Current Trends in Korean Adolescents' Social Purpose

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Abstract: In the research presented we investigated the features of Korean adolescents' social purpose as compared with other life goals in terms of different aspects of psychological well-being (study 1). We also examine the perceptions of high achieving Korean adolescents on social purpose and factors affecting it (study 2).The results of study 1 showed that the pursuit of social purpose significantly predicted psychological well-being compared to the other two life goals. Results of study 2 showed Korean adolescents value and pursue social purpose as a life goal. They explicitly accepted their social responsibility to serve their country in line with idyllic Confucianism values and Collectivistic roles. However, further analysis revealed that they had implicitly pursued individualistic desires of materialistic wealth and fame in parallel with their explicit social purpose. Implications of the results are discussed from the socio-cultural perspective on social purpose in regards to how to understand the features of social purpose that Korean adolescents have and how to foster its development.

Introduction

Research on purpose is a fairly new, but a very important area of research that has great potential to explain the powerfully generative role of identity formation, morality, and achievement on youth development (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003). Purpose development is influenced not only by individual characteristics and values, but also by socio-cultural values and traditions surrounding the individuals. In the current research, the characteristics of Korean adolescents' social purpose were investigated with the perspective that socio-cultural characteristics of Korea would differentiate Korean adolescents' social purpose development from their counterparts in Western countries. Specifically, the characteristics of Korean adolescents' social purpose were examined as one of the main life goals pursued by the

adolescents, and were compared with two other life goals, "Family and Human Relations" and "Social Fame and Wealth." Furthermore, the characteristics of social purpose of high-achieving Korean adolescents, who were expected to be future leaders in society, were investigated in depth. This socio-cultural investigation of social purpose would contribute to increasing our understanding of the development of social purpose during the adolescence period.

Damon, et al. (2003) expanded upon Frankl's (1959) "sense of purpose" by redefining purpose as "…a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self (p. 121)." Based on this definition, we were interested in the characteristics of social purpose (i.e., a society-oriented purpose) that could be applied within the context of Collectivism in The Korean society that emphasizes the values and principles of social responsibility and contribution. *Social purpose,* therefore, was defined in the present research as a life goal that is motivated by a deep, moral sense of social values, influenced by social obligation and expectation to contribute to society and by the willingness to sacrifice one's personal needs to dedicate one's merits for the betterment of society.

A growing body of research on social purpose has shown that the willingness to contribute to society in life can play a positive role in the lives of youths. According to Damon, et al. (2003), "Youth is an important formative period for cultivating a sense of purpose" (p. 120), a critical developmental period during which youths start to form and select a belief system that reflects their social purpose. And this social purpose formation during youth leads to positive outcomes (i.e., pro-social behavior, moral commitment, achievement, and high self-esteem), while a lack of social purpose during youth results in unwillingness or an inability to establish a belief system that is beyond "'self-preservation" or "self-advancement'" (Damon, et al., 2003, p. 120).

Research on social responsibility as a life goal has shown that its recognition affects the discovery of one's "meaning of life" positively, which increases aspects of personal well-being such as personal growth, self-actualization, and life satisfaction in populations ranging from adolescents to older adults (Compton, Smith, Cornish, & Qualls, 1996; Kasser, & Ryan, 1993; Schmuck, & Sheldon, 2001; Shin, Seo, & Lee, 2011; Zika, & Chamberlain, 1992). Studies of social purpose exemplars, for instance, profile young people who express commitment to diverse social goals, ranging from civic causes like improving people's lives through preserving the environment or finding cures for disease, to making a significant contribution to the arts (Bronk, 2008).

However, a pursuit of social purpose is an extraordinary achievement that many youth do not mature into. Youth, who do not mature, simply plateau and never progress beyond self-oriented goals of getting what they want (Gestdottir, & Lerner, 2007; Moran, 2009). Thus, it is important to provide social supports for adolescents to develop their value systems, facilitating the pursuit of social purpose, especially for adolescents who have a great potential to become social leaders in the future (Gardner, 1999).

The development of social purpose is influenced not only by individuals' personal beliefs and experiences, but also by socio-cultural contexts. Individual differences in social purpose, therefore, can be viewed from different socio-cultural perspectives, which potentially broaden the understanding of the developmental process and characteristics of social purpose.

Korea has historically been characterized as a society whose cultural and social belief system is based on Confucianism. Korean Confucianism emphasizes Collectivistic social values and the

value of oneness in a group context, such as family, community, or country. By accepting and participating as a member in a family or community, one's role in society is both implicitly and explicitly understood to serve one's community as a member of society (McGuire, 2007). Based on Confucianism influences, Korean students assume their social and academic roles of being a "student" are to work hard and achieve not only for their own benefit, but for their family, and most importantly to uphold their social duties to contribute to their society (Lee, & Larsen, 2000.)

Parents play a significant role in their children's psychological and social development by instilling social values to first excel in their studies and then to contribute to society as a member of society. Korean parents devote themselves completely to their children, often at the cost of sacrificing their own personal needs. In return, children are expected to follow their parents' wishes and devote themselves to their studies, where academic achievement becomes a reflection of the parents' sacrifices and devotion. Even though Korean adolescents have reported more negative emotions regarding education than adolescents in Western countries (Diener, Suh, Smith, & Shao, 1995), parental expectation and pressure have been found to have a positive impact on their children's academic achievement, where the students feel a sense of indebtedness toward their parents for all their devotion, sacrifice, and support (Kim, & Park, 2003; 2006; Park, Kim, & Tak, 2002).

Confucianism is embedded in Korean society. However, over the last 40 years, Korean society has gone through major economic, social, and cultural transformations. As the society has become industrialized and democratized, social values of Confucianism that Koreans apprized have changed into materialism and individualism, similar to those of Western cultures (Kim, & Park, 2003).

As a result, some research has shown conflicting tendencies in the life goals that Koreans value. Whereas the older generation placed greater importance on relations to others and group values (Chung, & Ghim, 2005; Hahn, & Lee, 2003), the younger generation considers self-indulgences and leisure (Na, & Cha, 2010), individualism for self, and anti-authoritarianism (Na, & Cha, 1999; 2010) as more important. The percentage of individuals valuing materialistic goals has increased among young people, but it remains relatively small for the old generation. These changes in Korean society has somewhat coincided with the changes of Western cultures. Some previous research in the United Stated also have found increasing individualistic traits and declining civic engagement over time (Malahy, Rubinlicht, & Kaiser, 2009; Twenge, & Foster, 2010).

The significance and implications from our research on the current shifting of social trends occurring in Korea have provided a unique opportunity to study the characteristics of social purpose in Korean adolescents. The findings from the study contributes to the body of social purpose research from a socio-cultural perspective, and offers an avenue to better understand the social purpose of Korean adolescents, whose perspectives have become a fusion of Individualism and Collectivism in modern Korea.

In the current research, two topics of research were pursued. First, we were interested in identifying the characteristics of Korean youth's social purpose in relation to other life goals they pursue (Study 1). Second, we wanted to find out the meanings and influences of social purpose that elite Korean youth have (Study 2).

In Study 1, we identified the features of social purpose in comparison with other types of life goals (e.g., family and human relation, and wealth and fame). To do so, data were collected from 411 students having diverse majors from several universities in Korea. In Study 2, participants were selected from Korea's top university, whose students ranked within the top 1% in the National Korean Scholastic Exam, Korean version of the Scholastic Aptitude Tests. The reason for selecting this particular group of students was that these students have established themselves as the future leaders of Korean society by their scholastic excellence. According to Korea Ministry of Education (2005), the graduates accounted for 42.3% of chief-executive officers in top Korean companies and 65.7% of all judges in the Korea Judiciary. Thus, understanding the nature of their social purpose could have important implications for Korean society and its future sustainability and development.

Study 1

The purpose of Study 1 was to examine the association of social purpose as one type of life goals with psychological well-being of Korean adolescents as compared with the life goals of "Family and Human Relation," and "Wealth and Fame." To do so, data were collected from Korean college students on life goals including social purpose and the criterion variables of meaning of life, achievement motivation, and self-concept.

Method

Participants
Participants of the study were 412 college students from 7 different universities in the metropolitan areas in and around Seoul, the capital city of South Korea. Among 412 participants, 279 students (67.7%) were female and 133 (32.3%) were male. The mean age of the participants was 22.15 years and the standard deviation was 2.47. The participants of the study were college students who took a class in 'Introduction to Psychology,' 'Counseling Psychology,' or 'Educational Psychology.' All participants completed the Life Goal Questionnaire of the study; however, only 110 participants completed the questionnaires of life meaning, achievement motivation, and self-concept, which were used as criterion measures in the study. Therefore, the analysis on Korean adolescents' goal characteristics in general was done with all of the 412 cases, whereas the analysis on the relations of the different types of life goals to the criterion measures were conducted only with the 110 cases having a complete data set. Participants received extra credit for completing the questionnaires.

Measures
Four different questionnaires assessing life meaning, achievement motivation, and self-concept were administered to participants. First, the Life Goal Questionnaire (LGQ) used in the study was developed by Shin, Seo, and Lee (2011) in order to examine the characteristics of Korean adolescents' life goal. The forty item LGQ measures life goals in terms of Social Purpose, Wealth and Fame, and Family and Human Relation. The LGQ was reported to have the good criterion-related validity and the reliability of .85 according to Cronbach's α on average. Table 1 shows sample items of the LGQ used in the study.

Table 1

Example items of the Life Goal Questionnaire of the study

Types of life goal	Example items
Social Purpose	It's important to give back to society. I consider the social value of a job that I want.
Wealth & Fame	I think that wealth determines my social status in society. It is important to become an authority in my field of work.
Family and Human Relations	Having a happy family is an important goal of my life. Having good relationships with others is important for my personal happiness.

The Life Meaning Questionnaire (LMQ) used in the study was developed on the basis of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire developed by Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006). The LMQ was used to measure individuals' perception on the meaning and importance of one's life. The number of items used in the study was 20. Example items of the LMQ were "I understand the meaning of my life," "I am working hard to make my life more meaningful," and "I know what makes my life more significant." The reliability of the LMQ was the Cronbach's a of .86 in the study.

The Achievement Motivation Questionnaire (AMQ) used in the study was to measure the degree of task orientation, independence, spirit of adventure, confidence, responsibility, and future-oriented thinking in relation to task performance. The AMQ was developed for the purposes of the study based on the Questionnaire of Achievement Motivation suggested by Hermans and Hubert (1970). The number of items used in the study was twelve. Example items of the AMQ were "Whatever tasks are given, I try my best to get a better outcome," "I am thinking often about my future job," and "I prefer somewhat adventurous work to routine work." The reliability of the AMQ in the study was Cronbach's a of .82 alpha.

The Self-concept Questionnaire (SCQ) used in the study was to measure individuals' academic and social self-concepts. The SCQ was developed on the basis of the self-concept scales developed by Fitts (1965) and Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976). The number of items used in the study was ten. Example items were "I can do better than others in school work," "My friends like my ideas and suggestions," and "I am an important person to my friends." The reliability of the SCQ was Cronbach's a of .86 alpha in the study.

Results

The means and standard deviations of the three types of life goal are shown in Table 2. The goal of Family & Human Relations has the highest mean, followed by the goals of Wealth & Fame and lastly, Social Purpose. To test mean differences among these goals of repeated measures ANOVA was used in the study. The results showed that there was a significant overall mean difference among the goals (Wilks' (2, 409) = .709, $p < .001$; = .291). To identify specific mean differences, the Bonferroni method was used for post-hoc mean comparisons. The post-hoc analysis results showed that all mean differences were statistically significant from each other (see Table 2).

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of the life goals (n = 412)

Types of life goal	M (SE)	SD	Min.	Max.
Social Purpose	3.361 (.026)	.529	1.61	4.57
Wealth & Fame	3.471 (.024)	.499	1.49	4.79
Family and Human Relation	3.666 (.023)	.482	2.14	5.00

*A five-point Likert scale was used where 1 represented "I do not pursue it at all" and 5 represented "I pursue it constantly"

Additionally, gender differences were examined by using the repeated measures ANOVA with life goal as a within-subject variable and with gender as a between-subject variable. The results showed no significant main effects of gender and no interaction effects between gender and life goal. As in the previous analysis, only life goal showed a significant main effect in the current analysis. The descriptive statistics of male and female adolescents of the study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Descriptive statistics of the life goals for male and female participants (n = 412)

	Male adolescents		Female adolescents	
Types of life goal	M (SE)	SD	M (SE)	SD
Social Purpose	3.419 (.047)	.546	3.333 (.031)	.519
Wealth & Fame	3.514 (.045)	.527	3.451 (.029)	.485
Family and Human Relations	3.668 (.045)	.523	3.665 (.027)	.462

Next, the relations of the three life goals to the criterion measures of life meaning, achievement motivation, and self-concept were examined. The correlations among these measures were statistically significant, except for the correlation between the goal of Wealth & Fame and the measure of life meaning (see Table 4). When significant, the correlation coefficients ranged from .33 to .63, which showed a moderate association among the measures (Cohen, 1988).

Table 4
Correlations among the goal types and the criterion measures (n = 110)

	Wealth & Fame	Family & Human Relations	Life Meaning	Achievement Motivation	Self-Concept
Social Purpose	.443**	.540**	.365**	.444**	.412**
Wealth & Fame		.448**	.156	.349**	.417**
Family & Human Relations			.326**	.349**	.439**
Life Meaning				.547**	.443**
Achievement Motivation					.587**

**p<.01

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine whether the goal of Social Purpose, would have an additional explanatory power in individual differences on the criterion measures. To do so, the two life goals of Wealth & Fame and Family & Human Relations were entered in the regression equation first. Then, the goal of Social Purpose was entered in the regression equation.

For life meaning, when the first two predictors were entered, the goal of Family & Human Relations was the only significant predictor. However, when the goal of Social Purpose was entered, the goal of Family & Human Relations was no longer a significant predictor, and the last entered variable was the only significant predictor of individual differences in life meaning (see Table 5). The results suggested that Social Purpose would become a meaningful value that explains individual differences in the degree of life meaning that Korean adolescents perceive these days.

Table 5
Hierarchical regression of the three life goals on life meaning (n = 110)

	b (*SE*)	β	*t*	*p*	*R2*
Model 1					
Constant	2.127 .472)				
Wealth & Fame	.035 (.094)	.037	.375	.708	.107
Family & Human Relations	.372 (.118)	.312	3.154	.002	
Model 2					
Constant	1.969 .464)				
Wealth & Fame	-.021 .095)	-.022	.218	.828	.159
Family & Human Relations	.227 (.129)	.190	1.768	.080	
Social Purpose	.259 (.102)	.274	2.542	.012	

For achievement motivation, when the two goals were entered first, they turned out to be significant predictors of individual differences in the measure of achievement motivation. However, as with the results pertaining to life meaning, when Social Purpose was entered in the regression it became the only significant predictor. The Wealth & Fame goal was a marginally significant predictor of achievement motivation, having a slightly larger probability value than .05 in the study (see Table 6). The results suggested that Social Purpose would also motivate Korean adolescents to work hard and plan for the future more determinedly.

Table 6
Hierarchical regression of the three life goals on achievement motivation (n = 110)

	b (*SE*)	β	*t*	*p*	*R²*
Model 1					
Constant	1.241 .416)				
Wealth & Fame	.221 (.083)	.252	2.656	.009	.176
Family & Human Relations	.277 (.104)	.253	2.663	.009	
Model 2					
Constant	1.074 .404)				
Wealth & Fame	.162 (.082)	.185	1.969	.052	.243
Family & Human Relations	.125 (.112)	.114	1.117	.267	
Social Purpose	.272 (.089)	.313	3.064	.003	

Finally, for self-concept, the first two goals entered in the regression remained statistically significant after the Social Purpose goal was entered. Different from the two previous analysis results, Social Purpose did not explain individual differences in Korean adolescents' self-concept (see Table 6). The results suggested that Korean adolescents' self-concept still would be more related to their desire to become rich and famous in society, and that individuals who value Family and Human Relations more are likely to show higher self-concept than those who do not.

Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to investigate the characteristics of social purpose pursued by elite Korean adolescents, who were expected to become social leaders in the future. Specifically, their perceptions on life goal including social purpose, social contribution, and factors affecting their pursuit of their social purpose were investigated.

Method

Participants
One hundred twenty nine college students at a university in the capital city of Seoul, South Korea, participated in the study. All students were defined as high-achievers because they had scored within the top 1% on the Korean Scholastic Exam. The data were collected from students who enrolled in the introductory course of Educational Psychology in 2007 and 2009. Among the 129 participants, 72 were female (55.8%) and 57 were male (42.2%). The composition of the sample was 42 freshmen, 31 sophomores, 13 juniors, and 43 seniors.

Data collection and analysis
A qualitative approach was used to collect the data for the study by using individually written reflection papers. Participants were asked to write a reflection paper as one of the class assignments on their personal life goal. Specifically, participants were asked to write about their experiences and reflections by providing questions on their life goal and factors affecting it such as "What is the dream or goal you want to achieve for the rest of your life?" "What are the life values you are pursuing?" and "What were key factors that contributed to your goal-setting?"

Each reflection paper was analyzed by using the method of thematic content analysis. The method focuses on textual data and allows researchers to interpret the data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes (Hsieh, & Shannon, 2005; Neuendorf, 2002).

First, the reflection papers were read by the researchers several times and then were coded into the units of meaning. Next, the units of meaning were sorted into groups based on similar issues and experiences (Burnard, 1991). All meaningful units were compared until no new categories could be identified. Then, the different groups were abstracted into sub-themes (Graneheim, & Lundman, 2004). Lastly, the sub-themes were abstracted into main themes (Baxter, 1991; Graneheim, & Lundman, 2004).

In order to bolster the study's "trustworthiness," which parallels the concept of validity, the following quality-enhancing measures were taken. First, to attain credibility, which parallels internal validity, peer debriefers were recruited. Two peers who had experiences with qualitative research but were outside the context of the study, were asked to review the emerging themes or categories and provided a check against biases to enhance credibility and reliability throughout the coding process (Lincoln, & Guba, 1985). When issues were identified or were interpreted differently between researchers and peers, a thorough discussion was conducted to reach an agreement (Geertz, 1973; Davis, 1992).

Lastly, dependability was established by using audit trails. The purpose of audit trails was to let other researchers replicate each step in the research process. Throughout the study, transparent descriptions of the research steps were kept, which allowed people to know how the raw data went through a process of analysis, reduction, and synthesis (Rodgers, & Cowles, 1993).

Results

The analysis of the data revealed that almost all participants explicitly expressed the social responsibilities of Korean's academic elites and future leaders in principle. However, further analyses revealed their social purpose was pursued not for social value (i.e., social welfare, altruistic beliefs), but for rationalizing their implicit intention to pursue personal success for materialistic, rather than for pro-social reasons.

The Characteristics of Elite Students' Social Purpose
Social purpose was generally accepted by the participants as their social duty, but only a small number of students really wanted to dedicate their lives to the pursuit of social purpose as their life goal. They knew and announced explicitly that they wanted to contribute and dedicate their lives to society.

> "I realized that there are many people who won't ever break out of this vicious circle in our society due to external and systematic problems, not internal. As a beneficiary of the constant support and recognition I've received from society, I feel a certain sense of social responsibility (to help them to get out of the vicious cycle)." (SJH)

However, in a few cases there were feelings of relatively strong resentment and rejection of social roles and expectations. In these cases, social values were clearly rejected and the expectations for social responsibility were seen only as an oppressed burden on them.

> *"Frankly speaking, I've never really felt a sense of responsibility for society, I've never experienced a need to be philanthropic or be required to do something for society. I actually used to feel a kind of repulsion with the concept of 'talents for nation' that my parents' generation had and having to deal with the expectations to change society by myself. I'm just 'one' person. I don't feel the necessity to bear such a large burden alone. The whole Confucianism ideology and political issues that my parents dealt with, "the patriarchic duty as a social contributor for society and the duty of 'doing for others'" contain way too much propaganda like totalitarianism.... What I learned in history and sociology from high school was that the "patriotism" that my parents' generation experienced was only a means for abusive oppression for a nation."(GYU)*

This type of student admitted that pursuing social purpose would mean a life full of pressure and rejection. These students worried that a life dedicated to the pursuit of social values would mean giving up a life of economic stability, physical comforts, personal freedoms or daily entertainment. They acknowledged that there were expectations from society for social values because they were the highest academic achievers attending the most elite university in Korea, but they confessed that they had strong doubts to commit to such a life.

On the other hand, most students who pursued social purpose as their life goal viewed social purpose as a social responsibility that was expected of them, but something that could be accomplished in a more passive way. These students showed a strong tendency to select a profession that could guarantee a position with status, recognition, or wealth first, and then as an afterthought, they explored the types of social values that could be realized with their desired position. For instance, a student who described himself as a person pursuing social values wanted to be a politician. The in-depth analysis revealed that becoming a politician was not a means to fulfill his social values (i.e., social changes to help the society's weak), but rather the opposite. His life goal of social value was dependent on his desire to fulfill his core value of holding a position of power and authority, which could allow him access to the facilitating power of his position to pursue his social values later.

> *"With so much support (including social recognition due to high academic ranking in school) I felt a sense of noblesse oblige, a sense of duty to help as a future leader. I know that I'm going to get a good job, and will again enjoy the benefits of being a leader in society somewhere. Then, I'll help out those who are lower than me in society. It's my way of paying back for what I've gotten from society." (IDK)*

In other words, social purpose was pursued not because these participants held altruistic beliefs to better humanity or to make social changes out of true desire. Instead, social purpose was only a rationalization or justification for career choices. For these students, social purpose was an explicit expectation of their parents and of society, but at the forefront of their implicit desires was social fame. Social fame was their core value that later facilitated the recognition of social responsibility and later pursuing social purpose.

Parental Influence on Social Purpose
In the study, the most important and significant factor influencing Korea's elite students' social purpose, was the students' family, particularly their parents. There were cases where students took on their parents' social purpose fully as their own personal belief system. In these cases, they could guarantee not only their family's fame, but could also satisfy some level of social purpose in a truly altruistic fashion.
> *"When I was a kid, both my parents, who were teachers, decided to move the whole*

family to a small village in the countryside where poverty, education, and overall welfare of life was so low. They dedicated their lives to serve the people in the community. The children there couldn't even afford private tutors, something that's pretty standard if you want to get ahead. The lives those kids were living was kind of sad because they'd never have any opportunities to escape that cycle of life. I mean, it's all they know and expect. This motivated me to want to work for an NGO where I can really make a difference in the lives of people like them." (DKI)

Parents also influenced students' goal-commitment behavior directly. By working hard to meet their parents' expectation, they were able to find the strength to work for their goal including social purpose and to concentrate on the goal pursuit, even in times of difficulty. Namely, parents became their source of comfort and the support system to overcome physical and psychological challenges.

"My mother's constant faith and ever-growing expectations stabilized my will to achieve all that was expected of me. Whenever I lost my drive or wanted to quit my studies, I thought about the expectations and concerns from my mother and my family. The idea that I might disappoint my family, especially my mother, lifted me up and gathered my strength to work hard." (LJA)

The study also found that the participants integrated their parents' expectations and hopes with their own personal goals including social purpose. Through sacrifice and devotion for their children, parents had instilled their social values and beliefs in their children's life goal pursuit.

"The values that my parents instilled in me as a child influenced how I formed my dreams. Both of my parents expected and hoped for me to become a scholar. Even now, I still have a sign that I made in kindergarten with my parents, which is still posted on the wall near the kitchen table of my parent's home. It says, "My dream is to be a professor!" I followed the path that my parents had envisioned for me without ever going against them, and I decided that was also what I wanted. Sometimes I wonder though, if it was only because my parents never really saw any other potential that they needed to hold such academic expectations for me." (LJH)

Discussion

In the current research, we investigated the features of Korean adolescents' social purpose as compared with other life goals in terms of different aspects of psychological well-being (Study 1). We also examined the perceptions of high achieving Korean adolescents on social purpose and factors affecting it (Study 2). In the current research, four major results were found that may have important implications to the research on social purpose.

First, in the Study 1, we found that Korean adolescents pursued the goals of Family and Human Relations, and Wealth and Fame more highly than the goal of Social Purpose. The results may reflect a recent movement of the society towards more materialism-centered individualism. In addition, a social change has been witnessed such that society or community itself was less valued than family, even though collectivism still had an influence. As a whole, it was found that the values Korean adolescents pursue would be placed more highly upon family and money than social contribution these days.

These results are consistent with the recent studies conducted in Western cultures. As a whole,

it was found that today's Korean adolescents value family and wealth more highly than social contributions (Epstein, & Howes, 2006; Ger, & Belk, 1996; Hamamura, 2012; Lancaster, & Stillman, 2010; Needleman, 2008). The results of the current study should be considered socially serious, since young adults today are more preoccupied with materialistic-oriented goals and less concerned with social values.

In Study 1, it was also found that the goal of social purpose was the most critical marker to explain individual differences in psychological well-being among Korean youth, even if it was pursued less. Social purpose best explained individual differences in meaning of life and achievement motivation. These results are consistent with findings of previous studies where positive relations between social purpose and psychological characteristics of adolescents were found (Benard, 1991; Hutzell, & Finck, 1994). According to Damon, et al. (2003), positive purpose during adolescence can lead to pro-social behavior, moral commitment, high self-esteem, achievement, and physical and psychological well-being. The results of the current study should be considered socially serious, since young adults today are more preoccupied with materialistic-oriented goals and less concerned with social values.

The finding that social purpose best predicts achievement motivation is one of the most novel aspects of this study – so its meaning could really be discussed more here. It really speaks to the fact that youth that are heard are more motivated by social goals. The association we find here is not intuitive and could be placed against and discussed more broadly against the literative on motivation.

Previous research has shown that the pursuit of social purpose enhances self concept (Colby, & Damon, 1992; Eccles, 2008; Hart, & Fegley, 1995). Surprisingly, however, it was found in Study 1 that individual differences in 'self-concept' were not significantly explained by social purpose for Korean adolescents; rather, the differences were explained better by their desire for the materialistic/social success and the family and human relationship. This finding might be related to the previous research findings that the self-concept of individuals in the Eastern cultures reflects not only personal characteristics, but also social environments surrounding them (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). Therefore, it is assumed that social success and family-centered fame would be a more influential factor to form self-identity for Korean adolescents, pinpointing a distinct characteristic of the present Korean society.

This finding, on the other hand, might suggest that social purpose would not be fully internalized for most individuals, limiting the formation of self-identity for Korean adolescents. This hypothesis would be worthwhile investigating in a follow-up study. Adolescents might have difficulty integrating social purpose into an internalized personal value. Damon, et al. (2003) suggested that most adolescents did not develop social purpose fully. In essence, adolescents need to find the meaning of social purpose on their own rather than being force fed values that they do not necessarily agree with or understand.

Another major finding of the current study was that, surprisingly, only a small number of elite Korean adolescents actually desired to dedicate their lives to the pursuit of social purpose as their life goal. They sincerely acknowledged the importance of social contribution and accepted their social responsibility to serve their country in line with idyllic Confucianism values and Collectivistic roles.

However, most elite students who said they had their own social purpose actually admitted to

pursuing personal success first and then thought about a possibility of finding a chance to contribute to society. Social purpose was more of a façade for their value of fame and success (i.e., pursuing a stable, respected career in politics, law, education, etc.). Thus, while they believed social purpose was an important life goal (because they were pressured and expected to pursue), attaining social fame and material success were the primary intentions expressed by most students.

From the perspective of the Korean socio-cultural context, a Confucianism-enriched Collectivistic society, these students had been more or less subjected to the values and expectations of their society, and had implicitly felt that social purpose was something they were obligated to follow. Perhaps through these external pressures and expectations, the value of social purpose was superficially recognized, and not truly internalized or realized on an intrinsic level. Having lived in a Collectivistic environment, the students had pursued social purpose as a strategy to produce the illusion of the idyllic social contributor that veiled and belied their true desires of fame and wealth.

Lastly, the current study showed that the most important and significant factor that influenced the pursuit of social purpose for Korea's elite students was their parents. Korean parents devote themselves to their children and are actively involved in all facets of their children's daily lives. This devotion and involvement necessitates their children to accept their parents' expectations and life values without psychological resistance. Furthermore, some parents serve for their children as role models they could follow in their lives (Hahn, & Lee, 2003; Park, & Kim, 2006). This would be a unique phenomenon found in the Collectivistic Korean society due to the Confucianism influence.

In sum, the present study found the level of social purpose pursued by Korean adolescents, in general, was much lower than expected, even though the pursuit was positively related to the perception of life meaning and achievement motivation. Also, it was surprising that only a small number of elite Korean students admitted to actually trying to pursue social purpose. Although these elite adolescents understood the importance of social responsibility, most of them felt it to be a pressure for meeting social obligations rather than an internal value that was worth pursuing through its own merits. These results suggest that we should and need to provide social supports and experiences for adolescents to develop the inner value of social responsibility and help them to eventually translate it into social purpose as their life goal.

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