and interpretations of reality are "in flux" and "change over time" (Merriam, 2002, p. 4).

Moreover, qualitative research designs aim at understanding why and how an activity happens in a natural environment rather than controlling and predicting whether or not a hypothesized condition will take place in a designed and controlled laboratory (Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research designs stress "understanding behavior from the subject's own frame of reference. External causes are of the secondary importance" (Bogdan, 2003, p. 2). Thus, in qualitative designs, close observations or dialogues with the researched is the key way to collect data. In such ways, researchers are a tool to uncover participants' perceptions and experiences through talking with and listening to people, observing their behaviors, and reviewing various documents related to the phenomena of interest. In this study, participants were senior women, a marginalized group in most societies, in an Eastern context. A

basic qualitative design was the most suitable design to facilitate the understanding of the

process and meaning of these elder women's learning through volunteering.

Sample Selection

To gain in-depth data, a purposeful sample was adopted in this study. By this type of

sampling, participants in this study were purposefully chosen from which the most could be

learned because they could provide information about the key concerns of this study (Patton,

2002). Thus, it was important to have criteria, or a list of essential attributes (LeCompte &

Preissle, 1993) to the study before proceeding to sample. Based on the purpose of this study,

criteria of possible participants were: (1) women aged 60 and over, (2) volunteered regularly for

at least two years. I describe the rationale for each criterion below.

The original minimum age of 65 was set as a criterion for recruiting participants for

several reasons. First, according to the Article 53 and 54 of the Labor Standards Act in Taiwan,

employees can legally apply for voluntary retirement after 55 years old and will be forced to

retire at age 60 (R.O.C. Ministry of Justice, 2002). Civil servants (R.O.C. Ministry of Justice,

1995) and school teachers and staff (R.O.C. Ministry of Justice, 2000) can apply for retirement

after age 60 but the mandatory retirement age is 65. Second, based on government statistics data,

women's life expectancy in Taiwan in 2005 reached 80 years of age which is over six years

longer than men's (R.O.C. The Department of Statistics; Ministry of the Interior, 2005).

However, the final age criterion was shifted to age 60 after I started the field work. The change

was adopted mainly because an aboriginal participant who was 60 years old needed to be

included in this study. Since mainly four groups of people, aboriginals, Taiwanese islanders (not

include Hakka people), Hakka people, and Chinese mainlanders, compose the population in

Taiwan, including the aboriginal participant significantly made the research participants more

diverse. In addition, to save the expenses paid for work pension, a policy encouraged many

public servants and teachers to retire at age 55. Thus, it was logically acceptable to reduce the

age criterion from age 65 to 60.

With regard to the second criterion, because the core concern in this study was to explore

the learning occurring in volunteering, one year might not be enough for experiencing and

reflecting through volunteering, I set the period of volunteering for at least two years, whether

the volunteering happened in the same or different units or organizations. Volunteering regularly

also could be explained as a possibility that such an activity had an importance and meaning for

the participants in their old age and was worthy of further exploring the meaning-making process.

Regarding the research site, because of Taiwan's small size, this study sought participants

nationwide rather than be limited to any specific city or area. Concerning participant recruitment,

I first looked for possible participants through non-profit organizations (NPOs) which used

volunteers and through friends' recommendations. A friend who won a national volunteer award

and who worked in a government department became my starting point to find possible

participants and NPOs to contact. Government websites that summarized national volunteer

awards and NPOs those winners volunteered for were also references that helped me have ideas

about which kinds of NPOs I needed to contact to find possible participants with diversity in

their volunteering work. I also searched newspapers and magazines articles on the Internet to

find possible participants. Once I received referrals from NPOs and friends, I contacted possible

participants to confirm whether they matched the participant criteria of this study. After

confirming that the possible participants fitted the research criteria and were willing to

participate in the research, I scheduled time and places for the interviews.

According to a governmental survey and analysis of participating voluntary service in Taiwan (R.O.C. The Department of Statistics; Ministry of the Interior, 2002), there were different distributions of choices for volunteering categories between men and women. The first three categories where Taiwanese women choose to volunteer are social work and well-being related service (32.6%), educational service (23.1%), and environmental and community service (22.9%). Although this governmental survey was based on adults who were over twenty years old rather than specific to senior women, I used this information to ask for help from these types of NPOs for possible participants.

Considering the heterogeneity of older adults, I made an effort to increase the sample variation in this study. In Taiwan, the approximate population of 23 million includes mainly four groups. There are (1) indigenous peoples whose ancestors have lived in Taiwan before the 17th century, (2) Fukienese, (3) Hakka people, both groups migrated from the southeast coast of China since the 17th century and were regarded as so-called Taiwanese islands (but often time the Hakka has been mentioned separately from so-called Taiwanese islands to denote their special cultures, characteristics, and advocacies), and (4) so-called Chinese mainlanders, immigrants from various provinces of China since 1949 when Chaing Kai-shek and the Kuomintang (K.M.T.) led people to Taiwan and the descendents of these immigrants. Each group represents somewhat different ideologies and social stereotypes. Thus, in this study, I attended to finding participants of all these four groups. In terms of religions, most Taiwanese believe in Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (93%). The proportions of Christianity and other religions are 4.5% and 2.5% respectively (E-News Channel NewsAsia, 2004). In term of education levels, although the obligatory elementary education in Taiwan started in 1943, seniors can gain learning opportunities from supplementary education programs. The rate of literacy at

the end of 2006 was 83.54% for those 65 years of age and above (R.O.C. The Department of

Statistics; Ministry of the Interior, 2006c). Moreover, different age groups within the older

population encounter different levels of physical or role losses and have various life events

despite being regarded as the elderly as a whole. Thus, I attended to achieving some diversity

within the sample with regard to age, population subgroup, religion, financial resources, resident

area, type of organizations they volunteer for, educational backgrounds, and so on. However,

since I asked NPOs' for recommendations for possible participants, some may have been

identified who were better in expressing themselves or had better performances in their

volunteering. The final sample size was 14. Although all participation was strictly voluntary and

most of the participants did not know whether there was payment for their participation before

the interviews, I sent a red envelope with 1000 Taiwanese dollars (supported by the Seed Grant

for students provided by the Institute of Gerontology at the University of Georgia) with a thank

you card (actually, the cards were postcards with different campus spots at UGA which I

considered as a way to let the participants remember their participation in this study) to each

participant at the end of the interviews.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

Interviews, observations, and documents are three major kinds of qualitative research

data (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002). Since the purpose of the study was to understand

participants' experiences and perceptions of learning through volunteering, open-ended and in-

depth interviews was the most appropriate way to gain these seniors' voices. In addition,

documents were used as secondary resources of data collection in this study.

Interviews

Interviews were the main tool for collecting data in this study. As Patton (2002) pointed out, interviews are the most often used method in qualitative inquiry:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe…we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time…we cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things…. The purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspectives. (p. 340-341)

Because interviews are an interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee, many factors influence the process and dynamics of inquiries. In terms of my study, to prepare for and conduct a better interview, related considerations while interviewing women, seniors, and those using different languages were necessary to review first as below.

Interviewing women. Recently, many researchers have explored the influence of the researcher's gender when interviewing women. In Padfield and Procter's (1996) research, they found that both interviewers and interviewees did take account of gender in the process of interviews. Furthermore, many researchers argue that it is a benefit when female researchers interview female interviewees because of the sameness of gender. Oakley's (1981) studies and arguments are the most-often cited when women interview women. She suggests that the best way to confirm rapport and get stories from women is involving researchers themselves to develop relationships and make interviews a non- hierarchical and interactive experience. However, Cotterill's (1992) experiences also point out that respondents might feel it is easier to talk to the researcher because of her status as a stranger rather than a friend or acquaintance. Also,

although women are minor and marginalized in most societies and human history, they are not homogeneous. There still are other structural inequalities that give some more privilege over others (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). In the book Wilkinson and Kitzinger edited (1996), many contributors describe how subgroups of gender, such as disabled versus able-bodied; young versus old; black versus white, cause the sense of the Otherness and the issues of representation. As Riessman (1987) pointed out, when women interview women, "gender and personal involvement may not be enough for full 'knowing'" (p. 189).

In the four studies in Merriam and her colleagues' article (2001), all of the researchers got some advantages and benefits when they interviewed those who were of the same gender and from the same mother countries. The mutually perceived homogeneity did produce a sense of community that indeed enhanced trust and dialogue. However, each of the female interviewers encountered different difficulties and obstacles interviewing women. Based on their experiences, either positively or negatively, race, class, gender, educational background, religion, and seniority impacted the shift of power during interviews. Other studies also support that the dynamics during interviews are fluid (Cotterill, 1992; Johnson-Bailey, 2004; Merriam et al., 2001; Tang, 2002). Apparently, the foundation of same gender does not mean a woman definitely can understand and accept the other woman, or be willing and zealous to share her stories.

Interviewing seniors. As Wenger (2002) stresses, when interviewing senior groups, it is important for interviewers to try not to become preoccupied with age and not to assume that everything is age related. She reminds interviewers that "as with all age groups, each older interviewee is one person, and they need to respond to each interviewee on an individual basis"(p. 261). Wenger (2002) found that older people tend to accept female interviewers more

than male interviewers into their homes. Her experience also showed that middle-aged or older women with outgoing personalities had the highest success rates in being accepted by older interviewees.

Moreover, Merriam and others (2001) describe the experiences related to dynamics resulting from age differences when women interviewed women. In their experiences, Lee, a Taiwanese doctoral student, found older Taiwanese interviewees would position themselves as more experienced and deserving of higher status than Lee. Ntseane, a woman from Botswana, found that old women tended to give suggestions and advice. Similarly, Tang (2002), a Chinese woman, found that senior interviewees seemed to have more stories to share and younger interviewees tended to give short answers. Also, Cotterill (1992), a white American woman, believed that "there could be very real problems for the younger woman interviewing older women, particularly if they occupy and originate from a higher class position than her own" (p. 600). In her studies, the women in the mother-in-law group were all at least 15 years older than she and many occupied class and status positions that the researcher did not share. Under these conditions, Cotterill believed that the older women may set boundaries for the interview that are not easy or even possible for the younger interviewer to cross.

Interviewing with differences of languages. Languages also impact on the dynamics of interviews. Merriam et al. (2001) pointed out how Ntseane, an African professor, struggled with understanding the African proverbs as applied to business concepts. Merriam also used a cross-cultural experience while she and her colleague worked on understanding aging and learning in Malaysia as an example to remind readers that there would be a challenge for researchers to find appropriate terms to ask questions when the topics or concepts of studies were beyond respondents' experiences and understanding. In Tang's (2002) study, "linguistic domination and

subordination was displayed" (p. 714) in her interviews when she used Chinese, her mother language, and English to interview Chinese and British mothers respectively. As a non-English speaker, she sometimes did not use clear or appropriate words when asking questions. This resulted in the interviewees' disagreements on the choices of words. Even though she improved and changed to use correct words as a previous British interviewee suggested, Tang still felt uneasy and "an element of British cultural superiority over the foreigner" (p. 715). In contrast, when she conducted interviews in Chinese, she felt she could control the level of language which she used during the interviews.

In sum, because gender, race, class, age, and power are intertwined and embedded into societal systems and shape people's interactions, they can be uniting forces and also subverting factors within interviewing. Therefore, it becomes more significant to recognize the impossible ideal of a non-hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the researched. Researchers also have to be aware of wider social dimensions of power during the process of interviewing. No two interviews are the same. No position is fixed. No interview principle absolutely works in every situation with every interviewer-interviewee pair. Being an insider or appealing to sisterhood does not guarantee rapport, trust, and fluent dialogues. As Merriam et al. (2001) pointed out: " In the course of a study, not only will the researcher experience moments of being both insider and outsider, but that these positions are relative to the cultural values and norms of both the researcher and the participants" (p. 416).

Since I considered the aforementioned possible conditions in advance, such a preparation in either knowledge or psychology level was necessary and helpful for me, a young researcher interviewing older adults for the first time. However, although I did anticipate some issues, such as some interviewees might have a lower education attainment, even be illiterate, or could only

speak Taiwanese which I cannot speak very fluently, these still caused me to often repeat inquiries and clarifications. Besides, there were other conditions that I did not anticipate before entering the field. For example, one participant often used Japanese to express her emotion and assumed that I could understand Japanese as she did, although she mainly spoke both Mandarin and Taiwanese during the interview. Two participants who had no formal education asked their spouse or friend to sit beside them and help them express to me when there was a need. Sometimes, their helpers upstaged the participants and became zealous respondents. In this situation, I first encouraged the participants to express themselves and let them know that I would ask them again if I could not understand their descriptions. I also patiently explained to the participants as well as their helpers the reasons why I needed to hear the voices from the participants directly. In addition, one participant who had little previous education often mentioned the difficulties of expressing herself and said "I really do not know how to express what I want to say" during the interview. Moreover, compared with learning in a classroom, since learning through volunteering is an abstract term and process for many people, this resulted in the necessities and frequencies of using different ways to ask the same questions.

"Good interviews produce rich data filled with words that reveal the respondents' perspectives" (Bogdan, 2003, p. 96). In this study, to promote responses from the participants, a semi-structured interview format, a mix of more and less structured interview questions, was used. The explored areas included the experiences, perceptions, and impacts of learning through volunteering and their definitions of successful aging of those women respondents. The interview questions mainly followed as I originally designed. However, after conducting a few interviews and finding that the designed questions regarding what they learned through

volunteering were not very helpful to get rich data, I modified and added questions (The final interview protocol can be seen in Appendix A).

To capture each interviewee's actual words and tones, the whole process of each interview was tape-recorded. To ensure the process of recording successfully and completely, I used two recorders, a traditional recorder and a digital recorder, at the same time. The field notes that were taken during and immediately after interviews and the memo I wrote while analyzing data were regarded as significant data. According to Patton (2002), field notes include the description of what researchers observe about interviews, interviewees, and researchers' own insights, interpretations, and working hypotheses about what is happening. Taking notes during interviews helped me to formulate new questions as the interview moved along and to clarify or further probe something that interviewees said earlier. Reading over field notes also stimulated early insights that made subsequent interviews more focused and complete when I was still in the field. Taking notes immediately after interviews did catch fresh memories about the process of interviews and compensated and marked the contents which needed to be completed, clarified, or skills that needed to be improved. Such note-taking facilitated later analysis or even could be a backup and a source for reminders when the interview recorders have malfunctions or disjunctions. These notes assisted me to recall the respondents, their expressions, and voices when they told their stories. In this way, the researcher does not just depend on the words in the transcription (Patton, 2002). I also took pictures of each participant with their permissions. The pictures helped me distinguish the 14 participants from each other and connected their faces with the interview processes.

Moreover, when collecting data, senior interviewees' sense of security concerns and physical needs must be considered when interviewing elderly women who either live alone or

live with family members. Only when the senior interviewees feel at ease and safe, can they share their world of adapting to old age with researchers. The exact place for each interview was chosen based on participants' comfort to talk. Because I was a stranger to the interviewees and their families, considering their security concerns, the interviews were mainly conducted at the organizations for which they volunteered. Only three were held at the interviewees' homes. Further, I presented my student ID to the NPOs and the senior respondents in the beginning of the interviews to enhance the sense of safety toward the interviewer. I explained the research purpose to the NPOs when asked for their referrals of the participants and described the research purpose and process to the research participants in detail at the beginning of the interviews which helped promote their sense of safety toward the research participation. Self-disclosure through the interactions with senior respondents also was helpful to enhance rapport and build trust (Wenger, 2002).

Considering the physical situations of elder seniors, each interview was originally scheduled for approximately 45 to 60 minutes in duration. However, although I often asked if there was a need to take a rest or go to the lady's rooms, all the participants very kindly concentrated on answering questions and shared their experiences, and every interview turned out as 60-120 minutes. To collect complete and correct stories, because the researcher and many of the participants lived in different cities, in this study I often used the telephone to conduct short follow-up interviews for clarification and supplementation. The need to conduct follow-up interviews was because (1) some participants were not able to well and completely express their viewpoints at the first interview; (2) some participants retrieved information slowly at the first interview; and (3) many participants tended to express themselves indirectly and humbly which needed more probes. I addressed the possibility of doing follow- up interviews in my initial

contact with interviewees and made sure of a convenient time to do so according to their daily

schedules.

Since older adults generally have less opportunities to know what research is and how

research is conducted, tape recording might raise their level of anxiety (Wenger, 2002), not to

mention I used both a traditional recorder and a digital recorder to record the interview

processes. Thus, it was very significant for me to explain fully about why tape recording was

necessary, who would listen to the tapes later, and how the tapes would be dealt with after

finishing the interviews and the research project. Such explanations were essential to relieve

older interviewees' concerns and also were helpful to promote a smooth interviewing process.

After finishing each interview, transcribing verbatim was done as soon as possible.

Documents

Besides interviews, information from documents was used as significant data. The

documents could be written, audio, visual, or artifacts, and could be public or personal records

and physical material as well (Merriam, 2002). In this study, I asked interviewees to show me

any personal documents that are related to their learning through volunteering and made a copy

to further analyze. Those documents included articles in magazines, newspapers, community or

school newsletters which reported their lives or volunteer work, cards, medals, or related

photographs. One participant provided me a copy of a student research project that interviewed

her. The other even mailed me a package with copies of her efforts and contributions in

volunteering and with detailed annotation and mark lines on those copies. The government also

issues a Volunteer Passport which allows each volunteer to record his/her volunteering history.

The passport records the organizations volunteers work for, type and contents of work, and total

work hours volunteers provide each time they volunteer. This document also can be evidence

that provides opportunities for volunteers to compete for national volunteer awards. Although

some participants of this study did not regard such a record as important and do not always turn

in their passport for updating their work hours and services, some did regard this as a significant

record. I made copies of some volunteer passports from the organizations as well as from the

participants. Some NPOs also provided a copy of documents which included photographs and

participatory records of the participants.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Data analysis is "the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview

transcripts, fields, and other materials that you accumulate to enable you to come up with

findings" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 147). As Patton (2002) said, the biggest challenge of

qualitative data analysis lies in "making sense of massive amounts of data" (p. 432). Qualitative

data analyses should "begin with a review of the proposal or plans with which the work began"

(LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 235) and often proceed simultaneously with data collection

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 2002). Such simultaneousness allows qualitative researchers

to do necessary adjustments during the process of data collection and gain clues for data analysis

among huge amounts of data (Merriam, 2002).

Data analysis is inductive, a way to develop general patterns or theories from data rather

than use data to test pre-supposing theories (Ezzy, 2002). Among various ways of data analyses,

I adopted the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which involves

"systematically examining and refining variations in emergent and grounded concepts" (Patton,

2002, p. 239). The constant comparative method is "a series of iterations…in which the

researcher move[s] back and forth among the data and gradually advance[s] from coding to

conceptual categories, and thence to theory development" (Harry, Sturges, & Klingner, 2005, p.

5). I first immersed myself in an interview transcription, a field note, or a document to start open coding. Through this step, data were closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and then were broken down into discrete parts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). While coding an event, happening, or action, the researcher should "compare it with all previous incidents so coded" (Harry et al., 2005, p. 5) and label "concepts in the text that the researcher considers of potential relevance to the problem being studied" (Pidgeon & Henwood, 2004, p. 636). Upon finishing open coding, the second step was grouping or clustering the discrete codes based on their commonalities. In this step, I used thematic analysis which "allows categories to emerge from the data" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 83) that were responsive to my research questions. As categories of a data set emerged, other incidents in another data set were continuously compared and coded into the existing or new categories. Such comparisons continued through the whole process of data analysis. Lastly, I decided which categories are predominant in the data and summarized their contents by means of asking "what are the themes embedded in the conceptual categories?" (Harry et al., 2005, p. 6). After I finished all analyses for each transcription, I started comparing the themes I got between each participant. Based on such continuous comparisons, if I found some confused parts, I re-checked the original transcriptions and modified and ensured the themes more precisely represented the data. For example, about what these women learned through volunteering, many participants mentioned their learning of knowing how lucky they were after comparing themselves to the ones they helped. I originally categorized this as "self-oriented knowledge." After going through more of the same expressions in the data, I realized that I should create a new theme as "wisdom" and classify the "self-oriented knowledge" under the theme of "wisdom" rather than "knowledge." Moreover, about the definitions of successful aging, some participants mentioned "being happy." After going through the comparisons of the

data, I decided to combine being happy into the theme of "being healthy." Besides, originally "being contented with what one had" was categorized under the theme of "wisdom." However, I recalled what they indirectly expressed, I found that "being content with what one has" should be a separate theme which could also denote the cultural characteristic of their perceived successful aging. Regarding how they learned through volunteering, after continuous comparisons, I combined practicing and learning with other volunteers into the theme of "learning by doing" to make the theme more condensed. These continuous comparisons and re-modifications went through the whole processes of analyses until the finalized themes emerged.

Validity and Reliability

All readers and researchers expect that research findings are trustworthy. Based on such a need, validity and reliability are significant for any research. Merriam (1995) points out, "Internal validity asks the question, 'How congruent are one's findings with reality?'" (p. 53). For qualitative research, internal validity (or credibility) means how correct or close the research data that researchers collect and analyze as the processes, meanings, and perceptions actually exist. Because researchers are the only tool to uncover, analyze, and interpret data, the internal validity of qualitative research is related to (1) rigorous methods for doing fieldwork, (2) researchers' skills and competences, and (3) researchers' philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). Internal validity is a strength of qualitative research because qualitative researchers use themselves as instruments to closely observe or dialogue with the participants. However, as a novice qualitative researcher, to offset imperfect skills and competences, there was a need for me to increase internal validity of this study.

According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), triangulation, member checks, peer examination, statement of researcher's experiences, assumptions, and biases, and collecting data

over a long enough time to ensure an in-depth understanding of the research issue are five strategies to increase internal validity. In this study, all the aforementioned ways were used. I stayed in the field for about three and a half months and when there was a need, I called the interviewees for follow-up interviews. Among various triangulations, I used different data sources, such as in-depth interviews, documents, all field notes, and supplemental data I got from their member checks, to increase internal validity of this study. I also mailed the transcriptions to most of the participants, except ones who mentioned they did not want to have the transcription (e.g., one was illiterate).

For the member check, considering the conveniences and needs of reading and recalling for the participants, I first mailed the primary 3-page findings with a few interpretations to eight participants of this study and asked for their feedback. Within the letter of the 3-page findings, I described the meanings of the member check and the follow-up phone call to get their response to the member check. Since the type of member check I did included only the final findings which had no quotations or information could be tracked back to individual participants, thus, to save the mailing time, some findings were sent out to the NPOs the participants volunteered for by emails and then were delivered to the participants at their volunteer time slots. I also told the volunteer coordinators about the process of the member check and asked them to remind those research participants about the follow-up phone calls. I believed that this was also a way to give the NPOs a formal sense on this study and the importance of their assistance. Two participants of this member check who originally knew each other and volunteered in the same NPOs even set an appointment to discuss the findings together. They made a note on their discussions for this member check and further expressed their notes to me when I collected their feedback through telephone. One of these two participants even brought the 3-page findings to her other volunteer

partners in other NPOs and asked them to check if those findings represented the learning

experiences through volunteering correctly. All the feedback from the member check was

positive and they agreed that the major part of the findings of this study summarized and

represented their experiences well. The member check seemed to bring the participants a feeling

of being respected and the importance of what they were involved in in this study. All

supplementations in the process of the member check were also collected as extra data and

included into the data analyses.

Although external validity is defined as "the extent to which findings can be generalized

to other situations" (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 102), in qualitative research it is referred to as

reader or user generalizability. This concept stresses that the judgment of generalizability of

findings of any study is by users or readers rather than by the researchers (Merriam & Simpson,

2000). Thus, I provided rich and thick descriptions to assist readers to judge whether the findings

in this study can be transferred into their contexts. Moreover, to ensure the results of this study

can be applied to a greater range of conditions by readers of the study, maximizing variation in

the purposely selected samples also was employed in this study.

Reliability also is a way to ensure that research findings are trustworthy. In quantitative

research reliability means the extent that a finding can be duplicated. However, this concept of

replication is problematic in qualitative research because human beings are the subjects of

qualitative research and people's behaviors, thoughts, and feelings will never be the same day

after day. In contrast with quantitative research, qualitative researchers tend to define reliability

as the consistency between collected data and results (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). It means that

researchers use many ways to minimize possible biases and errors in the process of studies.

According to Merriam (1995), triangulation, peer examination, and audit trail are three strategies

for researchers to ensure for greater consistency between collected data and findings in the studies. In this study, besides triangulation, I used an audit trail, a method of detailed descriptions of the process, steps, and decision points during collecting, analyzing, interpreting data, and generating findings (Merriam, 1995; Patton, 2002) to increase reliability. Although the field work was conducted in Taiwan, I reported and discussed some problems I encountered with the committee members by emails. For example, when I faced the conflict between increasing sample diversity and age criterion of possible participants, I emailed my major professor and the methodologist of the committee to ensure and finalize the decision of including the aboriginal participant into this study. Especially, during the data analysis process, I worked closely with my major professor from the original themes to the final themes. The themes were conceptualized and finalized by means of many detailed discussions between my major professor and me.

Research Bias and Assumptions

No matter whether one is an insider or an outsider, it is necessary, significant, and ethical for a researcher to examine and reexamine her/his motives and assumptions before exploring lives that are different from hers/his. Consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or not, when researchers conduct a study, they will inevitably bring their lenses based on their life experiences and positionality into the processes of the research. As Norris (1997) writes: "a consideration of self as a researcher and self in relation to the topic of research is a precondition for coping with bias"(p. 174). Thus, let me start such examinations from brief biographical information, and then address my motives and assumptions of this research.

I am a single and over-thirty Asian woman. I am a Buddhist and grew up in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan. All my family lives in the same city. The most painful event in my life is my mother's passing away ten years ago. If she was still alive, she would be 67 years old now. My

life can be divided into three sections: (1) from birth to 1993 June, (2) between 1993 September and 2002 December, and (3) after 2002 December. In the first period, all my life mainly focused on finishing obligatory education and higher education. I got my master's degree in natural science. At the second period, I started my work career in the practical field of adult education. During these nine years, I went back to school three times. The first time I went back to the university that I got my master's degree from and enrolled as an undergraduate student at the night program. The second time I re-enrolled because of dropping out of that night program. The third time I went to another university to try to get another master's degree. The third period began with my coming to America to study in a doctoral program in adult education.

This is the first time I divided my life in this way. Looking back at my life through these three sections, I found that once I felt bored, empty, and doubtful in life, I went back to school. Moreover, I found that in my nine-year work career, training and working with volunteers occupied four years. Moreover, during the whole three sections, I did and still try to volunteer. Further, one of the happiest achievements in my work career was working with reading groups in which women were the main members and to assist setting up their volunteer systems. Through this retrospection, I realized how learning, volunteerism, and women learners link tightly in my life. Based on such exploration and self-disclosure, I more clearly learned the meaning of this research to me. I also need to honestly say that the study is also derived from such personal concerns-- to make a better lifelong learning environment for my old age in Taiwan.

I know little about real life in late adulthood. I have rarely been close to or familiar with senior women in my life. Except for the literature I read for this study, I have no clear personal answer and observation about what successful aging means. However, after I began my studies in the U.S., I have seen and heard many older women continuously learning after they retired.

Some of them participate in formal education, and others learn through informal activities such as volunteering. When I saw they energetically learned and vividly participated in their old age, I knew it was successful aging. But, how do Taiwanese older women define this term? I was very curious about it.

As an adult student, I regard experience and learning as a very valuable part in my life. I even felt angry when I found that most of the studies related to successful aging were health-related and rarely mentioned the significance of learning. In this study, I assumed that learning has positive influences on improving and adapting to life and increasing well-being in late adulthood. In addition, I do regard volunteering as experiential learning rather than simply an activity. Thus, in this study I assumed that one of the reasons for older adults' regular volunteering might be their learning through volunteering. I do not believe volunteering is a privilege for richer and educated people. As a person who always participates in learning and volunteering and regards both as significant issues in my life, I believe that volunteering and lifelong learning will benefit individuals no matter what age people are.

Further, considering my positionality as a woman, I am more concerned with women than men. Basically, I advocate that women are different from men and their voices need to be heard. In this study, facing with my senior interviewees, I assumed that I would be regarded as more powerful because of my educational level, but also less powerful because of my age and marriage status. As a Taiwanese who accepts higher education in a western country, I found that I seemed to instinctively anticipate different definitions of successful aging from the West in my study. Moreover, I also strongly felt the need of making Taiwan's contexts and practices exposed and understood.

Although this study was conducted in my mother country and used Taiwanese and Mandarin, the two languages I am most proficient at using, there were still some things I felt not so comfortable and confident about. For example, I am not familiar with the life in rural areas in Taiwan; I had no formal experience of interacting with older women who aged over 60 or who were illiterates or who were aboriginals. Nevertheless, as a female and novice researcher, I believe that only by keeping sensitive to my assumptions, subjectivity, and biases there will be ways to conduct a productive data collection and analysis. Further, remembering that every respondent and interview is different, and being careful not to take something for granted are significant components of a responsible study.

<div align="center">Translation Issues</div>

In this study, the language used to collect data was either Mandarin, the official language in Taiwan, or Taiwanese, the other dominant language, depended on which one the informants felt more comfortable with. Often time these two languages were mixed during the interviews. However, since Taiwanese is mainly a spoken language and very few people know its written form, Chinese was used in transcribing and in data analysis. Only in the final writing were the significant data, themes, and findings translated back into English and presented in the dissertation written in English. Thus, in this study, there were two levels of translation. For those data which were collected in Taiwanese, it was first translated into Chinese. Significant data from these transcriptions were translated into English. For the interviews which were conducted in Mandarin, transcriptions were written in Chinese and only significant data were translated into English. Merriam's (Merriam et al., 2001) cross-cultural interviews remind us that whenever language translation is involved, the understanding, exploration, and representation of informants' perspectives and experiences would become more complicated. To resolve this

problem, I checked the transcriptions which were done by others word by word and mailed

transcriptions to most of the research participants to ensure some translations between Taiwanese

and Chinese were correct. Since I am a tri-lingual in Taiwanese, Chinese, and English, I double

checked to ensure the accuracy of translations. For some cases, I asked other American and

Taiwanese who settled down in the U.S. for more than 10 years to help ensure the translations.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand older Taiwanese women's learning through volunteering, and the role of that learning in successful aging. The study was guided by the following research questions:

(1) How do older Taiwanese women define successful aging?

(2) How and what do older Taiwanese women learn through volunteering?

(3) How does the learning through volunteering influence older Taiwanese women's successful aging?

(4) How does the Taiwanese cultural context shape the definitions/perceptions of successful aging of older women?

This study employed a qualitative design. Between March 2006 and January 2007, fourteen older Taiwanese women who aged over 60 and have volunteered regularly in various institutions for at least two years participated in this study. To prevent the findings from influences of geographic and other factors, this study interviewed older Taiwanese women of diverse ages, education, and religious backgrounds who lived in various areas in Taiwan. Except for two participants who regarded their health condition as very bad, the remainder self-rated their health as average and above. Except for one, each interviewee regarded herself as an old woman who has a good old age or felt satisfied with her current life.

This chapter has two major sections. The first section presents participant profiles offering a brief picture of each individual respondent. The second section consists of the findings derived from data I got from interviews and documents.

Participant Profiles

Among the 14 women, the oldest participant was 90 years old and has continuously

volunteered since she was 64. Half of them volunteered for more than one institution. The NPOs

they volunteered for are various, such as hospitals, welfare units, local museum, community

college, senior center, temple and religious groups. Their volunteer work included calling and

greeting seniors who lived alone, providing directions and information to the public who came to

the NPOs, narration and editing, teaching computer or dancing, fundraising, helping in a mobile

medical car or a mobile library, taking care of comatose or disoriented patients, performing end-

of-life rituals, helping cook, copy, and mail, and so on. Most of them regularly volunteered for

more than ten years. In terms of educational attainment, two had no formal education but most

had at least a high school education. In terms of marital status and living arrangement, except for

two widowed, one divorced, and one never married, all married interviewees lived with spouse

or also with married children together. Most were Buddhists, two were Christians, and some

were either Taoists or had no specific religious affiliation. The living area was nationwide at

either urban or rural places. To present special political concerns in terms of so-called Taiwanese

islanders and Chinese mainlanders, among the 14 respondents, four originally came from China,

one was aboriginal, one was of the Hakka people (currently, the ancestors of most of Hakka

people in Taiwan originally are from southeastern provinces of China. They traditionally prefer

to live at nearby areas as a group and have their own languages), and the others were born in

Taiwan. Table 1 presents the summary of the demographic information of these 14 participants.

Table 1

Biographical Information of Participants

Name	Age	Marital Status	Living Arrangement	Education	Main economic sources	Religion	Living area	Volunteer Activities		
								N*	H*	AY*
Jin	66	Married	Spouse & married children	Some high school	Spouse or children & SMA	Taoist	North, municipality	1	3	6
Chen	69	Married	Spouse	Some graduate school	Pension	none	North, Urban	1	3	3
Lee	80	Married	Spouse & married children	Elementary school	Spouse or children & SMA	Buddhist	North, Urban	1	48	4
Xin	67	Married	Spouse	Teachers' college graduate	Pension	Taoist & Buddhist	Middle, Rural	4	12	22
Nan	86	Married	Spouse	High school graduate	Pension	none	South, Urban	4	13	21
Ming	82	Widow	Live alone	High school graduate	SMA	none	South, Urban	3	10	16
Gao	90	Divorced	Married children	College graduate	Pension & SMA	Christian	South, municipality	1	6	26
Ting	68	Never married	Live with a sibling	Some high school	SMA	Buddhist	East, Rural	4	15	10+
Ping	78	Widow	Live alone	High school graduate	Pension	Christian	East, Rural	5	21	28
Hua	60	Married	Spouse	None	Spouse or children & Pension	Buddhist	East, Rural	1	5	20
Yue	67	Married	Spouse	Teachers' college graduate	Pension	Taoist	Middle, Rural	1	30	12
Hui	65	Married	Spouse & married children	9th grade	Spouse or children	Buddhist	North, Rural	2	2.5	4
Feng	78	Married	Spouse	Teachers' school graduate (=High school graduate)	Spouse or children & Pension	None	North, municipality	2	9	28
Wen	70	Married	Spouse	None	Spouse or children & SMA	Buddhist	North, municipality	1	2+	10

N* was the number of the institution where she was volunteering.

H* was the accumulated hours she volunteered in a week at all institutions that she volunteered

AY* was the accumulated years of her volunteering without a stop since she started providing help in institution(s).

SMA was the senior monthly allowance delivered by the government

Although those who I interviewed were so-called "elderly," I did not feel a big age gap between any of them and me at all. Many times, I felt as if I have been interviewing teen girls when they smiled or laughed. I also felt as if I have been interviewing my friends when they shared their affective memories and even tears with me, such as their relationship with children or life in widowhood. Although there were obvious wrinkles and spots on their faces and skins which denoted the traces of age, even those over 70, they spoke energetically and walked as fast as I did. To me, these women were simply old in chronology. The ones I interviewed were simply young and wise souls packed in physically old bodies. Below is the profile of each participant based on the sequences of the interviews.

Jin

She was my first interviewee and the meeting was arranged at her volunteer duty time in the institution she volunteered for. Her sunny smiles and frank responses to my inquiry were what I can still recall vividly. Clearly, she was very welcome in the institution. I heard some staff happily chatting with her right after she arrived at the institution. During the interview, another staff even interrupted us because the staff wanted to see if Jin was available to go lead karaoke for the institution's residents. Jin greatly enjoyed karaoke. Stopping by a community center to karaoke with friends was her weekly activity. She also took a class at a community college where she could learn English through singing. By accident, the staff of the institution she volunteered for told me that Jin was a national athlete. After I tried many times to confirm this, she then shyly admitted it was true. She has participated in badminton competition for 35 years. No matter international or national competitions, she signed up without considering her age. She prided herself on her being still capable to contend with strong opponents. She appeared to be proud and excited when she mentioned how she defeated those tall Westerners in the games.

After the interview, she was allowed to guide me to go upstairs, the exact space she volunteered. When the elevator opened, I saw many adults with Alzheimer's disease which made me feel uncomfortable and I wanted to immediately rush back into the elevator. However, Jin gave a hug to one resident and then chatted with another one as if she had stopped by to visit close friends, although many of those "friends" were quiet and just stared at her without too many responses.

Chen

She started her teaching career since she graduated from a teacher preparation school at 18. Because she did not want to add financial burden to her parents, she gave up pursuing more education and gave the chances to her younger siblings. At 50, she enrolled at a university and she said that "it is my time to fulfill my own." After she finished the classes, she continuously took credits at a graduate program. She spent a total of ten summers on the undergraduate and graduate levels studying without interruption, only because she wanted to fulfill a dream which she could prove that she had a capacity to attend higher education. Since Taiwan was a colony governed by Japan for 50 years, she learned Japanese first and regarded Japanese as her mother language. After the Japanese colonial rule ended in 1945, she just started learning Mandarin and Taiwanese. At that time, she was only at the second grade. Thus, she did want to pick up her Japanese and become more proficient in it. Also, although she was a teacher in a junior high school, the historical context made her always regard herself as not being good at writing in Chinese. After a requirement of planning for old age in a university class, she first considered about retirement. At that time, she thought about being a volunteer but did not take action. Only after she did nothing but sleep at her first whole week of retirement, she felt confused and terrible for such a life. Therefore, she started exploring opportunities outside of her home.

Lee

She was the eldest daughter-in-law in a family. At the first day she married and moved into her husband's home, she realized that her husband had thirteen siblings with whom she needed to live. She even needed to feed almost all children of the siblings because she was the daughter-in-law. She laughed and said that she did not even know how to make a deposit at a bank because there was always no money left to take care of such a big family. It was very interesting to hear her mention the past life, such as her grandfather had five wives and the experiences she had sleeping and eating at different relatives' homes because of prevailing poverty during the war between Taiwan and Japan. Because of the medical underdevelopment at that time, she was saved after more than 100 shots to treat her tuberculosis but lost her hearing in one ear. Although she experienced a poor and toilsome life in the agriculture age in Taiwan, she mentioned that what she still remembered vividly and recalled often was those who treated her well and kindly at that time. It is also interesting that she sometimes spoke in Japanese to express herself which I needed to ask for her translation. She started volunteering at age 76. It was unbelievable that she volunteered at the same organization from 8:00 in the morning to 5:00 in the afternoon, six days (Monday to Saturday) a week for three years. She did not help there on Sunday because the Center was off on Sunday. People called her "grandma invoice," because her main work was to help arrange and check donated uniform invoices for a non-profit center which took care of comatose patients. For her, each donated uniform invoice was a hope because there was a lottery-like system hosted by the government. The levels of numbers matching on the invoices decided how much extra money the organization could gain to support the work. She laughed and told me about how other volunteers were surprised at her creativity of saving an invoice which was crumpled as a paper ball after being wet by rain. She carefully treated this kind of invoice as wet clothing and used clips, a hair dryer, and tapes to restore the invoices.

Xin

She lived in a rural area where I needed to transfer buses and then walked for a while to reach. She was called by a nurse at a hygienic unit and then became a volunteer who helped in a mobile medical vehicle because in the rural place, everyone knew someone was newly-retired. We met at the local foundation where she first volunteered. I heard a long sound of bike braking and then saw her come into the foundation. She has involved in a library project at the foundation 10 years before she retired from school. With a smile, she said that she and her husband were the No. 1 and No. 2 volunteers at this local foundation. Later, this project extended so she and her husband regularly drove a mobile library to some rural elementary schools every week. During the time students checked out books from the mobile library, she sent out the handouts of Taiwanese dialectal phrases she edited and used a microphone to teach students those phrases at class break time. She also edited and put the common library codes onto cardboard and gave them to students. For her, it was a way in a rural area to facilitate students' learning and foster their abilities of competition. She told me that by learning dialectal phrases, children could learn some traditional culture. She also believed that by memorizing common library codes, children could easily find books whenever they entered a library. She showed me many award records she got because of her excellent volunteer services. For her, as a resident in a small town, her working and serving for the community was an honor and also a must.

Nan

She sat in the reception room and waited for me. I felt a little bit shocked because of her serious facial expression and her formal dress with a golden modified short cheongsam. After a while, I realized that all was in anticipation of this interview. She had a very clear logical thinking style. She was the second oldest respondent for this study but she was not hunched over

as many seniors were and had no chronic diseases. Asking how she could stay so healthy, she

immediately took off her shoes and lay on the sofa to demonstrate a set of exercises that she kept

doing for about 20 years and that got her away from very bad physical health. She told me that

she made a lot of copies of the set of exercises and even put her name and home phone number

on it because she really benefited from it and wanted others to be healthy as well. Of course she

gave me one copy. Interestingly, when I called her Miss [a term meant for young women] rather

than Mrs, she naturally responded and accepted. Also, while I felt really anxious by her running

around the museum to find Ming, another interviewee, for me, she seemed fine and easy with the

fast run. When she was in China, because of the World War II, schools were moved from cities

to rural areas which caused her to leave home early for schooling. Further, a civil war also

pushed her to come to Taiwan from China alone when she was 25. Her husband's working in

other cities also resulted in her taking care of children alone. All the aforementioned factors

caused her to become a very independent person. She became a volunteer only by coincidence

when a staff member in an organization that she went for submitting her retirement membership

form asked her. Later, she kept finding more opportunities to volunteer. One of the opportunities

she got came from an attached recruiting advertisement with a newspaper which was from a

local museum. While being a volunteer at four institutions, her husband still often teased her

about if she still wanted more whenever he saw a recruiting advertisement.

Ming

　　As a widow, she has lived alone for 20 years. She came to Taiwan from China with her

husband and little baby and then became a fulltime housewife. Six years after her husband died,

her daughter encouraged her to come out of her home and do something new. Because she was a

housewife and was well cared for by her husband for all her life after she settled down in Taiwan,

she felt kind of timid to leave home and unsure if she would be accepted by the outside world. Friends introduced her to an opportunity of being a volunteer. During the interview, she frequently mentioned how appreciative she felt about being a volunteer which changed her world. She felt she was transformed as she became a volunteer. In other words, instead of being like a frog only looking at the sky from the bottom of a well, she had broad perspectives. Although sometimes she felt sad for the loss of her husband, she felt satisfied at the current life which was full with plentiful growth and possibilities. She always mentioned how she was grateful to the staff's and other fellow volunteers' acceptance and respect to her although she had little education and she was not young. Humbleness, politeness, and girlish smiles made her attractive. She repeatedly and humbly said that she had no brain and was not smart so she never thought or worried about something too much. Compared to other older adults' sleeping troubles, she happily and shyly told me that she really liked sleeping and always slept a lot. Except for the volunteer time, she always took a nap for at least one hour in the afternoon if she was at home.

Gao

She was the eldest participant for this study. She also was the unhappiest respondent, I guessed, because she was the only one among the interviewees who did not feel she had a good old age. However, as she said, volunteering was the only good happening in her life. Volunteer duty time was the only time she felt happy and could boost her morale. She started being a volunteer at age 64 when a doctor said that she would die soon. She laughingly told me that who knew she would still be alive after 20 more years. Even after a severe car accident, she simply took two-week rest and then continuously volunteered. She just took off the holder from her hurt hand right before she went into the door of the institution she volunteered for, so everyone assumed that she recovered. Even at the off-duty time, she often took care of people and helped

them get into elevators. People often felt odd because of this very old woman's service but she easily responded to such confusion with an answer: "I am a volunteer." She learned ballroom dance at age 71, enrolled in a workshop of Alzheimer's care-giving at age 75, and participated with her great-grandson in a competition of English speech at her late 80s. She also regularly took classes at a senior center every week. No matter in classrooms or when she took a taxi, once she had a chance, she introduced herself as a volunteer. She told me that she kept doing so just because she wanted people to know that she was not a general student or a lay person. By presenting her role as a volunteer, she wanted to encourage people: "If I can, you can" and also try to break the stereotype of being old is equal to being useless.

Ting

She wore a red top with a scarf and blue jeans. She said that she did not like dressing like an old person. She was the only Hakka person and also the only one who never married among the interviewees. Like the social stereotypes of Hakka people, she was really diligent and very able to bear hardships. As the eldest daughter, at the age of 14, the year she just graduated from elementary school, she needed to take care of her two-year-old sister as well as her ill grandpa. Their poor financial condition made her unable to continue her education. At the age of 60, she first thought of going back to school because she did not want her low educational preparation to become a limitation for her to continuously volunteer. For six years, she participated at night school without absences and was in the last semester of her high school when I interviewed her. Because of her being never married and the experience of taking care and accompanying her grandfather and her parents, she said she had a special feeling for the elderly. Thus, two of four institutions she volunteered for were associated with older adults. For her, accompanying and chatting with those elderly was just like interacting with her deceased parents and grandfather

which allowed her to enjoy the family love and warmth again. She was not rich and the $3,000 Taiwanese dollars monthly senior allowance from the government was her only income, but she regularly volunteered for ten years or so. From her home to the institutions, it took her 30 or even 40 minutes one way to ride a bike up and down on the hilly roads. When I asked her why she did this, she said, "I really do not know. I just enjoy doing so."

Ping

She sent me a bag with copies of many documents which recorded her volunteer services, social participation, and honors and awards. Impressively, she marked in detail some important lines on each page and also wrote footnotes and annotations for me. As a widow, although each of her children had affluent life and successful career, she still insisted on living alone in a rural place. To be able to live alone independently was what she really enjoyed and appreciated. Thus, she always said she was "waiting until I become sick" as a response to her children's invitations. She was interested in political participation. For her, being patriotic was a must and being involved in helping improve the society was also an obligation. Her being a volunteer was also triggered by her patriotism at the year when Taiwan withdrew from the National Union. Because of past financial plight, she gave way to her elder brother for the opportunity of higher education and started working after graduating from high school. Because of such a background, she was devoted to helping children and teenagers who could not afford education and who dropped out of schools to continue their education. Being able to drive made her able to often visit the seniors she volunteered for as well. Besides volunteering at five organizations and seven days a week, she often donated big money to various organizations. Amazingly, she even self-learned how to write a lawsuit document for a handicapped old man to help him gain a low-income certification which would give him a better life, even though the man was not the one who she took charge of

in her volunteer mission. She also learned how to write short poems and enjoyed such writing very much. She shyly said that she hoped to write her autobiography someday.

Hua

As most of the aboriginal, she was tall and had a sunshine-like face. She picked me up at a local train station and led me to her home for the interview. She was afraid that her lack of formal education would interfere with her abilities of expression so I saw a friend who she invited to help her at the train station as well. As most Taiwanese believed, aboriginals were very good at dancing and singing. I kind of believed so and Hua was one example. Hua was great at and also enjoyed dancing. Interestingly, as a natural dancer, she even paid to learn some dances because she voluntarily taught seniors at a local park every early morning. This teaching work came by accident. She just happened to pass through a local park and a group of bored seniors gathered there asking her: "Do you know how to dance? Can you teach us?" Then, the morning volunteer work started and continued day by day for ten more years. As Hua said, whenever she woke up and opened her eyes in the morning, the first thought in her mind was to jump on her motorcycle and go to those seniors who waited for her dancing class. As a hospital staff, she often helped those poor or older patients, especially those without family. She signed a form at the hospital and become a volunteer at the same day she retired. Thus, she laughed and said that she never really knew what it felt like to be retired. People often will try to avoid contacting with people who have a mental disorder but Hua is different. Her volunteer work was helping at a psychiatry department. She felt comfortable with the work even as she had to face patients who could not control themselves well. Since she was married to a non-aboriginal, she had few chances to speak her mother language. Being a volunteer also gave her an opportunity to talk with other aboriginals. Importantly, because many elder aboriginals could not speak Mandarin,

Hua became a significant helper who could do translations between doctors and aboriginal patients.

Yue

Although she grew up in a very poor family, she said that she never envied other's richness. However, this background made her a person who always desired to give the needy a hand. Especially after she became an elementary teacher, she often bought socks, shoes, and underwear to poor students. For poor students whose parents could not pay for medical insurance, she even brought students to see doctors and then paid all the expenses. She and her husband volunteered at a local hospital in the beginning of her retirement. Later she became a volunteer of a temple and helped do charity there. As an educated person, she never thought that she would become a person who spent so much time at Taoism temples, as many elder people did in Taiwan. It just turned out in this way for her after her husband's car accident with someone's warning beforehand. In the beginning, she just occasionally helped program classes for summer camps focused on teenagers who withdrew from schools. Later, she became a volunteer there who would always be there whenever there was a job. Although her formal volunteer duty was only on Tuesday, she went there almost every day, including Sunday, doing things such as fundraising by rice cake sale, visiting and greeting the poor, cleaning the environment and restrooms, reciting scriptures, and so on. She told me that she just felt odd if she did not go there. At the same time, she was afraid that someone would not catch her if there was a need. Thus, she never stayed long at her children's homes when she visited them in other city.

Hui

She used to own a sewing store. She taught brides-to-be how to sew and she told me that being able to sew used to be a necessary skill for women to enter marriage. She closed it right

after she got married because of the need of taking care of her husband's big family. She started

going out of the family again after her husband retired. At that time, she was about 60. She

signed up for a computer class at a local community college and became a class volunteer there

after class ended. Her main work was assisting in computer class for those adult learners. During

the interview, she mentioned lots of names of media software she was using which I even did not

know about. Actually, I saw her personal website before I interviewed her. She was one of the

two participants in this study who used emails everyday. She often encouraged and introduced

her neighbors and friends to sign up for the computer classes. As a computer volunteer,

whenever she saw learners become comfortable with the computer and the Internet or even could

use this technology to improve their business work, she felt satisfied. Besides volunteering, she

enrolled in many classes at the community college as well. As other interviewees, she regarded

herself as a woman who had a good old age. Although her son's health problem was her biggest

pain and worry, she knew that there is no perfect world.

Feng

Being very energetic, active, and good at expressing herself were my first impression on

her. She always could give me clear descriptions and examples during the interview. When we

could not find a place for the interview at the organization she volunteered for, she unhesitatingly

said that she could transfer on the Mass Rapid Transportation and buses to come to my place for

the interview. Of course I could not let an almost 80-year-old interviewee do this so we met at

her home. She intentionally asked her husband out so the interview could be without

interruptions. She was a winner of national volunteer awards. The community meeting she and

her husband went to together triggered their involvement in volunteer work. Some organizations

even invited her to volunteer for them because of her wonderful performance. She took her

volunteer duties very seriously. Even her son who lived in Europe complained that she could visit him for only three times, when he married and when his two sons were born because of volunteer work. The experience of greeting a foreign TV team in English while the team did an interview at the organization was the most unforgettable memory of her volunteer career. She even vividly remembered the four phrases she said to those visitors and their responses to her hospitality. She was not afraid or nervous at all although those foreigners were much taller than she. Thus, she learned more English later because the organization would send her to greet guests at the reception desk whenever there were foreign visitors. She was almost 80 but most of time she did not feel old. Only occasionally she felt old and having not too much time left. When she thought about how much time she had left, she told me that she really hoped there would have a machine to make time reverse.

Wen

She looked 50 or 60 with no wrinkles on her face. She laughed loudly when I said so because she was 70 and felt herself very old. Every morning after she finished exercise at the nearby park, she stopped by an 80-year-old neighbor's home to accompany and chat with him for one hour and then went back to her own home. She and her husband saved and donated money to the Buddhism foundation to help the foundation build a hospital before they both became volunteers for the foundation, although they were not rich. She started volunteering there after the small food shop she and her husband ran together ended. The work she did for the organization included classifying recycled materials, cleaning the environment, helping cook vegetarian meals for various activities, and so on. Her recent main volunteer work for the organization was Chu-Nian, a way to express blessings and help keep the deceased in peace by reciting Buddha's name when people are dying and within eight hours right after people die.

Although all the deceased are people she did not know, whenever the requesting calls came from the organization, she went without hesitation to hospitals and homes of the dead. Sometimes, she would also participate in people's funeral ceremonies with her fellow volunteers as a team to express their blessings to the dead and the family members of the dead by reciting Buddha's name. When I asked Wen what she felt about doing this special volunteer work, she happily said that she did not feel afraid or weird but was glad to be able to bless others at their last moment in the world. She was very soft-hearted. Sometime, when she did Chu-Nian for the young or even children, she told me she cried. Because of her own financial condition, she felt more empathy for the desperate and the needy. Thus, even though she felt she could help very little, it was much better than doing nothing. Helping people also let her feel peaceful at the same time. She said she only knew working hard to earn more and more money and never heard about volunteering when she was young. Now she realized that doing charity work was a need and also a must, and would say "no way" if someone asked her to stop volunteering.

Research Findings

Findings regarding to the four research questions are displayed in Table 2. The older female participants defined and perceived successful aging as (1) being healthy, (2) having no financial worries, (3) maintaining good relationships, (4) continuing contributing to society through volunteering, and (5) having a good death. Building upon their past life experiences, participating in volunteer services prompted these older Taiwanese women to learn wisdom, knowledge, and skills through observation, learning by doing, formal training provided by the institutions they volunteered for, and thinking and reflecting.

Table 2

Summary of the Research Findings

Definition of Successful Aging
(1) Being healthy (2) Having no financial worries (3) Maintaining good relationships (Friends, Family) (4) Continuing contributing to society through volunteering (5) Having a good death

Learning through Volunteering	
Have learned: (1) Wisdom (2) Knowledge (3) Skills	By means of : (1) Observation (2) Learning by doing (3) Thinking and reflecting (4) Formal training provided by the institutions they volunteered for

The Roles of Learning through Volunteering in Successful Aging
(1) Establishing a meaningful life (2) Building and improving relationships (3) Enhancing positive changes and self-evaluation (4) Promoting physical and psychological health

Cultural Influences on Perceptions of Successful Aging
(1) Changing intergenerational dynamic (2) Believing in karma, cause-and-effect, and fatalism (3) Being satisfied with what one has (4) Valuing good death

The study also found that the learning through volunteering did facilitate older Taiwanese women's successful aging. The influences of the learning on successful aging includes (1) establishing a meaningful life, (2) building and improving relationships, (3) enhancing positive changes and self-evaluation, and (4) promoting physical and psychological health. In addition, data supported that traditional Taiwanese culture did shape what successful aging meant to the

participants. Four cultural factors that shaped perceptions of a good old age included: (1) a changing intergenerational dynamic, (2) believing in karma, cause-and-effect, and fatalism, (3) being satisfied with what one has, and (4) valuing a good death.

Definition of Successful Aging

During interviews, I found that "good old age" could be regarded as the same phrase as "the ideal life at old age" for these older Taiwanese women. When I asked the participants what was a good old age for them, the answers were similar about what their ideal life at old age looked like. For these older Taiwanese women, successful aging is (1) being healthy, (2) having no financial worries, (3) maintaining good relationships, (4) continuing contributing to society through volunteering, and (5) having a good death.

Being Healthy

While asking these women what good old age meant to them, "being healthy" was the answer that came out first and immediately. For Taiwanese old women, health was a general term including physical, mental, and psychological dimensions. Although many of participants had some diseases or medical problems, such as high blood pressure, degenerate joints, hearing, and eyesight, and heart problems, one even needed to use a catheter everyday and another had cancer, most of them regarded their health conditions as average and above. For these older Taiwanese women, diseases were not counted as unhealthy. Being healthy meant that they maintained capacities of independent mobility and that they were able to take care of their everyday life on their own. As many of these participants mentioned, even though you have a million dollars, if you were unhealthy, you have nothing. As Ting said,

The worst thing is being ill. My most worry is what I can do if I could not walk someday.

See, I ride my bike to go anywhere. If I could not do it anymore, I could go nowhere. So,

health is very important.

Yue was even more specific as to health being must important:

The greatest thing at my age is I have a healthy body. I am still very healthy now. I have

appetite to eat. I sleep well, am not like others suffering from insomnia. I never think idly

and confusedly. I really enjoy sleeping. Being able to sleep and eat, everyone envy me.

Being healthy physically and psychologically is my proudest thing now. Although I need to

use catheter everyday after a surgery, it is ok and just a little problem.

Also, when the participants mentioned about the significance of being healthy for a good

old age, many of them pointed out that being unhealthy would make them become a burden on

their children. Considering this, being healthy became more important.

Having no Financial Worries

Besides being healthy, not worrying about finances was also a significant component of

successful aging for these old Taiwanese women. Among the fourteen participants, half had their

own work pension or insurance income, the other half simply depended on the financial support

of spouse and children or the monthly senior subsidies provided by the government ($3,000

Taiwanese dollars, is equal to approximately 94 U.S. dollars). No matter what financial sources

they had, these respondents did not ask for an affluent life; rather, they stressed having enough

financial sources that could support their basic life needs and that could keep the sense of

independence and dignity. Nan's descriptions provided such a perspective:

Of course I would have been not so happy if I had no work pension. So, it is really

necessary for older people to have their own basic life expenses. If you just depend on

children and wait for them to give you money, being just like one of my classmates, she felt

uneasy whenever her children mention about money or do something related to money.

Sometime she felt not to be respected when her children gave her money. It is also

impossible for many young people to give their parents money nowadays. Thus, I could

only tell her: take it if your children give you money. Do not think too much about their

attitudes.

Jin, the participant who volunteered for dementia residents, repeated the same idea and

described in more detail about what basic financial needs meant to these women:

We are not mentioning a lot of money. At least whenever you need money, you have. For

example, go out with friends for fun or go to see a doctor. It is really a bad life if you do

not have money to see a doctor, isn't it? At least you do not need to worry about some little

money for basic life.

Maintaining Good Relationships

Besides being healthy and having no worries about basic financial needs, these older

Taiwanese emphasized maintaining good relationships as they considered what a good old age

was. Such a concern included the relationships with both friends and family members. The

participants unhesitatingly stressed the significance of the company of old friends and husbands

for a good old age. Meanwhile, to have a successful aging, children's having decent careers and

lives was necessary. This could set the older mothers free from worrying about children's safety

and wellness. Besides, children's showing filial piety to them was also emphasized as an

important component of successful aging. Wen's descriptions below about how essential it is to

have her husband's company at old age provides support for half of the participants' perceptions

of good old age.

A couple always needs to be together. Just in such a way you can be happy and then can

have a good old age. If I have something wrong, he will be concerned about me. If

something happens to him, I will also be concerned about him….You definitely need to

remember to add this for me. Husband and wife need to be together. It is better….It is

better for a couple to be always together. Do not fight when both become old. It will be

unhappy if I need to be a widow and be alone. Having his company is much better.

For these women, a bond between friends was also important. Sometimes or for some of

them, friendship was even more indispensable than husband's and children's company. Many of

them mentioned that friendship kept their life from boredom and loneliness and that having no

friends to play and laugh together is very sad. Also, the participants also pointed out that they

could better communicate with old friends and be understood much better than with children

because of no generation gaps.

In addition, these old Taiwanese women kept the new generations in mind. For the

respondents, such familial connections were necessary in at late adulthood. They wish that their

children and grandchildren keep safe and well. They also hoped that the new generations have

decent jobs so they would not be a burden on society. The new generation's showing filial piety

was also part of the element of successful aging. The correlation between good old age for old

Taiwanese women and new generations was as what Yue shared below:

First, it doesn't matter if my children and grandchildren have achievements or not. I just

wish them have proper and normal jobs. That is enough. I simply wish the new generations

can show filial piety to us and have decent jobs. If they have no jobs, just idle everyday is

not a good thing, right? The new generations need to at least be able to afford the daily

expenses. I and my husband can be free from worry and have good old age only if they can

have a decent and stable life. If they have unstable lives, we will become their burden, then

their lives will be worse, right? If your new generations have no stable life, how can you be

relieved? Now I can volunteer frequently, it is also because my children are well-behaved

and do not make me worry about them. Secondly, of course my sons and daughters-in-law

need to show filial obedience and can never talk back in defiance. It is essential for old

people to have a good old age.

Continuing Contributing to Society through Volunteering

To age successfully, almost all the participants mentioned, either directly or indirectly,

the desire of being a lifelong volunteer and continuing contributing to society. Being a volunteer

is one of their favorite things in late adulthood. Many said that they would stop their voluntary

services only when they were no longer mobile. Born in 1917, as the oldest and only divorced

interviewee of this study, Gao's voice presented such a perspective:

Being able to be a volunteer is the best thing in my life. Actually, there is nothing good in

my life. I have no good performances at my work career. I have no better education….I

have no good marriage. The children, son-in-law, and daughter-in-law, I feel….[She

hesitated to mention family affairs and stopped the talk.] However, I still can be a

volunteer. The most significant goal of my current life is continuously being a volunteer.

Haha! That's all. I will give you the same answer no matter how many times you ask me. If

my hands were better, I would come here [to volunteer] more often. See, at such an age

with such a bad health, I can still come out to volunteer. No one believes so. This is really

the best thing in my life. I always told people that it will be much better if I will be able to

die while I am doing my volunteer duty….it will be much better than you are bedridden

and die on the bed….Being able to provide services to people is my biggest wish.

Nan, the second oldest participant, also mentioned her strong willingness and wish of continually providing services:

I thought about if I will be able to volunteer and if there will be a place that allows me to volunteer there when I thought about I will be 90 in a couple of years. Today is the first time I heard that there is a volunteer who is older than me. It is great. I feel very confident now and want to follow such a case and keep my volunteer work. I hope I can still be a volunteer when I am 90. What can I do at home if I do not be a volunteer? I thought people will not want us to be there [being volunteers]. If the institutions can allow the ones who are very old to volunteer there, I will keep going. I always told people, I want to be a volunteer until the institutions don't want me. This is my current goal, to continue my volunteer work. I am working at four institutions now and want to keep all of them until I cannot.

Some participants mentioned that their volunteer work allowed them to contribute the society by caring for the young. For example, Hua, the aboriginal participant, helped overlook the traffic condition in front of an elementary school in mornings and afternoons when children went for and left from school to ensure their safety. Nan also mentioned how she felt she was taking care of the young, just like all were her sons, when she reminded the young of taking a rest after donating blood in a blood donating center. Ping especially stressed that continuing being a volunteer was a way for her to contribute to the improvement of the society. By means of providing time, help, and care, and donating money, she volunteered for the elderly who were sick or lived alone and for the young who abused drugs or withdrew from school because of family and financial problems.

Having a Good Death

The other component of successful aging for these old Taiwanese women was a good death. Almost all participants mentioned that what they desired and asked for was not longevity but a good death. For these women, a good death meant being able to die at home surrounded by family members who make them feel comfortable and warm. Dying without feeling of the pain of diseases and without being confined to one's bed by sickness for too long a time were also mentioned by these women as a good death. Compared with a desire of longevity, these older Taiwanese women regarded keeping healthy and having a good death as components that were much more important to a good old age. None of the participants actively mentioned that they wanted to have a longer life or do something to pursue longevity. In contrast to their response to longevity, the desire for a good death was expressed strongly and clearly. Chen experienced the passing of her mother and mother-in-law who respectively lived to age 98 and 101. She mentioned that the experience of looking at the pain of her mother-in-law for many years made her feel that longevity was really not necessary. Nan frequently mentioned during the interviews about a temple in Japan where a lot of people pray for a quick and sudden death. She said that she has prayed for the same thing and regarded passing away during the sleep time as the most perfect ending point of life. Moreover, no matter what their religions were, the desire for a good death was the same among these old Taiwanese women. Ping who is a Christian said,

> I feel the important way to evaluate the value of my life is looking at what I have done in my whole life rather than how long I live. Now women outlive men by a couple of years. Some can even live up to 90 something. If they all lay on bed for the rest of their lives, I feel that such a life is really very miserable and sad. I had a friend who was really blessed. Her son taught her about computers on Saturday night. Then the son said; "It is sleeping

time. You should go to bed. You had a class at the community college tomorrow."…then

she did not get up at the next morning. I am a Christian. I really feel that God took care of

her so let her die in such a good way.

Wen, a Buddhist who helped Chu-Nian for the deceased, directly mentioned about her

desire for a good death:

Ah! I do not want longevity. Too old is also trouble. Everyone needs to work and make a

life. I knew an old guy who couldn't deal with his own feces and just released all in his

pants. His son reluctantly looked for people to take care of him because of money. Just let

the old guy pee and poo on the floor. This is really not good. So, the important thing is

health rather than longevity. If the time of "going home" comes, I hope for no pains caused

by diseases. It is much better to not register at a hospital or emergency room and let

medical people do that and this. It will be the best if I can die at home in peace. This is my

wish. I do not want to go to hospital and let them do a lot of things, such as intubating, on

my body and then make me not be able to go back home. If there is a choice, I will choose

not to go to the hospital. Die at home will make me feel warmer. My greatest wish is to die

at home in peace. That is the best. The age that I die is not important. Not suffering too

long is a blessing given by Buddha.

In short, successful aging could be viewed as a good old age and could be an

interchangeable term with "an ideal life at old age" for these older Taiwanese women. In the

picture of the ideal life at late adulthood, for these older Taiwanese women, (1) being healthy, (2)

having no financial worries, (3) maintaining good relationships, (4) continuing contributing to

society through volunteering, and (5) having a good death, were five core components.

The Learning through Volunteering

Most of the time, volunteering is regarded as a social and altruistic activity. However, I believe that it can also be viewed as a learning activity because it does offer many and various learning opportunities for those who provide services. In this study, I found that the participants
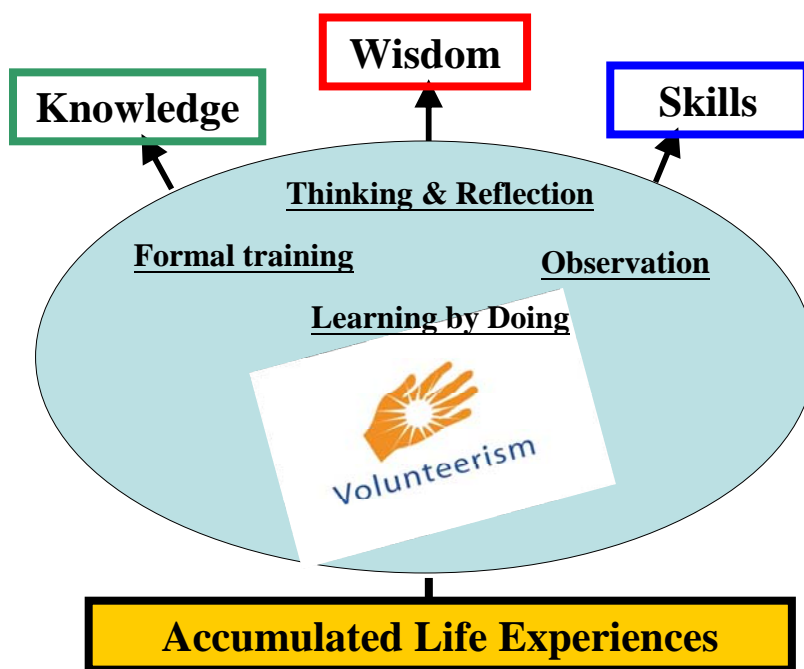

Figure 1. The learning process through volunteering

have learned knowledge, skills, and wisdom through volunteering. Their learning started, proceeded, and accumulated, by means of (1) observation, (2) learning by doing (including learning with other volunteers and self-directed learning), (3) thinking and reflecting, and (4) formal training provided by the institutions they volunteered for. I also found that the aforementioned ways they adopted to learn through volunteering often intertwined together

rather than existed alone. Their learning process through volunteering is illustrated in the figure below. As can be seen in Figure 1, the previous accumulated life experiences are the foundation of the learning through volunteering. Based on this foundation, by means of the four approaches, observation, learning by doing, thinking and reflecting, and formal training, volunteering facilitates the learning of wisdom, knowledge, and skills.

Knowledge and skills these older women learned through volunteering were various and depended on what kinds of institutions they volunteered for and what kinds of jobs they were assigned. For example, Xin, Nan, Ming, and Hua who volunteered in either hospitals or blood donation centers learned about medical knowledge and skills, such as how to maintain health and prevent risks and diseases and how to measure blood pressure through formal training and lectures provided by the institutions. The participants also learned other skills such as how to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), speak different languages, and use technology by formal training and learning by doing. Jin volunteered at an institution providing care for comatose people and dementia patients. Thus, she learned more specific medical knowledge in those areas. Ting and Ping were assigned to provide the elderly who lived alone with greetings through weekly phone calls. So they learned knowledge about the psychological need of the seniors and also learned the skills about how to interact with these people. Chen volunteered at a local museum and needed to guide the public and provided explanations based on the exhibition themes. Thus, through formal training and learning by doing, she learned and accumulated knowledge about local cultures, historical descriptions of past events and architectures, and became familiar with seeing and explaining ancient maps. Her articles published on the community museum newspaper and guide books which introduced the local cultures and histories supported what professional knowledge she learned through volunteering. By means of

formal training, learning by doing, observation, and reflecting, she refined her guiding skills when facing audiences. She even became a better email user because much editing work and communication for her volunteer work needed to be done efficiently. Interestingly, when she began to learn this new technique for the first time to meet the requests of communicating with family members who lived overseas, she could not really stick to it. Mostly, the knowledge these older Taiwanese women have learned through volunteering was related with their volunteer work but not always. Knowledge, such as leisure and social trends, or even international viewpoints might be provided by the institutions as part of education for volunteers.

In terms of skills, because of the needs of interacting and cooperating with others in volunteer missions, many participants mentioned that they learned how to better interact with people and refined interpersonal skills. While facing various and unfamiliar persons for whom they needed to provide services or help, other fellow volunteers, or staffs at the institutions, there were challenges of interpersonal interactions. Some of the participants even needed to face and learn leadership in their volunteer groups. Whenever the learning involved other people, their accumulated life experiences more obviously became materials that facilitate their new learning. Feng's sharing below provides a clear picture of such a learning process:

> I did not know how to interact well with people before. When I was young, I always argued with those who had different viewpoints from me. Whenever I saw unreasonable persons and heard some words that I could not accept, I just immediately said something back and fought with those people. After becoming a volunteer, sometimes I met patients who blamed others and shouted loudly and unreasonably. Of course I still felt uncomfortable at that time but did not respond back as I would before. I tried to calm down and consider him. I thought about how his behaviors might result from his discomfort of the disease. I

told myself: I was not a patient and had no suffering so I should try to understand and accept his behaviors and feelings rather than get angry and fuss about what he showed….I often recalled why others got work promotions before but I did not. I decided to change…. Now I realized that immediate responses often cause trouble. I decided to try to stop for awhile and keep the peace in mind when I heard something I did not feel comfortable. I decided to try to listen more to people. I knew that I would have failed again if I had still showed my original personality. I tried to adjust myself. I told myself, it is my success if I could keep silent and not respond to those words and people I didn't like. I decided to use this volunteer opportunity as a personal training and experiment….Now, I still often deliberate and do reflection on how to not let people blame me and how to improve myself and make people respect me. I have also learned about the ways of making people like me more. Now I really believe that knowing how to interact with people is a key assignment of my life. So I sincerely learned with my efforts. I am so happy that people welcome and like me now.

When Taiwan was primarily an agricultural economy, many people did not have access to education. Women and aboriginals, especially, often were taken-for-granted as groups that did not need education. Combined with gender and age, as the only aboriginal participant of this study, Hua's lack of formal education was predictable and explainable. However, her learning literacy through volunteer work was especially impressive:

I have no formal education. So I originally could not understand any words and could not write…. I have learned some words after I became a volunteer. When we do an activity, if there were anything I could not understand, I would ask and other volunteers would teach me. They all were kind and loved to teach me. So, I have learned a lot. For example, we

helped at a free medical diagnosis and needed to help write case reports, especially when

we went to rural and country places, many residents could not even write their own names.

I started learning how to write case reports at that time. Whenever I met something I could

not understand, I asked the nurse and other volunteers…. Sometimes I could not understand

the handouts which I got from training classes. Then I would ask the volunteers who sat

beside me…. I have no education so I use such chances to learn. By means of doing

volunteer work, whenever I met what I could not understand, people always like to tell

me….Some volunteers used to be teachers and told me that I might buy a dictionary. At the

beginning, I even did not know how to use it [look up a dictionary]. I asked and re-asked

other volunteers. I also practiced at home. Because I never went to school, I could not read

any words. I would write down the words that I did not understand and repeat writing those

unfamiliar words…. Now, I know how to look up a dictionary. I can not spell but I can read

some. I always brought my dictionary with me whenever I need to be on my volunteer

duty. Others admire me very much….I can understand some newspaper articles as well

although there are still a lot of contents I can not understand…. I ask every time, although it

is slow. Gradually, I could understand a little more words. This makes my life more

convenient whenever I go out.

Hui was a volunteer at a local community college. Her volunteer duties included helping

computer classes as well as classes for foreign brides who married Taiwanese men. Whenever

she tutored the computer classes, she felt just like she did a practice and review again on the

knowledge and skills she had learned. While she followed the classes and activities designed for

the group of foreign brides, she watched or helped them prepare and practice, and experienced

the things those foreign brides were learning at the same time.

In addition to the learning of knowledge and skills, volunteering experiences also facilitated and deepened wisdom and growth for these older Taiwanese women. Because of the opportunities of being out of the home and meeting and interacting with different kinds of people, these respondents had chances to compare their lives and conditions with others and reflected in/on/through such experiences. Some wise thoughts and behaviors they might just hear others describe or simply read life guides and advice in books. However, because of volunteering, the wisdom they simply heard and knew became an ingrained part of their behaviors and beliefs.

For example, through volunteering, they had chances to see and compare with those who they were helping. They contrasted themselves with those who were poor and lived alone, were comatose, had dementia, or lay in bed for a long time. These older women realized their luck and happiness and more cherished and appreciated their present lives. Ping and Jin started many dialogues with themselves about values of life, aging, illness, and death. Besides the wisdom of cherishing and being content with what they have had, many participants also learned that the most happiness comes from giving without thinking about gaining anything back from others. Wisdom came through the learning and experience of helping others. As Nan said,

I have learned many things through volunteering which are impossible to learn from books… There is no payment for volunteers and volunteers also do not ask for any payments. Thus, you just keep giving and giving. Once you do so for enough duration, you will get used to this and naturally face everything in such an attitude. Now I do really realize the principle and truth about giving is a blessing more than receiving and taking…. Before becoming a volunteer, I was a person who often considered what I can get back while I was giving something out. Now sometimes I thought back and found I do seldom

consider myself now but just others. This change and learning is my greatest harvest from volunteering.

Feng's reflections were a very important tool to help her self-improve. Contrasted with those people who had more misery, she felt contented because she was able to help resolve people's problems as a volunteer. She stressed that such a process of comparison and contrast changed her personality and the way she interacted with others a lot. She said,

I remembered I saw a Ph.D. who had a stroke and became paralyzed. He could go to a hospital only by means of the help of the foreign nurse his family hired for him and me as a volunteer. On that event, I thought about the suffering I would have felt if I had been him. This well-educated person would have provided services to us if he had no disease. Compared with him, I do feel I have much bliss and should stop complaining. I feel that I should stop being angry easily and need to stay happy and healthy. Compare to being ill, I would rather be a happy volunteer to provide others with help and services…. One will feel happy if I take good care of him and serve him. Then, it also means I succeed because I have learned what it means to say "you are happy, I am happy as well." I just didn't understand this before I started volunteer work. I never knew how to give, share, help others, and make people happy before. I just learned through volunteering about the truth: loving others is equal to loving yourself…. All of this about how to treat people is learned by being a volunteer. In one side you might only see how sincere I interact with others, but on the other side, this indeed is a good thing for me because I also get happiness and sense of success back at the same time.

Wen's learning by reflection and thinking also provided a good example about learning through volunteering.

Oftentimes the learning came from my own observations and thinking. For example, I saw some old people argue for a little thing when we did volunteer work together, then I would think. In this case, I thought the conflicts were caused by their narrow mind and not considering others. So I told myself, I need to do reflections often and learn more…. Whenever I saw the smiles on other senior volunteers' faces, I naturally felt that they are very kindhearted. Those senior volunteers always speak softly and sent gratitude for what I have done which makes me feel very happy and believe what I am doing [helping others] is truly right. Thus, I feel more that I need to continue to tolerate, forgive, and help others.

In addition to the aforementioned ways that the participants adopted to learn knowledge, skills, and wisdom during their volunteer work, transformational learning also happened. Although it is not the major learning way among these older Taiwanese women, the cases were worthy to describe. For example, Ming stood up from sadness of widowhood and became self-confident after she volunteered. Before she volunteered, others around her thought she would collapse after this loss and she believed so as well because she used to be taken care of well by her husband and had been a housewife for almost all her life. Volunteering brought her a new insight and belief about what she could be.

Interestingly, some participants strongly regarded their learning through volunteering as much more important than their formal learning in other institutions, such as senior centers and community colleges. Most of the participants regarded being volunteers as important or very important in their current lives. As Nan pointed out, "The volunteering is just like a walking-dictionary which presents various dimensions of the life to me." In contrast to learning subject-centered contents, to learn through volunteering is just like learning in real life. Many participants perceived learning in classrooms as a passive and unidirectional process in which

they simply needed to sit there and listen to what lecturers said, but learning through volunteering was an active process that they could control. Some also pointed out that subject-centered learning at classes were for fun or to kill time, but volunteering was a must. As Xin said, "I would rather not go to my classes but will not be absent from my volunteer duties. Why? Because those classes are not absolutely necessary. At the age I am now, the classes I learn today will be forgotten tomorrow." Even Hua and Wen, the two participants with no formal education, strongly shared the benefits they have gotten from learning through volunteering and volunteering per se and had no motives to pursue subject-centered learning at all. Ting who pursued her high school education also was a result of the desire to keep volunteering.

In sum, volunteering involved learning experiences to those who provided services and help, even for those who were over 60 years of age. For these older Taiwanese women, their plentiful life experience is an essential foundation of learning. Based on the previous life experiences, new knowledge, skills, and wisdom were learned during their volunteer duties. The knowledge they learned was mainly associated with their assigned duties and the types of institutions in which they were volunteering. The skills they learned were various but most people learned of and refined interpersonal skills. The volunteer opportunities also facilitated the deliberation on the process of life, aging, illness, and death and brought these older women wisdom. By means of observation, learning by doing, thinking and reflection, and formal training provided by the institutions they volunteered for, these Taiwanese women started and continued their growth and learning through volunteering.

As Hui, the computer volunteer, said; "All learning is extra and a bonus of volunteering." In contrast to their learning in classrooms, volunteering provided opportunities for them to learn in a real world. Volunteering became a learning setting and as well as a learning resource for

these older women to connect old and new experiences. Through volunteering, they need to learn so they can fulfill their service duties. In the meantime, they dialogued with others as well as reflected and reviewed their own lives, and then new learning started, proceeded, and accumulated. Such learning through experiences never needed to be memorized but was also unforgettable and had been influential in their own late life. After understanding the definitions of successful aging and the learning through volunteering, the next findings helped reveal the roles and influences of learning through volunteering on the successful aging of older Taiwanese women.

Roles of the Learning through Volunteering in Successful Aging

As I pointed out in the previous summary, learning through volunteering had been influential on the late life of older Taiwanese women. In terms of the third research question, volunteering influenced older Taiwanese women's successful aging on four dimensions. They were: (1) establishing a meaningful life, (2) building and improving relationships, (3) enhancing positive changes and self-evaluation, and (4) promoting physical and psychological health.

Establishing a Meaningful Life

Volunteering had established a meaningful life for these older Taiwanese women by means of (a) providing a role, focus, and a goal, (b) providing time framework, (c) extending life scope and possibilities, and (d) making life more substantial and meaningful. The majority of the participants started volunteering after their or their husbands' retirements and after children had built their own families and careers. Whether being a volunteer was triggered by their own active search or by others' suggestions, this unpaid participation did heavily and continuously influence their lives in late adulthood in ways that they did not anticipate when they promised to help.

Many used "a turning point of my life" or "a new beginning of my life" to describe how the learning and experience of being volunteers had benefited their aging life.

The hundreds or even thousands of accumulated service hours on many participants' Volunteer Passports issued by the government were the best evidence to support the provision of a new life role and focus for these older women from volunteering. Looking for something to do was the first thought that triggered many participants to start finding opportunities for volunteering. After the termination of their long term work career or reducing obligations from taking care of family and children, these older Taiwanese women found volunteering had become their new title and life goal. No matter they were fulltime housewives or fulltime career women, during the interviews, they always used "go to work" to refer to the time they went for their voluntary duties. Most participants stuck to their weekly duty schedules. Many of them regarded their duties as the most important thing in their current life and never easily switched the duty time slots with others or were even never absent from their weekly duty. They regarded their voluntary services as a responsibility and often said "If you are going to do it, you'd better get on the stick even if it is no payment." For them, volunteer work was not a way to kill time but a work to which they were committed. Ming's always dressing up early and sitting in the living room to wait for the departure time for her volunteer duties and always arriving 5-10 minutes early and Gao's regular volunteering despite her daily pain in her right hand were good examples to describe how seriously these older women paid attention to their new life role. In addition, some mentioned that being volunteers helped maintain their life in a regular pattern. Because of being volunteers, they had reasons for going out of their homes rather than simply staying at home all day. Because of being volunteers, their lives had a schedule. As Nan told me:

Because you are volunteers, you will go out and be involved in the society. People are easy

to feel lazy when they stay at home, then the life will become irregular. Like me, every

morning I definitely wake up very early. After breakfast, because I volunteer in four places,

everyday I have different work to do. If you just idle, you might eat your meals irregularly

or sleep late sometime, because there are only two persons (she and her husband). It is

really not good. I now have the same life pace as what I had before I retired. I sleep and

wake up at the similar time that I used to do….Your life will be regular if there are things

to do. See, I know where I need to go every Monday and Tuesday. All are under

arrangement.

Besides providing a role, focus, and a goal and providing time framework, volunteering

extended their life scope and possibilities and also made older women's life more substantial and

meaningful. Regarding extending their life scope and possibilities, volunteering brought these

older women from household routines or previous work professions to a brand-new and more

diverse dimension. They met various people and opportunities and opened their eyes through

diverse information, events, and requests. For example, Nan and Xin had chances to lecture to

other groups and share their volunteer experiences. Hua learned some literacy and could read

some contents of the newspaper. Hui and Xin had chances to learn about being a leader in the

group. Some of them had chances to travel overseas and interact with people in other countries

because they were rewarded by the government or the institutions they volunteered for. Chen's

example presented how volunteering had extended the scopes and possibilities of her late

adulthood:

I more enjoy learning new things or something I don't know….I actually regarded

volunteering as a kind of learning rather than a job….I feel volunteering provide me a

space of learning and growing. So, I enjoy it. For example, my volunteer work gives me chances to explore and understand the culture and history of the county which I didn't know before. I have lived at this county for decades but never thought about knowing more about this land…. I also helped the instructor translate documents written in Japan which was also a learning opportunity for me. The documents recorded a more than one-hundred-year history in Taiwan, in Japanese. I just learned Japanese for one year when I was at my first grade. Although I learned more at some institutions after I retired, the instructors regarded the Japanese difficult to understand, because those Japanese are in an ancient and classical style. I regarded it as a challenge and took it.

For Ting, as the only never married and the only Hakka participant of this study, she always mentioned how little she knew about life and the world before being a volunteer and how much she had learned through volunteering. For example, as she said, amazingly, volunteering even brought her back to school for further education:

Because of being a volunteer, I had a chance to widen my life scopes and went back to school….One day I went to a driving test center for a test and found a recruitment poster there. They were recruiting volunteers. The poster showed that volunteers needed to have at least junior high school degree. Although the institution I volunteered at that time did not set a limitation on education attainments, the poster at the driving test center did make me worry about the related requests and limitations in the future. I always enjoyed being a volunteer. I was afraid of only being able to volunteer at one place if other places set a recruiting criterion on education levels. So, I enrolled to a junior high school ….[Now I] have more education, I know wider and more diverse information, then I am able to be more help. Otherwise, I might be unable to better understand and respond to people I

serve….Now, I am in senior high school. I will graduate this year…. The school starts at

6:20pm and I ride my bicycle back and forth. The same with being volunteers, I have never

been absent from school within these six years.

Besides providing a focus, time framework, and extensive life scopes and possibilities,

many participants also mentioned being volunteers made their life more substantial and

meaningful. Compared with others who live their old age in a more casual way (singing,

traveling, gardening, and so on) or only stayed at home, these older women regarded their choice

of being a volunteer as a much better way to use time in late adulthood. Although a need of

finding something to do did trigger many of them to start this new trial, the unknown duties at

that time became a significant job for them later. The sense of meaningfulness and the feeling of

not wasting time led them to become a continuous help-provider, just as both Lee and Jin

mentioned: people should not simply play all the time, they still need to do something

meaningful. Ping even used an old Chinese saying "No plow, no meal" as a metaphor to explain

her arrangement of volunteering seven days a week and the sense of meaningfulness in doing so.

Gao provided me magazine articles and newspapers that introduced her life and perceptions as a

senior volunteer. Those descriptions of the articles and newspapers were consistent with what

she mentioned about the interactions between her and those she helped during the interview. All

pointed out how she perceived life was more meaningful whenever she helped other poor or

unhappy older people and saw changes that she helped happen. In addition, contrary to the

stereotypes of why the elderly volunteer, these participants showed that they did not do

volunteering simply because they had money and time but nothing to do. As Yue, the participant

who needed to use a catheter everyday pointed out:

No! No! I do volunteer is not because I feel bored at home. I always read books whenever I

am at home. There are many things to do at home but I can arrange time to do those things.

I just feel that I should go there [the institution where she was volunteering] and do

something. I just feel such a time arrangement makes life more substantial and

meaningful….Those teenagers at the young camps we hosted originally were all so-called

bad children but changed a lot under our counseling and assistance. They still remembered

us and sometimes came back to visit us. It was worthy. This makes me feel that my

volunteer job did not make a futile effort.

Building and Improving Relationships

Volunteering also influenced the late adulthood of these older women by building and

improving relationships. Such effects included friendship and family relationships. Regarding

friendship, in general, once we become older, we have fewer chances to build new interpersonal

connections. Because of participating in volunteer work, these older women widened their lives

not only by learning at the institutions, but also through meeting and interacting with staffs and

other volunteers. Regardless of age differences or background levels, being volunteers provided

chances for these older women to interact and make friends with diverse people. Volunteering

brought them a significant feeling of having many friends which was mentioned often during the

interviews. As Yue happily shared below:

After being a volunteer, I seemed to make more friends. I learned a lot from them. I have

learned many life tips whenever I chat with other fellow volunteers. I remembered one day

a volunteer mentioned an ancient recipe she got from her grandpa and we just tried it

immediately. It tasted good… We also shared many things with one another. If there is

something great, we shared and celebrated together. We comforted one another if some sad

and bad things happened. I also enjoy the feeling of working together, with partners.

In addition, as women who aged over 80, Ming, Lee, and Nan often mentioned how

much they appreciated the chances of meeting young people and learned a lot from them. The

respect from young volunteers and staff often made them feel good and warm. Most of these

older women shared time and had leisure activities together with other volunteers they knew at

the institutions they worked for. Some even developed such connections as intimates and bosom

friends. Just as Ping and Chen pointed out, because the efforts and enthusiasm for the same

missions and goals, they felt easier to make friends with some volunteers they knew at the same

institutions and interact and support each other closely.

Besides meeting and making friends with more people, the participants also shared the

stories about how being volunteers had improved their family relationships. First, their busy

volunteer schedules and positive changes through volunteering enabled their husbands and

children to not worry about where they were and what they were doing if they were not at home.

Secondly, volunteering was regarded as an altruistic behavior and brought them respect from

new generations. As Lee, the "grandma invoice" said, "my son and daughter-in-law are happy

for me and always tell their friends that I am a volunteer. They know this is a good thing." Lee's

husband even automatically followed her steps to volunteer at the same place after she helped

there for a couple of years. Her son and daughter-in-law knew the names of her close fellow

volunteers. Her volunteer work and fellow volunteers became the topics of conversation with her

son and daughter-in-law at home during dinner. The colleagues of Lee's son even often collected

uniform invoices and asked him to bring them back to her (Lee's volunteer service was to help

check collected uniform invoices. It is just like lotteries, once any uniform invoices matched the

number lists, the money could be used to support the comatose patients taken by the institution she volunteered for). For Wen, her sons and daughters saw how she regularly and dedicatedly participated in volunteer jobs so the family atmosphere became more harmonious. As she said, "children will see and learn what parents are doing." Amazingly, after some years, each of her children participated in volunteer work at the same institution that she volunteered for.

Volunteering is also a positive distraction from conflicts resulting from looking at someone and something too closely. As Nan said: "I am so busy on my own things and do not have time to be involved and be picky at those tiny and trivial things." Compared with simply staying at home all day, because having volunteer work to focus on, many participants mentioned that they naturally reduced the conflicts and arguments with their spouses or other family members. The most amazingly, many practiced and made use of the skills, knowledge, and wisdom they learned through volunteering at home and changed the family atmosphere a lot. Especially, the often-heard conflicts and arguments between mothers and daughters-in-law seemed never a problem anymore for these older Taiwanese women. For example, the tensions between Jin and her son's family who lived with her had been relieved a lot because she asked herself: "If I can volunteer outside, why I cannot volunteer for my family?" Thus, she behaved as a volunteer at home and picked up those housekeeping things that her daughter-in-law had not done without complaints and anger anymore. Below, Feng's example vividly depicted how she made use of what she learned through volunteering to improve family relationships:

> I remembered when my daughter-in-law married my son, she was pretty arrogant
>
> sometimes. But you know what, I just pretended as if I had not heard anything from her. At
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> that time I had become a volunteer. I just used what I have learned from my volunteer
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> work—never responding to the words I dislike hearing and let others be somebody. Yes! I

am okay to be nobody. Then, she would gradually feel that I am a good mother-in-law…Now she treats me pretty good and always bought gifts for me…. I heard other fellow volunteers mentioned their own problems between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law a lot. So, I observed how they interacted with each other and then developed this method—never compete with your daughter-in-law and never only regard yourself as the most important. At the same time, I also always told people how I felt satisfied to have a daughter-in-law like her. See, as I told you what I have learned in volunteering, we must know that loving others is equal to loving your own. I have been married for 56 years. Before volunteering, whatever my husband said to me, I would always argue with him and send some words back. Now I used the skills and ideas that I have learned through volunteering on our interactions. I realized that I should never talk back to him when he was angry.

Since one of the definitions of successful aging for these women was maintaining good relationships and connections with friends and family, it became obvious and consistent in terms of why building and improving relationships, including meeting new friends and keeping previous friendship, and enhancing and improving family bonds, can be viewed as a benefit resulting from volunteering.

Enhancing Positive Changes and Self-Evaluation

Based on the emerging theme, volunteering did influence the late adulthood of these older women by enhancing positive changes and self-evaluation. Many interviewees mentioned the changes and improvements through volunteering, especially in terms of their attitudes and personality. Such positive changes could be associated with the wisdom and interpersonal skills that they had learned through volunteering.

For example, after seeing many unhappy, unhealthy, or misfortunate lives that need more help, Wen told me that she found she became more considerate and did not anger as easily as before. She also became more careful and concerned about people even to those who she just saw on the street and did not really know. For Hua, since she had no formal education, she used to say dirty words to people everyday which she learned from her veteran husband without knowing how improper and hurtful those words were. Because of learning through volunteering, she had a chance to realize from volunteer training that those words she said to people were dirty words and then had a chance to change. Now, she would scold people who said dirty words and let them know it was a bad attitude. By means of dealing with various work, events, and people through volunteer duties, many mentioned they had changed from being timid and introverted to being more confident and active.

In addition to positive changes, volunteering also enhanced the self-evaluation of these older Taiwanese women. All the participants mentioned the sense of usefulness, value, and achievement because of the volunteer experiences. Such a positive self-evaluation came from many ways, including appreciation and compliments of the institutions and those who were helped. Many participants pointed out that being volunteers per se meant that they were still healthy, had the capacity to do some work, and still were able to help others. Some of them even got national awards or were invited to be volunteers by other institutions because of their excellent performance. Yue always caught night trains to return to the middle of Taiwan on Monday whenever she went to northern Taiwan to visit her children. Feng has not flown to Europe to see her grandchildren for many years. They made these decisions because they felt that they were strongly needed by the institutions and by those unknown people they were helping. Ping regarded her experience of helping a handicapped old man to apply for a low-income

certificate as the most unforgettable achievement in her volunteer career. A copy of the lawsuit appealing documents she self-learned and wrote for this man presented all the effort she made in this case. Ting spoke of how she was cheered up when she recalled the attitudes of the seniors she helped to take care of had changed from refusing her to being able to recognize her voice and waiting for her calls or visitations at the specific time slots. As the second oldest respondent, Nan's vivid descriptions below reinforced the understanding of how being volunteers benefited these older women's lives by enhancing self-evaluation:

> Whenever I work at the blood donation center, no one dares to leave directly after donating blood without sitting for a while. There might be one who says "It is ok. I did this before" but will still sit for a while if I say "no." I just told them, "Please give me ten minutes." It is the rule at the center because of some risks to the donators after blood donation. The donators often were embarrassed to not stay for ten minutes if I, an old person, asked them to do so. Sometimes, when the nurses were very busy with too many donators, I would even catch some donators back to the center from the door and asked them to sit for a while before leaving….I really enjoy work as a volunteer. It is just like I indeed do something everyday. I bring many thanks back everyday, a package of thanks. I gave a cup of water to donators, they said thanks. I gave a snack to donators, they said thanks again. Every time they said thanks to me…How won't you feel happy about this? … It means they appreciate me. It means that they feel that I am taking care of them. Those young people were just like my sons or grandchildren. I feel a sense of achievement about being able to take care of the young.

As Nan's aforementioned description, the respect and gratitude from those who they helped enhanced these women's positive self-evaluation. In a magazine article introducing

Ming's and Nan's volunteering, Ming also pointed out that the gratitude on the faces of persons she helped and served was the strongest reason motivating her regular volunteering. Looking at the thick guide book she and other fellow volunteers wrote together about the history and culture of the county she lived at, Chen, as the participant with the highest education in this study, pointed out that she gained self-confidence in her writing ability after being a volunteer:

> After graduating from school [at aged 18], I had not written articles for a long time…..I started learning Mandarin and Taiwanese [at the second grade] when Japan restored Taiwan to Taiwanese government. Thus, most of us [her cohort] could not write articles [in Chinese] beautifully. I never thought I could write well. But now, see, this guide book was partly written by me. Before we started writing and editing this book, the leader assigned each of us to be responsible for writing one area, 10,000 words. It turned out with a result that everyone wrote more than 10,000 words. I did feel that my ability was confirmed. The publication of the book means that at least someone still confirmed me….This experience of writing articles, editing, and publication made me become self-confident.

Promoting Physical and Psychological Health

I put this as the last point because this benefit was the most apparent one, especially after understanding the former three dimensions about the benefits these older women gained through being volunteers. Among the participants, many either volunteered in three and over institutions or volunteered in one institution but helped there every day. What accounts for such a high level of service and still wishing to be a lifelong volunteer? The consistent answer from these women was provided: Volunteering promoted physical and psychological health, especially the latter one.

In terms of promoting these women's physical health, volunteering worked on this in both direct and indirect ways. For many of them, voluntary duties directly promoted physical

health by making them stay active. Meanwhile, volunteering indirectly promoted these women's physical health by facilitating a sense of importance of maintaining their physical health and by increasing opportunities of gaining health-related knowledge and information from the institutions and their fellow volunteers. As Nan mentioned, "involving in volunteering let me forget worries, ages, and the self" which made her keep healthy. She also believed that if she just had stayed at home after retirement, she would have simply been old, sick, and waited for death. Going out of the home and being a volunteer made her feel she was younger and healthier than others who were at the similar age. Xin's descriptions below also provided a picture that allowed us to better understand the association between being volunteers and physical health.

> People tease that seniors are the third-class citizens because they always wait for three things. Do you know what they are waiting for? They wait for eating every day, children prepare meals for them. They wait for time to go to bed every night because they do not have anything to do. Whenever they watch TV, they catnap. The third thing is waiting for go back to heaven. I think that we old people can keep contact with the outside world by being a volunteer. Then I would be not so easy to catnap or feel sleepy whenever I sat on a chair….My brain will degenerate slower because I will use my brain whenever I do volunteer job. I will use my brain more often.

In terms of promoting psychological health, all the participants mentioned that being volunteers made them feel happy and avoid negative thoughts and emotions. Some also felt peaceful and blessed because of being volunteers. Feeling happy is the most common voice when these older Taiwanese women mentioned about the benefit they gained from participating in voluntary services. Such a happy feeling was driven in various ways. As a volunteer, the altruistic behavior per se brought them a sense of happiness and satisfaction. Their sense of

making progress and achievement from volunteering resulted in happy feelings as well. Being

able to do a job they enjoy and learning something new through volunteering also was a source

of their happiness. As Nan mentioned frequently during the interviews, the article she wrote, and

a magazine article reported her volunteering, being busy per se is happiness for her. Although it

was unpaid, many mentioned that they enjoyed the happy moods in their voluntary services so

they continued year after year. As Chen shared, the happy feeling came from her continuously

learning new things through volunteering and such learning opportunities made her feel not old.

Feng felt frustrated when her children left home and gained the happy life back by being a

volunteer. She regarded being a volunteer as a way of actively seeking happy feelings. Both in

the interview for this study and at the articles in newspaper or magazines that reported her

volunteering, she stressed how feeling happy was important to old people and how much

happiness she gained from volunteering. For Gao and Hua, volunteering even became an

effective way to transfer their focus from physical discomfort and pain caused by diseases and to

keep living positively. In addition, many mentioned that being volunteers also swept negative

emotions such as loneliness, boredom, complaints, and idle thinking away from their hearts

which facilitated their psychological health.

In sum, through volunteering per se and also through the learning in the processes of

helping others, volunteering benefited the successful aging of these older Taiwanese women by

(1) establishing a meaningful life, (2) building and improving relationships, (3) enhancing

positive changes and self-evaluation, and (4) promoting physical and psychological health.

Rather than functioning alone, the four dimensions interacted facilitating these women's

successful aging. For example, because of being volunteers, older Taiwanese women felt a new

goal and kept a regular schedule (dimension 1) which could promote their physical and

psychological health (dimension 4) and also could enhance their positive self-evaluation

(dimension 3). Volunteering benefited these women by having more friends (dimension 2) and

avoiding the negative emotions of simply staying at home (dimension 3). The two dimensions

could improve their family relationships (dimension 2) and could also facilitate their sense of

happiness and a balanced psychological health (dimension 4). The Figure 2 below briefly

presents the aforementioned findings in terms of the roles of the learning through volunteering in

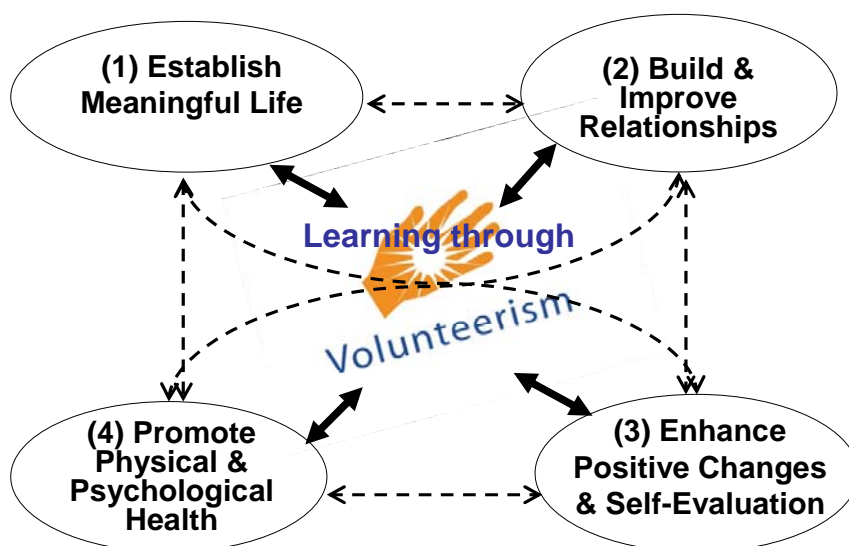older Taiwanese women's successful aging.

Figure 2. The role of the learning through volunteering in successful aging.

After exploring the definitions of successful aging, the learning through volunteering and

the benefits of such learning on successful aging of these women, the following section brought

us a better understanding of how traditional culture shaped older Taiwanese women's

perceptions of successful aging.

Cultural Influences on Definitions/Perceptions of Successful Aging

The emergent data vividly showed Taiwanese culture did shape how older women perceived what good old age meant. Religions, traditional Eastern philosophies, and modernization, all shaped the perceptions of successful aging of these Taiwanese older women in four ways. They are: (1) a changing intergenerational dynamic, (2) believing in karma and fatalism, (3) being satisfied with what one has, and (4) valuing a good death. I present these four factors below in detail.

A Changing Intergenerational Dynamic

Taiwan's economy and society have been transformed from mainly agriculture to technology and service industry. Such a transformation has impacted Taiwanese's life styles and family interactions which could be seen with these participants because they all experienced these changes. The most apparent is modernization and industrialization which often forced adult children to leave their parents to seek better work opportunities. Although Confucianism emphasizes group/family more than individuals, the need to leave home for better career opportunities caused by modernization and industrialization seemed to also influence Eastern family relationships. The changing attitudes and expectations of these participants toward children and grandchildren was an example of such influences. Traditionally, raising children, especially sons, guaranteed an old Taiwanese a good old age because sons would live with the old parents and provide care and finance. Also, traditionally, the essential index of a good old age is seeing children establish their career and family and also see the birth of grandchildren. To see children's establishment of their career and family meant parents have finished their obligations and responsibilities toward societies and the clan and also meant that the old parents could start enjoying their own lives without worries and sacrifices for children any more. Once

children establish their career and family, it would then be the time for them to provide feedback to their old parents, which was regarded as a behavior of filial piety. To be able to see the birth of grandchildren meant there will be offspring to carry on the last name and history of the clan and continuously worship ancestry, which is also regarded as a behavior of filial piety. However, looking at the data from the participants, it is clear that such traditional values have changed and even have broken in some ways.

In this study, such a changing intergenerational dynamic most apparently showed in three dimensions: being independent, the desire of living with children, and relationship with grandchildren. Regarding being independent, many participants pointed out the necessity and importance of being independent personally and financially for the elderly to have a good life in late adulthood. Many mentioned that they would like to keep independent and would not like to add burdens to their children whether they were healthy or not. As Ping shared, she refused children's invitations of living together many times. She felt blessed to be able to live alone which made her life free and independent. Living alone also allowed her to donate as much money as she wanted without considering her children's viewpoints; she showed me many receipts of her donations when she mentioned this. Some even considered living in a senior center or a nursing home later and did not consider children as the primary caregivers. Also as Ming said, "Dependence, no matter in physical health and mobility or in financial ability, is suffering." As for independent financial ability, most of them did not rely on children's financial provision. They had their own income from either pensions or the monthly senior allowance delivered by the government. Regarding the desire of living together with children, half either strongly felt it unnecessary or even disliked such an arrangement. The other half admitted such a desire and regarded living with children as an index of having a good old age. However, for

these participants, they also realized that social modernization had changed many things. They knew that there were different viewpoints and daily schedules between generations. They were also concerned about their children's work opportunities and career development. Thus, these women felt it acceptable to not live with children.

Regarding the relationship with grandchildren, half of the respondents mentioned that it was not necessary for them to see grandchildren establish their career and family. Among them, some even said that it was fine to have no grandchildren. For them, the work of taking care of grandchildren seemed not as obligatory and welcome as to elder women in the past. Most of the remaining hoped to see it but could accept if not being able to see this happen. Nan described the changing intergenerational interaction:

> I never asked my son to drive me to somewhere, even go see a doctor, because I knew that he is busy and has his own family. I have never asked for children's company. They would like to give me a ride whenever I want to go out but I always say no. I am busy and happy in my own volunteer work so I told them to just leave me alone. It is impossible to always depend on your children. You will be disappointed if you just lean on them. They have their own family, wives, and children. So, I always told friends and old people the necessity of looking for fun on your own. I always tell old people to go out because you will find friends there. You cannot be dependent. How can your children have time to accompany and chat with you? ….I have a daughter in the U.S. and she said: "Mom, you are doing volunteering. So how about coming and being a volunteer for us?" I said "no," because the U.S. is not for us. You will always need to rely on her to drive you out. I knew that she wanted me to help take care of grandchildren. But, for example, we went to Disney with them. Of course there were some fun for adults but you needed to stand in a queue for

grandchildren the whole day if you bring them with you. So, you need to put children and grandchildren in the center rather than yourself whenever you are with them….See, if I had no pension, I could not be so happy and optimistic. I can have a stable retirement life because I have my pension. Not like some old people felt devalued in front of children because of financial dependence. I did not take a buck from my son. If you ask for money from children, you would always feel like you need to do something for them or help them. Now I can be detached. I could just help take care of little grandchildren sometime but it is not my obligation. Their things are not my obligation. It is good for me….Yes, I did on purpose keep independent and maintain kind of distance from them.

Importantly, although there were changes of intergenerational dynamics, some were kept intact. Although these women did not feel it necessary to live together with children, maintaining good connections between generations was still their wish in their heart. Compared to living together, children's and grandchildren's visitations at times and sending greetings by phone were important as alternatives to let these Taiwanese women ensure the familial connections. In addition, many participants pointed out the significance of their children's decent career and life so that they did not need to worry about their safety and wellness. Filial piety is a core traditional value in Eastern societies and can be presented in many ways. In this study, having children's feedback and financial support and having offspring to last the clan seemed to no longer be an essential way of fulfilling filial piety. Instead, some respondents stressed that children's showing filial obedience in terms of their attitudes and spoken expressions was an unignorable component of successful aging. For example, children's being respectful and concerned about old parents, not talking back in defiance, and understanding what the elder parents want and need were what these women regarded as important.

Believing in Karma, Cause-and-Effect, and Fatalism

Besides changing intergenerational dynamics, through interviews we could also see Eastern philosophies and prevailing religions strongly shaped how these women perceived what successful aging meant. Among various traditional philosophies and religions, Buddhism, Taoism, Taoist philosophy, and Confucianism are the major traditional belief systems in Taiwan. In addition, "Tian," which is held in awe by most Taiwanese, is regarded as a sacred power that overlooks everyone's behaviors and decides people's fortune/fate/Karma and future. The respect and awe toward "Tian" mix with ingrained influences from Taoist philosophy, Confucian philosophy, and Buddhism then further forms a strong belief and value system and ideology in Taiwan. Such a strong belief and value system and ideology are further delivered through family, school, and society year by year and become a significant guide to people's attitudes, behaviors, and thoughts.

Buddhism regards life as a result of karma or cause-and-effect. In general, no matter what religions people believe, Taiwanese agree that "Shan You Shan Bao, E You E Bao" which means that either good or wicked, you will get something back based on whatever you give to others. A lot of old sayings describe how virtues can be accumulated and then keep individuals and families far away from calamities and disasters which can be regarded as the best example about the ingrained belief of cause-and-effect in Taiwan. No matter Tian or Buddha or God(s), many Taiwanese believe that there is "somebody" watching you all the time and the justice will come sooner or later because of cause-and-effect. Volunteering could be regarded as a virtue and benevolent action in Taiwan. Many participants agreed that they regarded their volunteer work as a charity. Although all of them regularly volunteered because of the enjoyment and meaningfulness of helping others, some mentioned such an altruistic activity is also a way to

make them feel peaceful and blessed which was driven by their belief of karma. As some

mentioned, whenever they did good deeds and benevolent actions, they believed that they would

be protected by the Tian/Buddha/God(s). They believed that such benevolent actions could be

transferred and accumulated as Yin-De, a kind of merits and virtue, which can benefit people's

good death, next life, and descendants. We may also explain such a belief as a bank savings

account which accrues interests. Many Taiwanese believe that virtue can be earned and

accumulated to promise their better future. As Wen's son was severely injured in a car accident,

she believed that the only reason for his survival was because of Buddha's blessings resulting

from her accumulated benevolent actions. Nan's son also met a severe car accident. The car was

almost completely destroyed but her son only had a light physical injury. All her neighbors

regarded such a miracle as a result of Nan's practicing charities. Feng's description of how she

explained many things based on cause-and-effect supported again such a popular belief in

Taiwan and its influence on the definitions of a good old age:

> A colleague's whole family encountered continuous tragedies which I believed were
>
> because he had not sent his very ill mother to the hospital. I have seen many things and
>
> now do believe that retribution exists. Everyone will have his/her punishment and deserved
>
> fate based on his/her behaviors. You need to know, if you do good deeds, you will be
>
> healthy and happy and your life will be more meaningful. Your last moment of life might
>
> not suffer too much and too long. If you do work of charity, someday when you are ill,
>
> someone might give you a hand and help take care of you. I do believe in cause-and-effect
>
> and transmigration. The desire to be happy and healthy is human nature. Thus, we need to
>
> think about giving others happiness and health first and then people will repay us later. Of
>
> course I do not mean that I want those who I have helped to return me anything. I just

believe I will get something back someday because of my good deeds and volunteer work.

Even if there will be no positive feedback in the future, I feel peaceful now for my future

because I am helping people.

Ting, the Hakka respondent of this study, displayed attitudes toward cause-and-effect and

Tian which also showed how such a traditional belief acted on Taiwanese's ideas and behaviors:

Many people say, what you are doing now will benefit your future and I agree with such a

viewpoint, although I don't very care about it. An old saying is that: "When you give

people one, they will return you a half." I indeed saw such things really happen. It is really

true that the Tian is watching us. I am kind of between believing and suspicion. However, I

do my best to help people. In the beginning, I did not do so much volunteer work. Later,

others said that we should more often help people if we were physically healthy and said

this would be really good for our own future….I feel that a softhearted character is really

important. It is better to always try to help people when there is a need. I think that a person

without a softhearted character will have no good future.

Being Satisfied with What One Has

The attitude of being satisfied with what one has is another dimension related to

perceptions of successful aging shaped by Taiwanese traditional culture. Both "Wu Yu Ze

Gang," an old saying based on Confucianism which means "people will be strong if they have no

desire and request" and the emphasis of Buddhism on "few desires can clear the human mind"

support the notion that less desire is better. From textbooks to words people say everyday, for

Taiwanese, being content with whatever you have has been tightly connected with less worries

and being happy.

During interviews, being satisfied with what one has was mentioned either directly or indirectly as a key to a good old age. As many participants said, the feeling of having a good life or bad life is subjective. They believed that once a person is satisfied with whatever he/she has had, then happiness and health can be possible. In addition, it seems that anything could be a reason that made these women feel satisfied. No matter one's financial condition, longevity or not, life quality, children's cares, and so on, "it has been good enough" was often mentioned by these older women. They did not pursue more money and enjoyment of ease and comfort. Ming stated: "The more you want and fuss about, the more troubles and worries you would get" were repeatedly heard during the interviews. Even Ming and Ting who depended on the $3,000 NT dollars (less than 100 US dollars) monthly senior allowance from the government felt satisfied. Many of them experienced wars and said that they felt life was good enough because there still was rice in the household rice bucket. For these Taiwanese women, being healthy and happy, having a smooth-going life, and being able to keep the current life had been good enough and they would never ask for more. Below Chen's sharing provided a clearer picture on such a life attitude:

> Because I have healthy body, I can do what I want to do. This is really good enough. Besides health, I feel I am ok in everything. As for children, although I do not take their money, they show me filial obedience. Husband, parents…I am not an unsatisfied person. I feel I am ok now and not feel pitiful for anything. I felt that the attitude of satisfying with what you have had will impact on your life. For example, I like keeping busy and feel happy with busy life. But others might feel my life is bad because all my life, even after retirement, is working. They might regard me as a poor person. That is why people always say you will be happy if you are content with what you have had...Also, I feel my life is

good enough because I have food to eat and clothing to keep warm. But there are so many

people who desire having famous brands. I do not envy that kind of life. See, I do not put

jewelry on my hands. I do not like. What do diamonds mean to me? Nothing! But someone

who pursues this kind of life regards people with no jewelry as miserable…. My mother-in-

law lived to 101. At her last years, whenever I visited her, I felt she was suffering. At the

time, seniors preferred children being around them often. However, sometimes we just

could not make something happen although she really wanted and cared about our frequent

visitations very much. See. That is why I am saying that all is related to your own thoughts.

For me, I do not think and care about all these things.

Valuing a Good Death

The desire for a good death was another dimension related to perceptions of successful

aging shaped by Taiwanese traditional culture. In contrast to Westerners' strong and active

intentions of making efforts to have longevity, these Taiwanese women presented a different

desire about life and death. Almost all participants pointed out that longevity was not important

for them and also was not a component of successful aging. For them, health, happiness,

meaningfulness, and a good death were more important than longevity. For them, if longevity

simply prolongs the years they will have but without health, happiness, and meaningfulness,

longevity is nonsense. More significantly, good death was the one they value more. As

mentioned earlier, for these women, a good death means dying at home or dying without long

term suffering. For these older Taiwanese women, good death was strongly emphasized as an

essential component of successful aging.

Taiwanese people's attitudes toward death and longevity might be shaped by Buddhism,

Taoism, and fatalism. Buddhism regards life as a bitter sea because of its nature of

impermanence which might be used to explain why these Taiwanese women did not pursue longevity. Through their lives and their volunteer experiences, these women saw how difficult it was for people to go through the last stage of life. In addition, Taoism regards life as a natural phenomenon. Just like a raindrop or a tree, life cannot exist forever. Taoism regards a person's life as a process of a harmonious action to cooperate with Nature and regards the end of life as a natural and necessary happening. "Wu Wei" is a key concept of this philosophy which means never dealing with anything painstakingly or intentionally. Thus, Taoism does not stress and encourage people to pursue longer life on purpose. This philosophy encourages people to reduce private desires, to live naturally, and to get rid of the bothers and worries about death.

Also, fatalism might be another reason to understand these Taiwanese women's attitudes toward life-and-death. "Chen Shi Zai Tian" and "Sheng Sih Yo Ming, Fu Gui Zai Tian" are two old sayings which mean that the result of everything, including a person's life/death and fortune/poverty, all depends on and is decided by "Tian." Such sayings completely reflect the power of "Tian" in most of Taiwanese minds. In addition, Taiwanese's fatalism also results from Confucianism. According to Confucianism, fate will decide people's richness or poorness; fate will also decide how long people live. Thus, it has taught Taiwanese that the only importance is to focus on enhancing personal morality and to increase the public's well being when people are alive. This philosophy has taught Taiwanese (or many Asians) that fate will decide everything. The attitude toward following and accepting one's fate often exists in Taiwanese behaviors. Such a system also has been widely used for Taiwanese to explain what happened and will happen in their lives. Thus, the participants in this study showed an easy attitude toward longevity. Many said that they could not decide how many years they will have. Thus, if a person regards how long she/he can live as a thing she/he cannot pursue or control at all, it makes sense that she/he

would pay more attention to prepare for a good death. In this case, again, the belief in cause-and-effect and karma facilitate these women's motivation to do more good deeds or charities to accumulate virtue and have a good death. Below, Xin's viewpoints presented most of these older Taiwanese women's perceptions about longevity and a good death.

I remembered a famous Taiwanese scholar said that the length of life is not necessary but the quality of life is important. If you have longevity but with dementia and if you can only lie down on the bed for the rest of your life, do you feel such a life is better? My father-in-law lived to 96. He lived in a nursing home for three years. In the beginning he moved into the facility, he still knew who he was but the condition got worse. Compared to other residents there, he was a healthier one. Many residents sat in wheelchairs or intubated. Because I visited him often, from these experiences, I realized longevity was not necessary. The Tian will decide how and when I go back "home." I will be satisfied if "He" lets me die in happiness.

In short, the philosophy of fatalism which stresses on the length of life will be decided by Tian or your fate rather than your own, mixed with Taoism's following the nature and Buddhism's regarding life as a process of ever-changing/impermanence and sufferings, it made sense why these older Taiwanese women valued a good death more and put this desire above a concern for longevity.

Chapter Summary

This study answered what successful aging means from Asian elderly women's perspectives and helped us better understand the roles of learning through volunteering in successful aging. Fourteen older Taiwanese women provided their definitions of successful aging and their learning experiences and benefits through volunteering. For these older women, the

data presented successful aging as (1) being healthy, (2) having no financial worries, (3) maintaining good relationship and connections, (4) continuing contributing to society through volunteering, and (5) having a good death. Besides, volunteering provided opportunities for these women to learn in a real world. Volunteering is a learning setting as well as a learning resource for these older women to connect old and new experiences. As a volunteer, they need to learn so they can fulfill their service duties. In providing help, they dialogued with others as well as reflected and reviewed their own lives, and then new learning evolved. Using their previous life experience as a significant foundation, these older women developed and learned wisdom, knowledge, and skills through voluntary services. By means of observation, learning by doing, thinking and reflecting, and formal training provided by the institutions they volunteered for, new learning and growth evolved and accumulated. The study also found that the learning through volunteering did facilitate older Taiwanese women's successful aging. The influences of the learning on successful aging includes (1) establishing a meaningful life, (2) building and improving relationships, (3) enhancing positive changes and self-evaluation, and (4) promoting physical and psychological health. Through volunteering per se and the learning through volunteering, the aforementioned dimensions intertwined with one another to enhance the participants' successful aging.

The study also showed that the perception/definition of successful aging was a cultural structure. Data supported that traditional Taiwanese culture did shape what successful aging meant to the participants. Four cultural factors were found as: (1) a changing intergenerational dynamic, (2) believing in karma, cause-and-effect, and fatalism, (3) being satisfied with what one has, and (4) valuing a good death. The voices of the Taiwanese older women reinforce and widen our understanding about what successful aging means based on perspectives of women

and the Eastern culture. Their voices also help us better understand volunteering as an altruistic and also a learning activity and the roles of the experiential learning through volunteering on older women's good old age.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand older Taiwanese women's learning through volunteering, and the role of that learning in successful aging. The research questions guiding this study were: (1) How do older Taiwanese women define successful aging? (2) How and what do older Taiwanese women learn through volunteering? (3) How does the learning through volunteering influence older Taiwanese women's successful aging? (4) How does the Taiwanese cultural context shape the definitions/perceptions of successful aging of older women? A qualitative design was employed to explore these areas.

Fourteen older Taiwanese women who aged over 60 and regularly volunteered for more than two years participated in this study. Participants presented diversity in terms of age, education, religion, marital status, living area, income sources, and types of organizations for which they volunteered. Data were collected mainly by semi-structure in-depth interviews in Mandarin and Taiwanese and were supplemented with documents. Data analysis was by means of the constant comparative method. Findings were mailed to eight participants who then provided their feedback by phone which served as a member check to confirm the findings of this study.

Three conclusions regarding the roles of learning through volunteering on older Taiwanese women's successful aging can be drawn from this study. They are: (1) Elder learning through volunteering facilitates positive development; (2) Volunteering is a holistic approach to older adults' successful aging; and (3) Perceptions of successful aging are gender-related as well

as cultural-specific. In this chapter, I discuss these conclusions, present implications for practice, and propose suggestions for future studies.

Conclusions and Discussion

The concept and measurement of successful aging have been dependent largely on experts and researchers rather than lay views of the important constituents (Bowling, 2007; Bowling & Dieppe, 2005; von Faber et al., 2001). This study explored perceived successful aging by asking older adults themselves. The study has arrived at three conclusions: (1) Elder learning through volunteering facilitates positive development; (2) Volunteering is a holistic approach to older adults' successful aging; and (3) Perceptions of successful aging are gender-related as well as cultural-specific. I discuss each in detail below.

Conclusion One: Elder Learning through Volunteering Facilitates Positive Development

Volunteering has been dominantly regarded as an altruistic activity. Sparse studies view volunteering as a learning activity and examine and explore its nature and process of learning. Since the role of learning through volunteering was the core concern of this study, based on the findings of this study, the first conclusion presents and discusses the relationship between learning through volunteering and successful aging.

This study revealed volunteerism's attributes as learning. As Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) define it, non-formal learning is "organized learning opportunities *outside* the formal educational system….are usually local and community-based, such as those programs offered by museums, libraries, service clubs, religious and civic organizations" (p. 30). Older adults might be unconscious of their learning through volunteering because many people only define learning as a behavior that happens in school. However, such learning indeed proceeds. Because the participants in this study mainly focused on their identity as a volunteer and a help

provider, they could not explicitly and easily describe all they learned in volunteer settings. However, the findings of the study showed that the learning through volunteering did impact on these older women's development and successful aging in late life. Based on the findings of this study, through participating in voluntary services, by means of observation, learning by doing, thinking and reflecting, and formal training, older adults learn knowledge, develop skills, and evolve wisdom. Below I discuss the findings of this study in terms of learning attributes of volunteering and the relationships between senior volunteers' learning and successful aging.

Learning Attributes of Volunteering

Such as Elderhostel, U3A, and other educational institution-affiliated programs for elders, the majority of articles in the adult education literature has described and explored older adults' formal learning, a type of learning that occurs in educational institutions (Merriam et al., 2007). However, considering older adults' accessibility, affordability, mobility, and other concerns, non-formal and informal learning might be more convenient and realistic learning approaches. As a type of non-formal learning, based on the findings of this study, learning through volunteering was found to have at least the following four attributes: (a) experience as a foundation, (b) real life-oriented, wide, and diverse contents, (c) multiple and flexible methods, and (d) helping and learning are in a reciprocal dynamic. Below I explain and discuss each attribute in detail.

As one of the assumptions Knowles (1980; 1984) proposed in his andragogy model, the most obvious characteristic of adult learners is their plentiful experiences. He stressed that due to the difference of experience, "for many kinds of learning, adults are themselves the richest resources for one another" (1984, p. 10). With advancing age, the accumulated experience becomes an increasing rich resource for older adults to continuously learn. This study supports

Jarvis's statement that "not every experience results in learning, but experience itself is only a potential basis of learning" (1987, p. 165). Since the participants of this study were older adults aged 60 and above, they brought more accumulated experiences than the young into the volunteering settings. Moreover, their original intention of entering non-profit organizations (NPOs) was simply being a helper rather than a learner. Thus, contrasting with formal learning, older adults' learning through volunteering was started from their ample life experiences rather than a learning motive. Whenever they learned new things, their plentiful experiences popped up as an unignorable resources and foundation.

Second, the contents of learning through volunteering are real life-oriented as well as very wide and diverse. Nan, the second oldest participant in this study summarized her learning through volunteering: "Volunteering is just like a walking dictionary and give me chances to learn many things that the books did not teach me." Because volunteering involves providing services and delivering some specific knowledge or information, learning requests will mainly be based on NPOs' missions and the work assigned to volunteers. In this study, interpersonal and communicative skills were the most often-mentioned learning during the interviews. The same results also were found in Narushima's (2000) study about elderly volunteers' transformation learning. Also, the organizations usually will provide liberal and leisure topics to foster the balanced and healthy life of their volunteers. In addition, based on the work and roles volunteers take charge of, volunteers need to learn different things. For example, Chen volunteered for a local museum, to fulfill her duty as a guide and her role as a team leader, she learned skills and knowledge about what and how to guide and communicate with audience as well as leadership. The more organizations they volunteered for, the more they learned. In addition, all the people and events they interacted with became learning material. All they learned through their

volunteer work could be applied to their real life, such as improved family interactions. Summarized from their wide and diverse learning contents, the older Taiwanese women updated a variety of knowledge, skills, and wisdom. Although used different categories, Narushima's (2000) study has similar findings in terms of what older adults learn through volunteering.

Third, similar with another characteristic of adult learners proposed in Knowles's andragogy model, this study supports that adults have an independent self-concept and can direct their own learning (Knowles, 1980, 1984). The findings of this study showed that the respondents learned in multiple and flexible methods. Based on what made them feel more comfortable, for example, Wen, the respondent who did Chu-Nian for dead people as her volunteer work, stressed thinking and reflection were the main ways of her learning. Besides thinking and reflecting, this study found that observation, learning by doing, and formal training provided by the NPOs they volunteered for were most often used as ways to learn. As Jarvis, Holford, and Griffin (2003) point out in their updated model of experiential learning, reflection might be not an absolute factor resulted in learning from experiences, however, reflection is a higher learning form which has essential influences on facilitating people's learning in experiences. In this study, it seemed that only when the older participants compared and reflected, their previous knowledge and skills turned out as wisdom. Transformation learning has been rarely applied to the study of aging (Narushima, 1999, 2000). Although only two participants mentioned how the learning through volunteering changed their previous assumptions and meaning structures in terms of the self and outside world, this finding, as in Narushima's studies (1999; 2000; 2005), supports that transformation learning can occur when older adults volunteer.

Lastly, as Hui, the computer volunteer in this study summarized, "All learning is extra and a bonus of volunteering." In contrast to their learning in classrooms, volunteering provided opportunities for older adults to learn in a real world and apply what they learn back to their own real life. Such life-oriented learning makes learning through volunteering uniquely and strongly benefits older adults' life. For volunteers, the starting point of learning is not an active motive to learn but a learning request from the NPOs and the volunteer missions. Volunteering just became a learning context as well as a learning resource for these older women to connect their own old and new experiences. As a volunteer, they needed to learn so they could fulfill their service duties. Nevertheless, in the meantime when they provided help and services, they saw other's lives as well as reflected on and reviewed their own lives, and then new learning started, proceeded, and accumulated. The characteristic of learning through volunteering embeds in the reciprocal dynamic between helping and self-help. On one hand the volunteers simply look like persons who provide time, experiences, assistance, and services to others. However, on the other hand, all that they pay out can be paid back as new knowledge, skills, and wisdom and further become a powerful resource to improve their own life and facilitate their successful aging. After concluding the attribute of volunteering as learning, I further discuss the link between learning through volunteering and successful aging in the next session.

The Links between Elderly Volunteers' Learning and Successful Aging

As Langer (1989) claims, "The body begins to die as the mind ceases to deal with novelty" (p. 142), many researchers have suggested that mental/intellectual stimuli might improve or at least maintain older adults' health and well-being (Bosma et al., 2003; Glendenning, 2001; Orrell & Sahakian, 1995; Schneider, 2003; Street, 1982; Swindell, 1997, 2002). However, the causal variables are not clearly known. Although researchers mainly believe

that there are positive correlations between learning and aging, Schneider (2003) points out that studies related to the impact of learning on aging are sparse. In addition, related studies mainly focus on the beneficial effects of older adults attaining formal education (Purdie & Boulton, 2003; Jo Walker, 1998). This study has shown that older women's learning through volunteering facilitates their positive development and successful aging and added a primary understanding about how older adults' learning promotes their good elderhood.

First, being healthy was one of the shared definitions of successful aging for these older Taiwanese women. They claimed that their volunteering kept them learning and using their brains which made them healthy as well as prevented them from fast declines. Based on the findings of this study, learning through volunteering is a process which not only increases older adults' fluid intelligence (learning resource was mainly from their formal training as a volunteer) but also enhances their crystallized intelligence (learning resource was mainly from their observing and interacting with others as a volunteer). In addition, as Fenimore's (1997) centenarian research found, the majority of meaningful learning experiences for older adults occurred through social interactions. In this study, volunteering provides opportunities for the older Taiwanese women to continue their social interactions and new learning after they retired from work and were relieved from family obligations. Continuously learning new things, either from training lectures or from other people they interacted with, can be regarded as a mental/cognitive stimulus which promoted their sense of health and well-being.

In addition, volunteering brought these older women chances to update knowledge and perspectives and to gain and refine skills. Especially the interpersonal and communicative skills, a skill that almost all participants claimed to learn during the interviews, benefited the older women's successful aging a lot. One of the definitions of successful aging is maintaining good

relationships. Apparently, good relationships are strongly contingent upon good interpersonal and communicative skills. The plentiful examples among the interview data displayed how these older women applied the interpersonal skills that they learned through volunteering to improve and promote their relationships with husband, children, daughters-in-law, friends, and other volunteers, the core members in their social network.

Third, built upon their plentiful life experience, all learning derived from volunteering further formed new insights and reflections toward life and resulted in wisdom. As Ardelt (2000) argues, it is more essential for older people to acquire wisdom rather than intellectual knowledge if they want to age well. In this study, many participants mentioned they cherished their life more and felt blessed after comparing themselves with those needy, disabled, and lonely people they volunteered for. Some pointed out that through volunteering, they reviewed and examined their life and learned more about the self and about what was really important for their future. It is exactly what Erikson and his colleagues (Erik H. Erikson et al., 1986) meant in their description about seeking to balance, reconcile, and integrate one's life into "a comprehensive sense of wisdom" (p. 56) at the last adult developmental stage. It is also what Havighurst (1963; 1972) proposed in his description of reaching personal goals and a new maturity as the developmental task for late adulthood. This study supports Dench and Regan's (2000) research report about how learning helps older adults have positive feeling about themselves, increase satisfaction with other areas of life, enhances self-confidence and ability to cope, and then further improves health. For example, Ming's transformation learning through volunteering helped her deal with her widowhood and increased her enjoyment of late life. Lee's and Hui's gradual acceptance of the unfortunate events of family members were examples of the aforementioned influences of learning in late life. The findings of this study showed how volunteering provided as a context

for the older women to reflect and review their life and further evolve wisdom and maturation and how these older women applied their learned wisdom to their family relationships and further better their late life.

In sum, the learning in volunteering cannot be ignored. This study shows again that older adults can learn, want and need to learn, and their learning benefits their late life. By updating knowledge, gaining and refining skills, and evolving and securing wisdom, learning through volunteering equips older adults toward positive development and successful aging. Building upon plentiful life experiences, volunteering is a learning context as well as a learning resource for older adults to dialogue their past, current, and future leading to further maturity and integration in older adults' life. The opportunities of continuous learning for older adults in such a non-formal learning setting make successful aging a reachable aim.

Besides the advantages of learning through volunteering, for elderly people, being a volunteer brings benefits which directly or indirectly enhance their good old age. This study brings a conclusion that links volunteering with successful aging as I present at the next section.

Conclusion Two: Volunteering is a Holistic Approach to Successful Aging

From older adults' viewpoints, volunteering was an activity which involves the whole person (Narushima, 1999, 2000). The participants of this study had similar narratives. Through such a social involvement, volunteering included the values, perspectives, experiences, and affections of these senior volunteers and further tumbled with who and what they faced and dealt with and then produced a new self. Volunteering can be a social activity as well as learning activity. Volunteering can be an altruistic behavior but also an opportunity of turning the helping experiences back to be material of reflection and self-helping which can be viewed as a holistic approach to successful aging. Facing physical, functional, societal changes as along with aging,

volunteering has been regarded as an especially important role at late adulthood because it can "inoculate, or protect, [older adults]….from hazards of retirement, physical decline and inactivity" (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993, p. 9). Moreover, through such a social interaction, the participants continuously dialoged with their past and current roles and life experiences, and even prepared for the future. This study found that volunteering facilitates a good old age in four dimensions. They were (1) establishing a meaningful life, (2) building and improving relationships, (3) enhancing positive changes and self-evaluation, and (4) promoting physical and psychological health. It is obvious that there is a strong connection between participating in volunteering and older women's perceived successful aging.

Relieved from work and family obligations gives older adults enough time and societal approvals to pursue what they want in the later life. As Havighurst (1972) proposed, the developmental tasks in late adulthood mainly involve disengagement from some of the more active roles of middle age and elders can decide if they want to engage in other roles. Most of the participants in this study started being a volunteer after aged 60. When these older women faced no more demands from either work or family, almost all of them chose volunteering as their only social involvement. Many of them volunteered in more than one NPO or even volunteered over three days a week which is a very high frequency of participation. Although their motives were not the research focus in this study, the beneficial results from participating in such an altruistic activity shed a light on why these older women regularly and continuously volunteering. According to the findings of four dimensions in this study that volunteering influences on older women's successful aging, I further extract three pivots—being healthy, being connected, and being meaningful to further discuss how volunteering influences on older adults' aging well.

First, volunteering connects with successful aging by being healthy-- one of the definitions of successful aging the respondents provided in this study. Being healthy includes physical and in psychological levels. Often times, they interplay with each other. As Victor, Scambler, Bond, and Bowling (2000) point out, "loneliness, isolation, and social neglect are some of the most prevalent stereotypes of old age" (p. 407). No matter whether these are stereotypes or realities, the participants of this study did mention that volunteering swept away such negative emotions they had before becoming a volunteer. Other researchers also point out that older adults can fill unused time, satisfy communication needs, neutralize the influence of loneliness by means of volunteering (Bradley, 1999; Hunter & Linn, 1980) which apparently have positive influences on people's health. According to Wilson and Musick (1999), volunteering makes individuals develop stronger networks that "buffer stress and reduce disease risk" (p. 150). Many studies have proved that volunteering indeed maintains physical health, increases positive changes in perceived health, decreases mortality, and should have positive effects on mental health as well as subjective well-being (Musick & Herzog, 1999; Willigen, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1999). Additionally, "the altruistic features of volunteerism might reduce destructive levels of self-absorption" (Oman, Thoresen, & McMahon, 1999, p.3) and promote coping strategies and building emotional supports. In their study of the differences of elder volunteers and non-volunteers, Hunter and Linn (1980) found that the two groups had significant differences in the number of anxious, depressive and somatic symptoms they reported, in their will to live, and in their degree of life satisfaction. In Choi's (2003) analyses, those aged 70 and over who volunteered more possibly reported excellent and good health than non-volunteers. Many research findings have well-established the positive correlation between volunteering and both physical health (Narushima, 2000; Stephan, 1991; Willigen, 2000; Young

& Glasgow, 1998) and mental health (Greenfield & Marks, 2004; Harlow & Cantor, 1996; Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, Rozario, & Tang, 2003; Willigen, 2000). All benefits derived from volunteering these older women shared in this study support the aforementioned depictions in the literature. According to the findings of this study, volunteering provided regular and diverse social interactions, thus, keeping these older women active and busy, and preventing them from feeling boring and unless. Volunteering also provided them with an emotional network and new learning stimuli and opportunities, and then therefore made them feel healthy physically and psychologically. Being healthy is one of the definitions of successful aging these older Taiwanese women proposed. It is also one of the influences that was found as an attribute of their successful aging driven by volunteering. Here, based on the aforementioned plentiful literature, this study contributes on the link between being healthy, volunteering, and successful aging from older adults' viewpoint.

Second, creating a role and goal which maintains the connections with society is another key found in this study between volunteering and successful aging for older adults. According to a national survey of people aged 65 and over living at home in Britain, good social relationships (81%) and social roles and activities (60%) are the most commonly mentioned constituent that gives older respondents' lives quality (Bowling et al., 2003). Good relationships with family (Bowling, 1995; Farquhar, 1995) and friends (Bowling, 1995), activities and social contact (Farquhar, 1995) are viewed as the most important areas in late life. Many studies have shown that social relationships are resources for health and well-being in later life (Rook, Mavandaei, Sorkin, & Zettel, 2007). These attest to the significance of being connected by continuous relationships and social involvement for a good old age. These components were stressed by the participants in this study as well. Such results might be attributed to seniors' losses in

relationships and roles, one of the most obvious changes in late adulthood. In this study, many

participants mentioned that their or their husband's retirement, husband's passing away, and

children's growing up and leaving home triggered their volunteer life. Meanwhile, from their

definitions of successful aging one can also see how relationships and social involvement are

essential for these older respondents. As Knowles (1980) described, "Adults derive their self-

identity from their experience. They define who they are in terms of the accumulation of their

unique sets of experience" (p. 50). Participating in volunteering refill the empty roles and gave

the older women a new one. Gao, for example, the eldest respondent of this study always

introduced herself as a volunteer, the most enjoyable identity she has ever had, as she said. In

terms of relationships, these respondents mentioned the significance of having the company of

husband and friends and of good connections with children. In terms of social involvement, they

all strongly proposed being a lifelong volunteer as a necessity and a must for their good old age.

As the participants of this study mentioned, being a volunteer enhanced their abilities of

improving interaction with family and others as well as building new friendships. Compare the

timing they started volunteering, one of their definitions of successful aging—maintaining good

relationships, and the findings about how volunteering enhanced their relationships, one can see

the associations between volunteering and aging well. With the unavoidable losses of roles and

relationships at elderhood, based on the aforementioned comparison, we can clearly find how

volunteering refills the breach between reality (i.e., loss roles) and desire (i.e., maintain

relationships) and further renews with a meaningful focus and more opportunities. From here, we

again see the strong link between volunteering and successful aging.

Besides maintaining health and building new roles and social involvement, feeling

meaningful is another key that links volunteering and a good old age. Based on Erikson's (1982;

1997; Erik H. Erikson et al., 1986) development theory, those who aged 60 and over are facing

the developmental crises of stagnation versus generativity and despair versus integrity. Base on

Erikson (1997), with aging, people may feel a real uncertainty about status and role and confused

about the existential identity. The elder will experience a loss of the stimulus of belonging and of

being needed. Such a condition may make old people feel useless. When no challenges are

offered, a sense of stagnation may well take over. As we listen to the senior volunteers' voices,

the participants of this study and other research (Larkin, Sadler, & Mahler, 2005; Narushima,

2000) pointed out that volunteering brings a sense of achievement and usefulness. Whenever the

helped and the NPOs expressed appreciation and admiration, these senior volunteers feel they are

needed and recognized. In addition, volunteering resulted in a structure for daily life and built a

fuller sense of identity (Bradley, 1999; Hunter & Linn, 1980). Such a feeling of being still

capable of resolving problems, contributing, and making a difference brings older people a sense

of meaningfulness again. In particular, volunteering made many of these older women feel that

they were taking care of the young, as a mother again. As the participants of this study compared

their choice of being a volunteer with other older people they knew who did not volunteer, they

all said that their choice was much more meaningful because the altruistic nature of volunteering

makes them a helper and contributor. Shaped by the traditional Taiwanese culture, the nature of

volunteering as a virtue and charity makes continued volunteering have meaning in preparing for

a good death, a significant developmental task of late adulthood (Erik H. Erikson, 1982, 1997;

Erik H. Erikson et al., 1986). Meanwhile, as some research has shown, one of the reasons for the

lower risk of mortality of volunteers is that volunteering increases perceived self-efficacy, self-

esteem, and positive affect, which in turn functions as a kind of prevention from stress (Wilson

& Musick, 1999). Thus, feeling life is meaningful from the life and identity as a volunteer also

can be inferred as a reason of promoting health. Lastly, when contrasting the two findings of how volunteering benefited their successful aging—establishing a meaningful life and enhancing self-evaluation, with the two definitions of successful aging they proposed—being healthy and continuing contributing to society through volunteering, we see how volunteering not only re-affirms older adults' life by generativity but also gives them a context to integrate life and prepare for the unavoidable death. Based on this, we clearly see the links again between volunteering and successful aging.

In sum, although studies have supported and shown that volunteering does have positive effects on older adults' development, we know little about the process involved. Moreover, few studies connect volunteering with perceived successful aging, especially based on older adults' own definitions. This study supports the descriptions in the current knowledge base about the older adults' benefits of volunteering. It also significantly uncovers the connections between successful aging and volunteering as well as the mechanism involved. By interplaying among establishing a meaningful life, building and improving relationships, enhancing positive changes, and self-evaluation, promoting physical and psychological health, this study shows that volunteering compensates or substitutes for losses and also can develop new possibilities and positive development in old age.

Conclusion Three: Definitions of Successful Aging are Gender-related and Culturally-decided

Current studies exploring successful aging have been mainly based on Rowe and Kahn's (1987; 1997; 1998) three-factor model or Baltes and Baltes's (1990a) SOC model to define, characterize, and predict successful aging. In these often-cited models, the authors do not include any gendered and cultural factors. However, as Bowling (1993) and Torres (1999; 2001; 2002; 2003) stress, one's personal value system or individual social and cultural construction decides

how people define successful aging. This study uncovered what successful aging means based on older women's voice and Eastern culture values which add new perspectives to the existing literature. Below I discuss the findings of this study in terms of gendered and cultural influences on successful aging respectively.

Women's View of Successful Aging

The majority of the aging-related studies have portrayed older adults as a homogeneous group. Age, gender, race, and class seem to become neutral parameters when representing and exploring aging-related issues. Women outliving men is "a fact of life recognized statistically but not operationally, due to a complex variety of economic and social attitudes which contrive to make women invisible and treated as if dependent—particularly older women" (Bornat et al., 1993, p. 237). Although women comprise the majority of the old population, few studies have accounted for gender differences. Findings of studies focusing on the experiences of men have been generalized to women. This study intentionally chose older women as research participants to help better understand the perceived successful aging of this majority of the older population in society. Despite no male participants as a contrasting group in this study, since in general men and women develop differently (Caffarella & Olson, 1993; Carlton-LaNey, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; T. A. Peck, 1986), have different aging processes (Belsky, 2001; Day, 1991; Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985), have different perceptions regarding aging (Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985), and have different predictors of successful aging (Morgan et al., 1991; Palmore, 1979), it is reasonable to say that the definitions of successful aging is likely to be gender-related.

Collings's (2001) study of understanding the successful aging of Canadian indigenous (Inuit) seniors shows women and men have different viewpoints in terms of what a good and bad elderhood mean. For the male indigenous, a good elderhood related to economic ability and

resources and physical health; females were more concerned about domestic issues, such as family relations, including the presence of a spouse and attention from adult children and grandchildren. Bamford (1996) interviewed 28 grandparents to explore the gender issue in later life and found that even though almost all the older women had a paid job, their key sense of worth mainly lay in the significance of home which for them was filled with family relationships and their role as a care giver. However, most of the male respondents regarded the sense of being of use as a key value. Unlike the female respondents, they did not put so much weight on home where for them was a place they spent time for their list of tasks and hobbies. For the men, their sense of being of use mainly resulted from continuous employment, but the women's feeling of being of use mainly came from caring. Many of the female interviewees used such a feeling to judge their value which denoted that they were not really old. Mjelde-Mossey and Chi (2004) explored gender differences in expectations of volunteer experience among older Chinese professionals. They found that for the older men, the expectation was associated with utilizing their own skills but for older women it was relevant to meet the needs of others. Although among the aforementioned studies, only Collings's (2001) research directly inquired about gender differences of perceived successful aging, the findings of all these three studies show that caring and relationships rather than task-oriented and ego-central characteristics define older women's life. In this study, from the three of the five definitions of successful aging of the 14 older Taiwanese women proposed, we can also see the same core.

Although there still are debates, many studies have verified the aforementioned characteristics in women's ego and identity developments. Those researchers advocate that for women's development there is a movement toward increasing intimacy and interdependence with others than toward autonomy and dependence (Caffarella & Olson, 1993; Carlton-LaNey,

1994; Gilligan, 1982; T. A. Peck, 1986). That is, the connection to others significantly impacts women's worldviews, self-definitions, and behaviors in everyday life. In this study, some definitions—being healthy, maintaining good relationships, and continuing contributions were stressed by the older Taiwanese women as components of successful aging which I see as congruent with relationship-oriented women's development.

One of the definitions of successful aging the older Taiwanese women provided was the importance of being healthy. Although being healthy seems a universal wish for old age, older women might have different reasons from older men to wish so. In Bamford's study (1996) of comparing women's and men's attitudes toward later life, she found that older women often mentioned their worries of not being able to take care of themselves and then become a burden of their children. In my study, similar concerns were proposed when the participants mentioned the significance of being healthy. Thus, we might explain older women's concerns on being healthy and regard it as a significant component of successful aging definition as a way of caring. Women have been assigned as a primary care giver of a family in many societies. Bamford (1996) interpreted her female interviewees' fear about being no longer able to care for themselves might be caused by their seldom being cared for by others, and they might feel more unease than men do about others caring for them in late adulthood.

Maintaining good relationships as one of the definitions of successful aging found in this study clearly connects with the women's aforementioned developmental characteristics. Losses in relationships and roles have been viewed as the most obvious changes in late adulthood. In particular, for women, becoming single again is a common experience as age advances (Joanna Walker, 1991). Thus, if relationships and connections to others are core in women's development, it is understandable why maintaining good relationships is a prerequisite for a good

old age for women. As Caffarella and Olson (1993) point out, an interplay of multiple roles as a web of relationships has more weight in women's development than men. It can be explained why friends, husband, children, and family harmony were mentioned when these older Taiwanese women described the picture of their ideal old age. In Day's (1991) ten-year longitudinal study which explored successful aging of white married women who were born in 1900-1910, a private safety net was one of three definitions. Under this definition, affective supports, such as friends' company, persons to confide in, share interests with, make one feel needed and appreciated were examples of women-specific concerns related to connections and relationships. Also, based on two informal talks and observations I did in Taiwan, older Taiwanese men did not stress friends as a necessary component of successful aging. These might be as evidence to infer that perceived successful aging is gender-related.

The other related definition of successful aging the older Taiwanese women provided was the importance of continuing contribution. As Caffarella and Olson's (1993) comprehensive review and T. A. Peck's (1986) development model have displayed, because of the relationship web and connectedness to others as the developmental foundation of women, women's decision making often considers both the needs of others as well as women's own hopes. Thus, it is logically acceptable when there is less weight in terms of work and family at elderhood, these older Taiwanese women transferred and spread their connection and care to the society by contributing their time, energy, and wisdom. In this case, such a connection can also be seen as a type of generativity, as many of these women mentioned how their volunteering was a kind of caring for the young.

Besides the essence of relationship, connection, and care in women's development which makes the perceptions of successful aging gender-related, financial security is another reason

that supports such a conclusion. Choi (2001) examined the effects of postretirement employment on older women's successful aging. The finding showed that the employment per se did not contribute to older women's life satisfaction; rather, the financial resources and in particular the older women's regards about their own financial situation are vital determinants of their successful aging. At the same time, locus of control is found to be achieved with financial independence (Into, 2003). In this study, many of the participants mentioned the significance of having no financial worries as a requirement of successful aging. As they mentioned, basic financial ability allowed them independence and no worries for basic life needs. Since women historically have been deprived many opportunities of access to employment, education, and other support and resources (Kendig, 2004; Joanna Walker, 1991), and their higher possibility of living alone because of higher life expectancy, it makes sense that financial security becomes a special issue needing to be included for women's successful aging.

Late adulthood is "not gender-neutral category—it requires a gender-specific perspective" (Narushima, 2004, p.25). Based on women's special needs and developmental characteristics as well as being supported by the existing literature, although there is no contrasting group to directly compare the differences of men's and women's good old age, this study concludes that the definitions of successful aging are gender-related.

Cultural Influences on Perceived Successful Aging

As Torres (1999) points out, much research related to older adults remains "culturally oblivious" (p. 34). Currently, only a few researchers argue that a society's value system predetermines and shapes how successful aging is conceptualized (Bowling, 1993; Ikels et al., 1995; Keith, Fry, & Ikels, 1990; Torres, 1999; 2001; 2002; 2003, 2006; Wray, 2003). Culture is a "system of shared beliefs, values, practices, perspectives, folk knowledge, language, norms,

rituals and material objects and artifacts that members of a group use in understanding their world and in relating to others" (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 369). The culture of a society is just like "the glue that holds its members together" through a commonality, such as language, dressing, food, aspirations, and challenges. "It is a set of learned behavior patterns so deeply ingrained" (Abdullah, 1996, p. 3. As cited in Merriam &Mohamad, 2000, p. 45) that people act them out in unconscious ways. Thus, how we feel, understand, interpret, and act in everyday life will strongly based on our cultural origins. Based on this premise, since most aging-related studies have been conducted in the West (Bee, 2000), it is worthy of being doubtful if the models of successful aging derived from the Westerners' experiences and Western contexts match the reality in other cultures well. Before we discuss cultural influences on perceived successful aging, it is necessary to first know the different foundations of Eastern and Western cultures.

Religion and traditional philosophy are essential components of cultural values. In Taiwan, Buddhism, Taoism, Taoist philosophy, and Confucianism are the major traditional belief systems. In addition, "Tian" which is held in awe by most Taiwanese is regarded as a sacred power that overlooks everyone's behaviors and decides people's fate and future. These five factors intertwine together and further form a strong value system and ideology and then become a significant guide to Taiwanese's attitudes, behaviors, and thoughts. Buddhism regards life as a result of karma or cause-and-effect and as a bitter sea because of life's nature of impermanence. This belief makes the individual life tightly connected with others and promotes an intention of cherishing the current life, reducing desires, and doing more charity work. Taoism is derived from the thoughts of Lao-tzu and Zhuang tzu, two main philosophers in the ancient dynasty. This philosophy regards life as a natural phenomenon which will never exist forever and advocates "Wu Wei" –a life attitude that urges never pursuing anything on purpose

but simply following the natural occurrence. Confucianism accentuates group and public

progress and benefits over the individual. This philosophy also stresses fatalism, a belief about

what one encounters currently and in the future are decided by his/her fate and overlooked by the

Tian rather than by his/her own power.

In the West, different religions and philosophies from the aforementioned Eastern belief

system shape a very different worldview. Based on Merriam and Mohamad's (2000) study which

aimed to understand how culture shapes the nature of learning for older adults in Malaysia,

Torres's (1999; 2001; 2002; 2003) descriptions about a culturally-relevant theoretical framework

of successful aging and her studies of perceived successful aging of Iranian immigrants in

Sweden, and my personal experience as an Easterner who has lived in the U.S. for four years, I

summarized some critical differences between Eastern and Western cultures. First, it is typical

that the Easterners emphasize harmonious relationships with nature, while Westerners believe

that humans can master and conquer nature. Second, Easterners pursue spiritual well-being but

material well-being is more valued in the West. Third, Easterners stress on relationships and are

group-oriented, but individualism is a core characteristic of the Western foundation. Building

upon the understanding of the differences of basic value orientations of the two cultures, it

clearly explains the different picture of a good old age in this study conducted in an Eastern

country from what has showed in the literature based on the Western cultures.

The current definitions of successful aging in the literature are dominantly based on the

Westerners' worldview. Although researchers have pointed out the difficulty of reaching a

common consensus on the definitions of successful aging (M. M. Baltes & Carstensen, 1996;

Paul B. Baltes & Baltes, 1990a; Day, 1991; Ryff, 1989a; Schulz & Heckhausen, 1996), we still

can see a common theme in the literature. Day (1991) pointed out that good health and long life

are two of the most widely accepted markers of successful aging. Based on a literature review, P. B. Baltes and M. M. Baltes (1990a) identified seven characteristics of successful aging: "length of life, biological health, mental health, cognitive efficacy, social competence and productivity, personal control, and life satisfaction" (p. 5). Rowe and Kahn's three-factor model has been dominantly adopted by researchers to examine successful aging. They defined successful aging as including three main components: low probability of disease and disease-related disability, high cognitive and physical functional capacity, and active engagement with life (Kahn, 2003; Rowe & Kahn, 1997). Lawton (1986) in his model of the good life includes behavioral competence, perceived quality of life, psychological well-being, and objective environment as the main sectors of successful aging. Through my review of empirical studies, among a variety of operational definitions and criteria of successful aging, no difficulty on any of activities of daily life (ADLs), such as bathing, grooming, dressing, eating, and toileting, and self-rated health condition seem to be the two most often-used standards when assessing successful aging. In addition, some researchers further used various physical and cognitive functions to measure successful aging, such as most of the MacArthur studies of successful aging, an interdisciplinary network funded in 1984 by the MacArthur Foundation which aimed to examine successful aging of physically healthy seniors in the U.S. (Andrews et al., 2002). Some included psychological definitions such as life satisfaction and cognitive functions or social factors such as skills of coping with losses and social interactions to identify successful aging. Therefore, based on different focuses on definitions of successful aging, different age groups, and different measurements, there are various studies and findings related to characteristics and predictors of successful aging. Based on the aforementioned definitions that researchers propose and Bowling's (1993), Knight and Ricciardelli's (2003), Bowling and Dieppe's (2005) summaries,

we can say that the academic definitions of successful aging have mainly emphasized longevity, physical and mental health, positive functioning, psychological well-being, social network and activities.

Compared with this summary of definitions displayed in the existing literature, the definitions of successful aging in this study bring some similar as well as some different perceptions regarding what aging well means, which might be derived from the aforementioned cultural differences. First is about the emphasis of being healthy. Without exception, the first answer when asked what a good old age meant, these older Taiwanese women answered being healthy. For older Taiwanese women, being healthy was an umbrella term which generalized physical and mental health, mobility, and positive functions. Deriving from the cultural value of putting the group prior to the self, being healthy is for them to avoid relying on other's care-giving and becoming children's burden. However, embedded in the cultural priority of individualism, for the Westerners, being healthy is mainly for their own independence and self-sufficiency as well as longevity. Based on different cultural values, being healthy might denote different meanings.

Also, being healthy is a subjective feeling. It can be a goal rather than a cure-all in late adulthood. Currently, many studies used Rowe and Kahn's model as the only reference point of successful aging. Thus, low probabilities of diseases, disability, and declines have become dominant standards to define successful aging. Such standards can be an exclusion of many older adults who have no access to get enough resources or lack capacities for a better life (Reker, 2001; Scheidt et al., 1999). In this study, almost all participants regarded themselves as successful agers but many faced various physical illnesses and more or less functional declines, and one even had cancer. As one of Collings' (2001) findings in his qualitative interviewing with

indigenous people in Canada, aging well is not one necessarily characterized by individual good health, but rather by the ability of the individual to successfully manage declining health. These two examples question the assumption between successful aging and being healthy proposed in current literature as well as has been deeply believed by many Westerners. As Torres (1999) infers, Rowe and Kahn's definitions regarding successful agers as those who can maintain their physical capabilities was shaped by the master and control orientation of the man-nature relationship in Western society. Although the participants in this study were concerned about being healthy in their late life, being satisfied with what one has and believing in karma and cause-and-effect, two significant traditional Eastern values, brought the goal of being healthy to be a not so tight and absolute objective.

Based on the Western value orientation in terms of the relationships one has with nature, with himself/herself, and with others, it is not surprising that production, success, autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-esteem have been often underscored in Western societies. In contrast with a Western value orientation of "the more, the better," the attitude of being satisfied with what one has is another dimension related to perceptions of successful aging shaped by Taiwanese traditional culture. Both "Wu Yu Ze Gang," an old saying based on Confucianism which means "people will be strong if they have no desire" and the emphasis of Buddhism on "few desires can clear the human mind" supports the notion that less desire is better. For Taiwanese, being content with whatever you have has been tightly connected with less worries and being happy. All participants either directly or indirectly mentioned the importance of being contented with what one has. Those living on the 3,000 Taiwanese dollars (less than 100 USD), a monthly senior allowance delivered by the government, the participant with cancer, and some with troubles of physical declines and diseases all expressed their content with their current life.

"It is good enough" was repeated whenever they mentioned their health, relationship, financial condition, and even the length of their life. This emphasis on being content with what one has in the East reflects again how cultural values shape the perceptions of successful aging.

The attitude toward the length of life is the third distinction between the perceived successful aging in the two cultural contexts. According to P. B. Baltes and M. M. Baltes's (1990a) literature review and Day's (1991) depiction, long life is a widely accepted marker of successful aging. Nevertheless, longevity is not in the list of the definitions of successful aging the older Taiwanese women provided to me. Moreover, they even explicitly told me that living longer was not a significant and necessary component for a good old age. As Merriam and Mohamad (2000) point out: "Cultural values of autonomy, control, and production are implicit in Western models of development that focus on gains and compensating for losses" (p.47). Thus, it is logically acceptable that the Westerners might want to be more productive and feel they can control many things to get a better future, even for the length of life. Easterners who have been profoundly influenced by aforementioned Eastern traditional values and philosophies believe that being content with what one has is better and can prevent people from worries and troubles.

Besides, the belief of fatalism leads Easterners to tend to accept rather than change because the future is controlled by fate. Moreover, Lao-tzu and Zhuang tzu advocated a calm attitude toward death. Toaism's philosophy stresses the importance of following and obeying nature and the Universe and does not encourage people to pursue anything intentionally. According to a study of 112 Taiwanese seniors who were 60 years of age or over, when being asked "How do you see your life," about 50% of participants regarded life as the course of Nature which cannot be controlled and thought they simply need to follow and obey their fates and to respect Karma (Hsin & Macer, 2003). This study reflected apparently how traditional

religions and philosophies have created a cultural context that shaped Taiwanese concepts of life and death. In addition, the relationship-oriented characteristics in Eastern values connect their own life more with what they saw at the end of life for their family members as well as others they volunteered for and brought a reflection on what kind of end of life they wanted. All the factors intertwined together and shaped the participants perceptions of longevity. Thus, instead of longevity, the participants in this study placed more value on a good death and regarded a good death as a component of successful aging.

According to Doka (2000), in general, people's attitudes toward death will be consistent with their culture, family values, and cognitive and emotional maturity. A good death for Taiwanese has a special and profound meaning. In this study, good death for the participants meant dying at home or dying without long term suffering. Nan and Ping for example, regarded dying when sleeping as a perfect ending point of their life. For these older Taiwanese women, no matter what their religious background, a good death was strongly emphasized as an essential component of successful aging. Compared with longevity, a good death seems more possible, especially for some participants who believe that their virtues can be accumulated by doing charity work and the accumulated virtues can guarantee their good death and the well-being of their descendants. The accruing interests from a bank savings account or Yue's "paving the road" are good metaphors of such a belief toward a good death.

Lastly, it is very apparent to see how culture shapes the meaning of successful aging when comparing the past agricultural Taiwan with the current post-industrialized Taiwan. As Taiwan has been transformed from a traditional agricultural society to becoming more modernized and globalized, or Westernized, the traditional values in terms of family relationships and intergenerational dynamics have also shifted. As Keith et al. (1990) found in

their cross-cultural studies, participants in Hong Kong could not understand why one needs and wants to be self-sufficient and live alone, an essential core value in American culture. Instead, as people in many Asian countries, the participants in Hong Kong regarded their families' willingness to meet their needs as a marker of successful aging. Although I am not sure if this finding still can present the current family value in Hong Kong, such a perception of successful aging was the same with the one in the agricultural age of Taiwan.

Emphasizing family relationships and filial piety are critical characteristics of traditional Eastern cultural values. For older adults, they would gain a sense of a good and safe old age if their children presented filial piety to them. In the past, filial piety meant children's showing respect to, taking care of, and providing financial support for old parents as well as establishing their own families and careers. The birth of new generations was also significantly counted as a behavior of filial piety because it means the heritage and name of the clan was maintained. However, when the Taiwanese economic system was transformed from mainly agriculture to industry and information technology, this study showed that the aforementioned norm of intergenerational relationship and presentation of filial piety which used to be essential for a good old age broke up.

"Confucian ethic of filial piety…sanctions dependency and family care for the elderly" (Willcox, Willcox, Sokolovsky, & Sakihara, 2007, p. 141). Thus, in many Asian countries, traditionally, those who have more children and grandchildren would be regarded as having good fortune because it meant that there would be more descendents to take care of the older ones. However, modernization brought urbanization and has taken away adult children from their parents' homes for better career opportunities. Thus, for older parents to live with adult children becomes impractical. In contrast with the agricultural age, after gradual modernization and

westernization, the Taiwanese values have tended to be moved from the end of stressing groups to the other end of emphasizing individualism. Many adult children choose not to marry or marry late. This changed phenomenon makes older parents feel out of control, powerless, and worry whether they will have grandchildren or not. Later, older parents have gradually been forced to accept such a change and even give up the expectation of having many grandchildren. Thus, some participants of this study expressed acceptance and ease if they would have no grandchildren. Also, many adult children who have their own children tend to regard educating their children as their own work and do not rely on and listen to old parents' opinions and advice. Thus, because of modernization and Westernization, traditional family ties and intergenerational connections have changed. Therefore, when the older Taiwanese women in this study responded to the question of what a good old age meant to them, instead of having children and grandchildren to live together and take care of them, being independent personally and financially became a key.

Meanwhile, Chen's comparison of her attitudes and expectations toward intergenerational relationships with that of her mother was a good example to support that the definitions of successful aging were shaped by people's cultural origins and would change when facing transformation of the social and cultural contexts. As she said, she could feel how her mother looked forward to children's visitation and hoped for children surrounding her everyday. However, she stood in the current Taiwan's social and cultural contexts and told me that her mother's expectation toward children was impossible. In her definition of successful aging, Chen never put any components in terms of children and grandchildren. She, just like many respondents of this study, did not expect or want to live with children and has thought about moving into an institution after she becomes older and needs to be taken care of.

From generation to generation, some ingrained cultural values keep the perceptions of successful aging the same, such as the concerns about children's establishment of a decent career. Nevertheless, based on the finding of this study, we clearly see how definitions of an ideal old age change when people have to face a long-term social and cultural transformation. Due to the urbanization and westernization, changes of family dynamics found in this study also can be seen in other Eastern countries (Sun & Chang, 2006; Willcox et al., 2007; Yun & Lachman, 2006). Thus, in this study, we can see the expectation of living with children and grandchildren became impractical and then disappeared; the role of being a grandmother became not as important as in previous generations. Filial piety was still required and regarded as necessary but the behaviors and presentations that were counted as filial piety were not requested as much as the agricultural Taiwan. Such a shift of perceived successful aging because of changing social and cultural contexts also can be seen in Torres's exploration of definitions of successful aging for Iranian immigrants in Sweden (Torres, 2001, 2003, 2006). The main difference between this study and Torres's studies was the reason for the changed perceptions of a good old age. For my study, the perceived successful aging skewing from the traditional definitions was resulted from the import of Western culture and the changes of social economic structure. For Torres studies, the changed definitions of successful aging were triggered by immigration. Wray's (2003) study is another example supporting why definitions of successful aging are cultural-decided. She found that African-Caribbean, West Indian, Pakistani, British-Polish and Indian participants more likely to regard religious belief as a prior influence on their happiness and fulfillment as they grew older than English participants. Thus, their perceived successful aging tended to be linked with spiritual fulfillment and a sense of belonging within a collective identity which often was gained through participating in religious activities. If we

ignore cultural meaning in terms of successful aging, according to Westerners' definition of

success in later life, these ethnic participants in Sway's study will be categorized as unsuccessful

agers because they do not put the ability of being independent from others and managing one's

life as priorities.

   In sum, based on distinct cultural orientations and values between the West and the East,

the findings of this study present a different picture in terms of what successful aging means for

old adults. The findings of this study display vividly how cultural contexts shape older adults'

Table 3

Summary of the Basic Differences in Cultural Values and in Definitions of Successful Aging

between the East and the West

	East	West
Relationships between one and nature	• Being in harmony with nature • Individual life embeds in human network	• Master, control, and conquer nature • Individual life separate from the rest of the world
Relationships between one and oneself	• Pursuing spiritual well-being • Less desire is better	• Pursuing material well-being • More ambition is better
Relationships between one and others	• Relationship oriented • Stress on importance of groups and public benefits. • Characteristics: Interdependent, cooperative, collective.	• Task oriented • Stress on individualism. • Characteristics: Independent, competitive, individual.
Successful aging is	(Based on the findings of this study) • Being healthy • Having no financial worries • Maintaining good relationships • Continuing contributing to society through volunteering • Having a good death	(Based on a literature review) • Physical and mental health • Positive functioning (no difficulties on ADLs) • Psychological well-being (life satisfaction) • Social network and activities (Productive). • Length of life

perceived successful aging. I summarized in Table 3 to display the basic differences between Eastern and Western cultural values as well as the definitions of successful aging in my study conducted in Taiwan, an Eastern country, and the definitions in the current literature which has been dominantly based on Western viewpoints and experience as I discuss above.

Implications for Practice

According to U.S. Census Bureau (2004b), in the United States, the proportions of people aged 65 and older in 2000 was 12.4% and will be 20.7% in 2050. Of the world population in 2006 midyear, 9.4% were those who aged 65 and over (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). The *Social Index-Indicators on child and elderly populations* in the United Nations (2006a) also shows that about one third of 219 countries had higher proportions of populations aged 60 and over than aged under 15. As the dramatically increasing proportion of older population becomes a prevailing phenomenon worldwide, how to successfully age has become a universal interest.

At the individual level, this study provides a picture of successful aging which might facilitate the current and future elderly populations to start deliberating what successful aging means to them. Considering what kind of old age is ideal and desirable for the individuals can promote their better plans and actions. It is never too late to plan one's later life. As Erikson and his colleagues (1986) found, those whom they interviewed who were in their 80s, anticipated life in old age and looked for guidelines of what they regarded as the path of successful aging through their relationships with parents, grandparents, their contemporaries (e.g., media figures, friends, and relatives), and other old people they admired. They summarized that "striving to emulate such ideals seems to give them [old people] a kind of strength, to counterbalance old age's uncertainty about how to behave now, in order to be true to the past as well as to prepare

for what may come next" (p. 60). Thus, the findings of this study might provide such a reference point for current and future older adults.

In addition, this study displays an alternative approach to successful aging for older adults which is worthy of considering and adopting. In particular, for those elders who worry about leaving home and social contact, the older female respondents' voices and sharing provide us with an image of what striding out of one's home and being a senior volunteer feels and looks like. According to the first global survey on living arrangements of those aged 60 and over in more than 130 countries, one out of every seven older adults lived alone (United Nations, 2005). Based on the findings of this study, volunteering can facilitate a new focus and build new social networks which can enhance the life quality of those elderly participants who live alone. Through volunteering, the research respondents' overrode the boundary of home and possible limitations of aging. Their learning and growth through volunteering portrayed a prosperous image of old age. The findings of this study show that being old is not equal to being useless and stagnant. This study also shows that volunteering is not a privilege for those who have time and money or even are so-called healthy. In this study, the participant who had cancer, who had no formal education, who lived alone, and who only lived on the government's monthly senior allowance volunteered. Moreover, they gained benefits through voluntary participation which was far beyond their original imagination. Thus, this study can be set up as a demonstration encouraging and leading older adults to a good starting point of enriching their late life.

In particular, for women, this study brings a significant blueprint showing women's successful aging. According to the World Bank (2001), women have longer life expectancy than their counterparts have in most countries. In addition, based on the statistics from the United Nations (2006b), for 2000-2005, the highest life expectancy at birth for women was 85 years in

both Japan and Hong Kong. In the main developing and developed countries, the differences of life expectancy between women and men were about three to seven years. The biggest distance between women's and men's life expectancy was eight years which was in Thailand. This gender gap in life expectancy results in women being the majority of the elder population. The good news of extended life expectancy is that women probably can live much longer than their parents' and grandparents' generations with almost 20 years to live after age 60. However, the bad news is the possibility of living without a husband's company for an average of three to seven years. Besides, because of low rates of fertility and late marriage, a woman might only have one or two children as well as grandchildren, or even none. Globally, 19% of women who were aged 60 and older lived alone, compared with 8% of men (United Nations, 2005). Facing more time and freedom, a longer life with less family work and attachments might be a possibility for a second spring of life but might also turn out as a risk. This study shows that being a volunteer will make older women happy physically and psychologically. Being volunteers helps older women better adapt to various changes in late life. By participating in volunteering, older women can make use of time and freedom in a much more substantial, meaningful, and satisfying way. Through serving and helping others, volunteering builds new relationship and support networks for older women which have been regarded as a core of women's development. There are multiple ways that older adults create meaning for their lives. This study shows that volunteering is good for older women's body, mind, and soul. Being a volunteer, a socially approved identity, women's old age was fostered as they learned, grew, and became wise through such a process of self-discovery, self-validation, and self-actualization.

Besides facilitating older adults to start thinking what kind of a good old age they want to pursue and to consider volunteering as an option of their late life, this study can apply to family

members of older adults as well. For older adults' family members, this study facilitates their understanding and empathy about and sheds a light on aging, old age, and the elderly. Although different experiences and life scenarios might interfere with the young to feel the elderly heart, knowing what kind of old age elders want and expect helps. Since successful aging is a subjective perception, I suggest that family members use "what a good old age looks like for you" as a topic to promote dialogues with older adults. The finding of this study provides information and evidence which allows family members encouraging older parents or relatives to consider and pursue their successful aging. Significantly, only after knowing what successful aging means to the older family members, the young can better know how to interact with the elderly and help them achieve their perceived successful aging. If desirable and applicable, as the findings of this study strongly connect perceived successful aging and volunteering as well as show the advantages of volunteering in later life, participating in volunteering is a good choice that the family members can further encourage older adults' involvement.

In societal levels, NPOs, and practitioners who work at NPOs (e.g., adult educators, social workers, and other practitioners in gerontology) can apply the findings of this study to their practice. Recently, how to better make use of elders as human capital has gotten more attention. For NPOs which often need volunteers, this study provides evidence again on how older adults can devote to volunteering by regular and frequent participation and how older adults can well take the role as a volunteer or even a leadership position among volunteers to assist the missions of NPOs. The positive influences of volunteering found in this study will give NPOs more confidence and evidence to extensively recruit older adults as volunteers. Also, based on the results of the perceptions of successful aging and the benefits resulting from volunteering in this study, practitioners who take charge of volunteers can know better about

how to recruit and maintain the older adults as volunteers. This study shows that older adults'

participation in volunteering is not only because they are bored. Once they are involved in the

work, they become enaged. Also, many respondents of this study mentioned the appreciation,

recognition, and respect from the NPOs and NPOs' staff strongly reinforced their perceptions of

being a senior volunteer and further promoted their regular participation. Thus, volunteer

coordinators and other staff who have chances to interact with elderly volunteers can apply the

findings of this study to examine their notions about elderly volunteers. Only when NPO

practitioners hold correct viewpoints, attitudes, and knowledge about older adults' volunteering,

can they provide friendly environment and design encouraging systems for older adults'

participating in volunteering and continuous learning through this participation. This study

shows how volunteering as a holistic social activity which provides mental stimuli, life reflection,

and various opportunities for older adults. NPOs's recruitment of elder volunteers can promote

positive changes not only for the elderly and their families, but also the NPOs and the whole

society.

   For adult educators, the findings of this study, as other research, present again that older

adults can learn, want to and need to learn, and can benefit from learning. Based on this study,

we see how learning through volunteering significantly improves older adults' life quality. For

practitioners in the field of either adult education or gerontology, the findings of this study can

be used as a framework to better design and develop programs or training for elders. For

example, based on the definitions of successful aging in this study, older women are concerned

with finance and health. Practitioners can add some classes, activities, and services related to

finance management as well as to promote health. If the class members are also from areas with

similar cultural background, the concerns of having a good death might be a good topic of

lecture or group seminar for seniors. More activities designed for interpersonal interactions and friendship building might be also taken into consideration. Since interpersonal and communicative skills and evolved wisdoms were often proposed by the participants of this study, program, training, and activity designs for older adults might emphasize these dimensions. In addition, the study shows that volunteering provides contexts which trigger reflections. The participants often mentioned the comparisons between their current life and their past experience as well as between their own lives and those they helped. The findings also showed that older adults benefit from such spontaneous comparisons and reflections. Thus, practitioners might consider adopting life reviews as a way to deliver programs or training for older adults. Also, as many participants in this study mentioned that their benefit caused by learning through volunteering was because of the learning embedded in real life. Comparing with learning in classroom and classes in senior centers, learning through volunteering brings older adults to dialogue, reflect, and take action and practice in their real life. Such a process enhances a motive to learn, improve, and change. For example, Chen could not remember the procedure of using the internet to write emails and Feng only leant English lightheartedly when their learning was simply for their children. Because of the continuous missions of and feedback from volunteering, they respectively became a good email user and an English speaker. Thus, adult educators might apply the findings of this study to re-structure their program development for older adults.

In national and cross-national levels, policy makers can apply the findings of this study to make policies which can promote better aging societies as well as facilitate healthier and happier older citizens. In this study, four implications in terms of policy making can be applied to national and cross-national levels. They are (1) making policies to better make use of the elderly as a significant social resource, (2) making policies to facilitate older adults participating in

learning, (3) making policies to support research on older adults' learning, especially for their non-formal and informal learning, and (4) making policies to develop a more inclusive system for promoting the successful aging of ethnic elders.

Regarding using seniors as a significant social resource, this study provides evidence to support the necessity of such policy-making. Because of lower fertility rate and higher life expectancy as a worldwide trend, in a short future, we might have more elders than the young. For societal needs, many studies of volunteering have been explored because of such economic concerns (Wilson, 2000). Some studies have presented how older adults contribute huge amounts of hours as volunteers and the conversion from volunteering hours to amazing human capital (Swindell, 1997). Looking at the numbers of NPOs the participants of this study volunteered for (half of them volunteered at more than one NPO) and the numbers of accumulated years they regularly volunteered (many have volunteered more than 10 years), this study displays again older adults' devotion to social service and participation and their willingness to continuously contributing to society. Facing longer life expectancy, policy makers can apply this study to consider how to better make use of older adults' time, knowledge, and experience to meet social needs as well as help improve social issues. This study apparently shows that including older adults into social systems by recruiting them as volunteers can benefit the individuals, organizations, as well as the societies as a whole.

In particular, the government in Taiwan established the *Peace and Harmony Program* in 1995 and announced the Volunteer Service Act in June 2001 which intentionally promote citizens getting involved in volunteering, integrating volunteer efforts for a promotion of social welfare tasks, and implementing volunteer services in a systematic manner. According to the Ministry of the Interior, R.O.C. (2006d), at the end of 2005, those aged from 30 to 64 were the

majority of volunteers in Taiwan. The proportion among total amount of all volunteers, volunteers who aged 65 and older was only about 9%. Among volunteers, women were the dominant volunteers at any age segments compared with their counterpart. However, such information only included volunteers who participating in government units and volunteered for social welfare work. Thus, a nationwide survey in terms of the intentions of using older adults as volunteers in various NPOs is pressing. Based on this study, we can see that there still is a stereotype in Taiwan viewing the elderly as those who might be useless and need help rather than as service providers. The policy makers in Taiwan might apply the findings of this study to first design a nationwide survey focusing on older adults' perceived successful aging and their motives and barriers for participating in volunteering. Besides, as this study found, the recognitions of the national volunteer awards effectively encouraged older adults' continuous volunteering and also promoted their sense of achievement and self-esteem. Based on this, the policy makers might further consider how to better use the award system to make the whole volunteer system in Taiwan more integrated and to attract more elders to join to be a volunteer.

Significantly, as the participants of this study proposed, some NPOs or even government units set aged 75 as a limitation for older adult's volunteering because of considering liability insurance for elderly volunteers. This unsuitable and out-of-date practice interferes with older adults' social participation and contributions, and needs policy makers' attention to further examine and modify. Better aging can be reached and maximized through early and sustained preventive intervention rather than remedial intervention (Friedrich, 2003). This study provides evidence how voluntary participation can benefit the aging process and promote the positive perceptions of aging in late adulthood. It is a perfect way for policy maker to include such a preventative intervention for both individual and societal priorities for successful aging.

This study also helps policy makers consider the significance of increasing opportunities of older adults' educational participation. Since the extended life expectancy also brings possible higher expenses on health and medical care and services, some adult educators advocate that it will be much smarter for governments to have more budgets for older adults' learning and training (Harrison, 1993; Harrop, 2006), because many researchers have suggested that being involved in learning or more mental stimuli promotes older adults' health. People should change their viewing older adults' education from a waste of time and money or just a way of keeping them busy. Learning in late adulthood should be stressed as a way to encourage elders' self-sufficiency as well as self-action and growth. Based on the findings of this study, learning does promote older adults' sense of self-sufficiency and growth. Policy makers need to reexamine what are educational objectives for older adults and further anchor and provide educational activities for the goals of participation and self-action.

Significantly, although people often define learning as an activity which happens in classrooms, for older adults, when one considers transportation, finance, physical limitations, and so on, non-formal and informal learning settings might be a much easier and affordable way to access learning opportunities. Currently, reports and studies related to volunteering have mainly focused on its altruist characteristics and individual participation and societal needs. However, this study shows that the learning attributes of volunteering need to be stressed. Although the learning often is not people's original focus when volunteering, this study found that the learning through volunteering has positive associations with older adults' successful aging. Through volunteering, older adults can get continuous learning by organizational education and training and by their own observation and reflections. Through learning by doing as a volunteer, older adults update knowledge, refine skills, and develop wisdom which help them age well. Thus,

facing a graying world, policy makers can apply this study to aging-related policies and switch the priorities from health service to lifelong learning to actively facilitating a successful aging society.

The last application based on this study for policy makers is the need of bringing more attention to ethnic elderly groups. The results of this study can be applied to explore perceptions of successful aging based on different cultural backgrounds. According to U.S. Census Bureau (2004a), from 2000 to 2050, the changes of population based on race origin will present very different distributions. The proportion for Asian-Americans will grow at a rate of 212.9%, for Hispanic will grow at rate of 187.9%, and other races, such as American-Indian or those have two or more races will grow at rate of 217.1%. However, the growth rate of non-Hispanic White will be only 7.4%. Based on this information, there is a strong need to apply the findings of this study to ethnic elderly people. There has been more later-life migration in the past (Longino & Bradley, 2006). Because of the fact of more population mobility among countries, the findings of this study can help practitioners and policy makers understand again the significance of being aware of multicultural issues. As Capitman (2002) proposes, multiculturalism "refers to a process recognizing, appreciating, and respecting dimensions of diversity and emphasizes how participants, practices, and institutions come to do so" (p. 9). He argues: "because 'cultural competence' is so difficult to attain, practitioners need to learn 'cultural humility' " (p. 12). Since our values, perceptions, and ideology are systematic constructions, people might unconsciously hold some stereotypes in terms of age, gender, class, old age, and ethnicity. This research reminds us that practitioners and policy makers need to examine frequently their preoccupation regarding aging and their knowledge regarding the relationships between culture and aging. Only when they have an inclusive viewpoint on aging, can the services and systems be delivered with

cultural humility. Significantly, only by means of policy making, aging-related legislation, budgets, can aging individuals, societies, and countries be benefited. In particular, according to the United Nations (2002), Asia and the Pacific will become home to the largest proportion of older persons aged 65 and above in the next 30 years. Helping others is a powerful catalyst and will promote positive and meaningful perceptions and impacts on the helpers, the helped, and the environment. Increased longevity, lower death rate, and a higher proportion of the population being seniors have become a general fact in every country. This study might be applied to trigger some ideas of international exchanges and cooperation in terms of initiatives, programs, and policies of successful aging, elderly volunteers, and learning at late adulthood.

In sum, the findings of this study have shown that older adults' learning through and participating in volunteering strongly facilitate their perceived successful aging. Learning through being a volunteer can be a holistic intervention and strategy for older adults' successful aging. However, strategies of facilitating people living longer as well as aging well "are presented in the context of personal decisions and lifestyles related to societal opportunities and restrictions" (Friedrich, 2003, p. 3). For current and future elders and their families, for current and future practitioners who work with older adults, and for policy makers at national and international levels, this study shed a light on how to enhance a better action and system for successful aging.

Suggestions for Future Research

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand older Taiwanese women's learning through volunteering and the role of that learning in successful aging. The findings of this study conclude that (a) Elder learning through volunteering facilitates positive development; (b) Volunteering is a holistic approach to successful aging; and (c) Definitions of successful

aging are cultural-specific and gender-related construction. Based on the research findings, in this section, I propose some suggestions in terms of topics, samples, and methods for future studies.

Regarding samples, I suggest that future studies need to define successful aging based on viewpoints of older adults themselves and make efforts to present the heterogeneous nature of the older population. First of all, as successful aging becomes an academic term as well as societal and individual needs and expectations, it is basic and pressing to first ask and listen to the viewpoints of older adults themselves what aging well means to them. Only if we know what older adults desire and want to pursue in their heart, can we have a right direction and framework to understand aging better and explore and resolve further questions. Missing the perspectives of older adults themselves, research findings and accounts and applications of the findings simply are inappropriate. Compared with the majority of current research findings on successful aging which are based on researchers' own definitions, this study joins the few research studies that better unveils the picture of successful aging by asking the definitions of elderly participants first. It is ethical as well as a must for researchers to follow such a principle to continue exploring successful aging.

Although many researchers advocate older adults are heterogeneous, they have not really acted in the same way. We rarely see age, gender, race, class, and ethnicity displayed even as researchers recruited their research participants. If a society is in fact stratified by those factors, why do we not present the possible differences resulting from those stratified parameters when we explore and examine aging-related phenomena? Why do these parameters become neutral when researchers set their research purposes for understanding aging and older adults? Significantly, if there are any disadvantages for any groups of people because of the

aforementioned stratified parameters in the societies, the disadvantages will be amplified with advancing age and further become an important foundation of various aging problems. For example, if women in some cultures have been marginalized from opportunities of education and work, they will become more vulnerable and powerless as they become old. Thus, various positionalities should be included into the concerns in a study. Except for middle-class, married, and White, we need to know more of the aging experience of older adults with different positionalities. Since the roles of learning through volunteering in late adulthood were the core concern for this study, the participants as volunteers might be limited in some ways and in some sense support the activity theory. However, exploring various aging experiences in different positionalities, health conditions, living arrangements, and so on is pressing. As we are facing a globalized world, the future studies need to attend better to heterogeneous representations of older adults.

Regarding topics, I suggest that researchers need to (1) always include cultural factors in their concerns, (2) pay more attention to older women's aging, and (3) extend explorations to older adults' non-formal and informal learning. As with the few studies exploring successful aging, the findings of this study show how culture embeds and shapes people's perceptions, values, and behaviors and also influence how older adults perceive and define successful aging. Thus, it is risky to obstruct our eyes and ignore the cultural influences when we try to understand the process and experiences of aging. I advocate and recommend that researchers need to always consider cultural influences when designing and interpreting studies. Immigration especially brings mobility of population and cultures and then further presents challenges to social systems and services. I would suggest more studies to start exploring successful aging of minority or ethnic elders and the possible changes of perceived successful aging after immigration. In

addition, for the West, research findings in different cultural contexts need to be included as a reference of thought. Whenever constructing a theory or model, cultural factors always need to be in the researchers' mind.

It is urgent to have more studies explore successful aging in the East, because Asia and the Pacific will become home to the largest proportion of older persons aged 65 and above in the next 30 years (United Nations, 2002). I also recommend more studies using Eastern viewpoints or participants to balance our knowledge base. Significantly, to more precisely understand and present the process of late adulthood and facilitate aging-related resolutions, Eastern researchers need to develop their own research agendas. Besides, it is important to develop research instruments and evaluation tools based on Eastern contexts and values rather than directly adopt the ones developed based on Westerners' worldviews. In addition, for the East, more aging-related studies need to be published to promote knowledge on aging based on Eastern cultural background and consideration. Cross-national cooperation is needed to promote understanding and deliberation about the relationships between aging and cultures. All in all, we need more inclusive theories and models of successful aging which include multiple cultural concerns. Only by means of this, can we build aging-related knowledge in wider and more integrated foundation and then cooperate together to resolve the upcoming challenges of dramatically increasing of older populations by research.

It is also pressing to have more studies focusing on older women's aging. As women outlive men so older women outnumber men and then consist of the major part of the older population. We know very little about women's development, especially older women's development. Combine these two concerns, older women's aging needs to be emphasized in future studies. To explore gender differences regarding successful aging also is necessary. In

addition, older women's aging well for those who have different sexual orientation, different social status (e.g., those women who never married), age 85 and over, and have different living arrangements, need to be further explored.

The other suggestion in term of topics is extending explorations to older adults' non-formal and informal learning. The majority of studies on older adults' learning has been focused on formal educational settings. However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2005), only 0.5% of adults aged 55 and older enrolled in school. Thus, it is apparent that research on older adult learners represents only a small group of older learners. From findings of this and other studies, it is obvious that seniors' learning participation is bigger than what we have known based on statistics from formal learning settings if we count older people's non-formal and informal learning. Considering limitations specifically for older adults, these two approaches to learning make learning more accessible and adoptable for elders of any status and background. This study also shows that although elders might not consciously recognize their learning because of their original non-learning motives and of the definitions of learning, older adults' learning evolves and such learning accrues and benefits their old age. Therefore, in the next step, we should put more focus on seniors' non-formal learning and informal learning and explore the role of such learning in late adulthood.

Regarding research design, I suggest future aging-related studies need to adopt more qualitative methods. Using statistics and numbers to present human life has been dominate for a long time. However, aging is a complicated process involving subjective values, experiences, emotions, and meanings. In this life period, many developmental transitions and tasks, such as adjusting to changes, preparing for death, bereavement, and widowhood, involve plentiful and deep feelings. Moreover, as some researchers advocate, as advancing age, people are actually

more heterogeneous than they were in a younger age. Thus, qualitative designs seem to be a more suitable and helpful way to serve as a tool of better understanding the experiences and perceptions in terms of aging, old age, and older adults. However, as with this study, researchers also can build quantitative questionnaires or instruments grounded in qualitative inquiry to further explore successful aging and learning in similar cultural areas.

Chapter Summary

To help individuals and societies prepare for challenges of a fast aging world, a growing number of studies have focused on how to age successfully. However, many studies have simply employed Westerners' perspectives and then generalized the aging experience of a small group-- middle-class, white, and men, as universal. This study breaks some assumptions of existing theories of successful aging and adds new perspectives to aging-related knowledge base by a qualitative design focusing on understanding aging experiences of older women in an Eastern context.

Based on the analysis of in-depth interviews and documents collected from fourteen older Taiwanese women with diverse age, education, religion, financial condition, and living areas and arrangements, three conclusions display how older Taiwanese women's learning through volunteering influenced their perceived successful aging. First, elder learning through volunteering facilitates positive development. Second, volunteering is a holistic approach to older adults' successful aging. Third, perceptions of successful aging are gender-related as well as cultural-specific.

Learning through volunteering in elderhood facilitates positive development and aging well. In a non-formal learning format, learning through volunteering provides mental stimuli to help older adults learn something new. Attached to plentiful previous experience, through such

learning, the older participants updated knowledge, learned and refined skills, and developed wisdom by a variety of methods. The learning process reinforces fluid intelligence as well as crystallized intelligence. Although learning through volunteering begins from volunteer work requests and missions, the process fills with plentiful learning. Volunteering provided learning requests, learning contexts, as well as learning resources which triggered and facilitated the reciprocal dynamic between the older Taiwanese women's learning and their helping role. For older adults, learning is a catalyst in a developmental process toward integration, maturity, and balance. Beginning with a helping motive, the learning through volunteering was uniquely viewed as bonuses and plentiful harvests which the participants said that they could never learn from classrooms. The learning through volunteering was embedded in real life and brought the older Taiwanese women a way to maximize their gains, minimize their losses in late adulthood, and approach toward successful aging.

Volunteering is a holistic approach to older adults' successful aging. Volunteering is an emotional, physical, and social participation which involves the whole person. Based on this study, volunteering is not only an altruistic social involvement but also a learning activity. Compared with the definitions of successful aging the older Taiwanese women provided, the research found that there is a strong connection between volunteering and perceived successful aging. Volunteering influenced older Taiwanese women's successful aging on (1) establishing a meaningful life, (2) building and improving relationships, (3) enhancing positive changes and self-evaluation, and (4) promoting physical and psychological health. Volunteering facilitates being healthy, being connected, and being meaningful in the late adulthood which all contribute to a good old age.

Perceptions of successful aging are gender-related as well as cultural-specific. Based on findings on women's development, other research findings about gendered differences on attitudes toward aging and on aging issues they need to face, I boldly infer that definitions of successful aging are gender-related. Looking into the definitions of successful aging these older women shared, it showed again that connections, cares, and relationships are central to women's development. In addition, this study strongly displayed the relevance between cultural values and perceived successful aging. Even with the same terms of definitions, the reasons and meanings are different because of different underpinning cultures, values, and belief.

Facing extended life expectancy and growing aging populations in almost every country, this study brings current and future older adults, their families, practitioners, and policy makers an optimistic strategy to prepare for and reach successful aging. Learning through volunteering is a vehicle to facilitate being old but continuously being healthy, connected, and meaningful.

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APPENDIX A

AN EMAIL TO ORGANIZATIONS

ASKING FOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF POSSIBLE PARTICIPANTS

To whom it might concern,

My name is Li-Kuang Chen. I am a Taiwanese woman who is studying in a doctoral program in Adult Education at the University of Georgia in the United States. My research interest is to understand elderly Taiwanese women's learning and successful aging. Currently, I am exploring resources where I might find suitable research participants for my dissertation study which I expect to begin in March. As a student who studies overseas, I have deeply realized the pressing need to include phenomena and experiences that exist in Taiwan and other non-western countries to make a more inclusive knowledge and understanding of this world. I am writing to you for assistance in finding volunteers for my study.

My study is to understand how volunteering in an organization can have a positive effect on aging. Participants need to be women age 65 and over who have been volunteering regularly for at least two years. There is no limitation in terms of religion, previous education, socio-economic status, and so on.

Participation in my study is of course voluntary. If you know any elderly women volunteers in your orgnization who might fit the above criteria, please reply to me at likuang@uga.edu and I will contact you soon. If your have any questions about this research, you are always welcomed to contact me. I am looking forward to your response. Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Li-Kuang Chen
Doctoral student at the Adult Education,
Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy
Univeristy of Georgia, USA

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled " An Exploration of Older Taiwanese Women's Experiential Learning through Volunteering in Their Successful Aging " conducted by Li-Kuang Chen from the Adult Education program in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy at the University of Georgia (phone number :706-542-2214) under the direction of Dr. Sharan B. Merriam (phone number: 706-542-4018). I understand that my participation is voluntary although the researcher will send me 1,000 NTD for expressing her appreciation to my participation. I can choose not to participate and stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed. If I participate in this study for less than one hour and decide to quit during the interview, the researcher will only send me 600 NTD.

The purpose of this study is to understand how the learning that occurs in volunteering affects successful aging of older Taiwanese women.
If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:
1) Answer questions during the 60-90-minute interview about my learning through volunteering, my definitions and perceptions of successful aging.
2) Allow the researcher to tape record the interview.
3) I will participate in a short follow-up interview no longer than 30 minutes if the researcher thinks it will be necessary for the research.
4) I will provide personal documents to help describe my learning through volunteering.

No risk is expected but I may experience some physical or psychological discomfort when I mention my stories. These risks will be reduced in the following ways: I will be able to choose what experiences and stories I want to share, or temporarily stop the interview, or ask for a change in time for continuing the interview, or even refuse the interview if I want. I will also be offered a listing of references to counseling/services. By means of participating in this research, even though I cannot get tangible benefits, I know the process will give me a chance to share my experience, understand myself better, and contribute to the knowledge of successful aging.

No information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if it is necessary to protect my welfare or if required by law. I will be assigned a pseudonym and it will be used on all of the information I supply. I also know the interview recording tapes will be erased by December 2006 when the research is completed.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the research (phone number: _____). I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

___Li-Kuang Chen_____   _____   _____
    Name of Researcher   Signature   Date
Telephone: Email: likuang@uga.edu
_____   _____   _____
    Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.
Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to the IRB chairperson in the Human Subjects Office at the University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411. Telephone: (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address: IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Regarding current life---

      1. What does your typical day look like?

      2. How do you feel about being the age you are?

      3. What are the best things about being the age you are?

      4. What are the worst things about being the age you are?

      5. What is most important to you in your life at this age?

      6. How has your perception of aging changed as you have grown older?

Regarding definitions and perceptions of successful aging---

      1. What do you think it means to have a good old age? (or a good life in old age)

      2. In what ways do you see yourself as having a good old age?

    3. Can you think of anyone you know who has a good old age (in Taiwan or not in Taiwan)? What are reasons that make you believe they have a good old age?

      4. What do you think might hinder someone from having a good old age?

      5. In what ways are you different from those at your age?

      6. What are your goals presently?

      7. How would you rank your goals in order of importance?

      8. What is your ideal life in old age?

      9. How will you do to make your old age more satisfied?

Regarding to learning through volunteering---

      1. Describe the moment when you started thinking about being a volunteer.

      2. What does a typical day of your volunteering look like?

      3. What do you learn through volunteering? What learning opportunities you usually have in the organization you volunteer for?

4. Describe the changes of attitudes and thoughts after being a volunteer, if there are.

5. How does such learning benefit your current life and old age?

6. How has volunteering made you view your life and old age differently?

7. How has volunteering made you different from others who do not volunteer? What kinds of differences happen?

8. Have you attended any formal learning programs or activities in the last few years? If yes, what programs or activities? How is the learning in those programs different from your learning through volunteering?

9. What is the most impressive or unforgettable experience of your learning through volunteering? How do those experiences inspire or impact you?